



Details from the 'Silver Room' (2016-2018) by Tia Thủy Nguyễn that is currently displayed at Château La Coste, Aix-en-Provence, Pháp. Images courtesy of the artist.

'Silver Room'

Installation by **Tia -Thủy Nguyễn**

Opening Date: *26 May 2019, at Chateau La Coste*

2750 Route De La Cride, 13610 Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate, France

“The arts have brought me to the abundant land of passion and innovation” - Tia Thuy Nguyen

Due to her undiluted identity and unique artistic practice that interweaves her worldly experiences with her innate passion for the arts, Tia Thuy Nguyen was able to fiercely push through the two years, 2016 - 2018, of putting together the following installation. Despite the numerous spatial, timely and geographical difficulties, she was able to bring the “Silver Room” to the very hills of Aix-en-Provence hidden in far-away France. With her ambitious vision, she was able to open a unique door to the world of Vietnamese contemporary art. Softly nodding to Central Highland architecture, Buddhist rituals and other unique craft-related disciplines of her home country, Tia has given the western world a taste of the Southeast Asian art scene.

Taking inspiration from the architecture of the Rong Houses that was originated from the ethnic culture of the North of Central Highland Vietnam, the ‘Silver Room’ is approximately the same size as the structures in the heights of the real house. Through the plentiful years of observational drawing as a student, Tia truly has become attached to tribal architecture and traditional design methods. She aimed to represent the construction that is deeply immersed in the epic historical traditions of Vietnam, complete with red meranti wood pillars and a roof that has been erected using large bamboo columns. The structure is immense but simultaneously, it is neatly immersed in the peaceful landscapes of Aix-en-Provence, making it not only an impressive sculpture, but also a site-specific installation. The gaps between the bamboo and wood bars create intricate patterns using natural light and shadows, making the art piece continually changing with time and weather variation - never truly permanent.



*Shadows and light shining onto the Rong floor, a detail of the 'Silver Room'.
Image courtesy of the artist.*

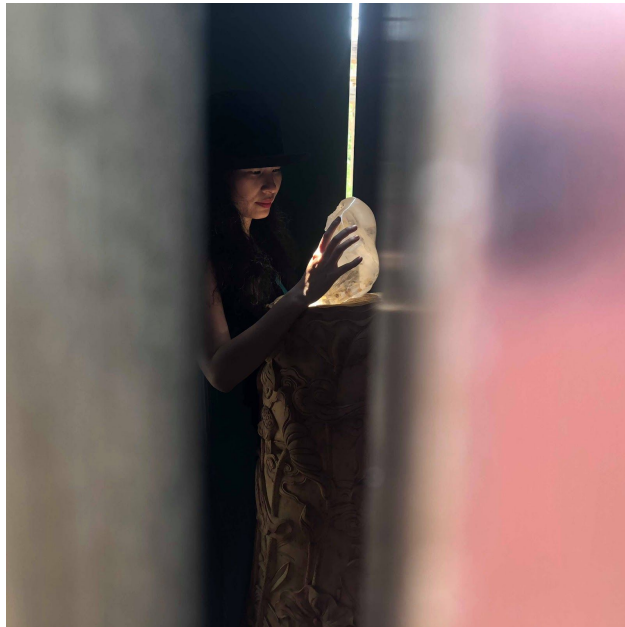
By stepping into the 'Silver Room', one commits to a journey into Vietnamese architectural tradition and folk. The following installation was constructed based on an idea of the "Three-Life Stone,"¹ clad with a cloak made of sparkling silver leaf. The 'Silver Room' has the shape of two stones, inspired by the story of "two stone pillars of Thuc Phan"² that are located on the Nghia Linh mountain. It is a symbol of fraternity and the determination to safeguard the country of Viet people. The two stones are pieced together with a gentle crack in between that allows the light to seep through as a reminder of the presence of the "Sun Goddess" in the famous epic "Dam San"³ - the hero who journeyed to find light for his village. The deliberate construction and measurements of the following space force the visitors to bend their knee and lower their heads, in order to wholeheartedly submerge into the experience of the 'Silver Room.' Unknowingly, the audience becomes a part of the performance, respectfully partaking in the ritual themselves. With the right conditions and a bit of luck, they

¹ According to people's belief: when a person dies, before they cross over to another realm, their soul must travel on "Hoang Tuyen Lo" (Golden Line Path). On the way, they will cross Nai Ha Bridge. At the beginning of the Bridge lies a large stone called "Three-Life Stone". It records a person's past life, current life, and future life. Buddha allows the three lives to be revealed, to show that every life follows the wheel of reincarnation. Fate allows us to meet we accumulate enough chance. When one chance vanishes, another emerges. When you have truly understood this, you will see that your karma is your own doing, while Buddha is always in your soul.

² The 18th Hung King bequeathed his throne to his son-in-law Tan Vien. His nephew Thuc Phan disagreed and decided to lead an army for the throne. Wanting to maintain peace in the land, Tan Vien urged his father-in-law to bequeath his throne to Thuc Phan instead. Thuc Phan became King and used the title "An Dương Vương". Moved by Tan Vien's gesture, Thuc Phan ordered two stone pillars to be built on Nghia Linh Mountain as an oath to continue protecting the land of the Hung Kings. After that, he built a temple made of stone to worship Hung Kings, calling them "Ancestors".

³ The heroic Dam San revolted against the matriarchy, defended his people against the invasion of other tribes, and raised his people to be strong and powerful. He journeyed to find the "Sun Goddess" to marry her, symbolizing his act of finding light for his tribe. Unable to accomplish this deed, he "disappeared" into the marshland.

will be able to witness the entire magic of the installation; observe the way in which the sun rays can fall through the cracks to create a spotlight on the white quartz stone statue of Buddha, that will reveal its halo. In Buddhism, there is a term referred to in Vietnamese as ‘duyên,’ which describes multiple aspects, such as time, place and circumstances falling into one right moment to reveal something life-changing or enlightening. That which cannot be forced. Tia Thuy Nguyen’s ‘Silver Room’ has one of those instances hidden within its premises, given the correct hour, lighting and positioning. The following art piece demonstrates the beliefs and practices of an untethered soul, that lives in between the past - present - future; in-between desire and letting go; in-between the identity of her homeland and her integration with the world.



*Artist Tia-Thuy Nguyen and the Buddha statue that has been hit by sunlight, in the ‘Silver Room’.
Image courtesy of the artist.*

The more paths Tia has travelled and boundaries she has crossed, the more profound her devotion of her identity and tradition has become. That connection is the invisible thread that ties her to her homeland, despite geographical obstacles. To her, art has never been a destination, but instead a journey that brings a part of Vietnamese culture and soul to the rest of the world. The ‘Silver Room,’ with its multi-layered-and-faceted means of interaction, incorporates a large variety of art forms, that are closely interconnected with one another to create a space, filled with colours, light and shadow; textures and visual effects. Deeply spiritual in its connotations, the ‘Silver Room’ aims to take its visitor onto an anthropological journey that is tightly interwoven with many tribal cultures of Vietnam. Whether it is a vision or a reality, expressively or covertly emoted, all of Tia’s work is marked with a touch of sophisticated beauty, compassion and truthfulness.

The Silver Room is part of Château La Coste’s prestigious contemporary art collection, alongside contemporary works by important artists such as Ai Weiwei, Louise Bourgeois, Tracy Emin, Sophie Calle, Franz West, ... and the architecture of Tadao Ando. The installation is currently on display at the site of 2750 Route De La Cride, 13610 Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate, Aix-en-Provence, France. For further information, please contact:
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Tia-Thuy Nguyen (b. 1981, Ho Chi Minh City) was born and raised in Hanoi. After graduating from the Vietnam University of Fine Arts (2006), she moved to Ukraine, where she achieved her PhD in Fine Arts at the National Academy of Fine Art and Architect, Kiev (2014). Tia-Thuy Nguyen has been practicing painting since 1999. Her artworks usually focus on the observation of her surroundings, and the colorful yet chaotic feelings of a woman who lives in this modern world. Being conscious about the difficulties of the Vietnamese art scene, in 2016, Tia founded The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, the first purpose-built space for contemporary art in Vietnam, that aims to be a dynamic destination for art and design display and education, demonstrating the creative criticality of Vietnam today. She challenges women's roles in today's society, with her own experience as a mother, a fashion designer and an artist. Tia-Thuy Nguyen's artworks have been exhibited, auctioned and collected widely in Vietnam and Europe. Recently, she has been listed in 'Top 50 most influential women in Vietnam 2019' by Forbes Vietnam.