

Alison Nguyen: Prosthetic Memory

7 May to 26 July 2025

Opening Reception: 7 May 2025, Wednesday, 5:00 – 7:00 pm

Venue: gdm (Galerie du Monde), 390 Ruiguang Road, Neihu, Taipei

gdm Taipei is pleased to present “Alison Nguyen: Prosthetic Memory”, the artist’s first major exhibition in Asia. The immersive installation brings together two bodies of work which explores the complex relationship between media, individual histories, and the politics of cultural memory.

In two rooms walled with glistening and semi-opaque industrial PVC curtains, Alison Nguyen’s *Prosthetic Memory* brings together two works that elevate the absurd in a timely rendering of dreams and memories sustained in the face of censorious compartmentalization and the prospect of severance from consciousness, memory, and history.

Across from a limousine cut in half and the aroma of the fresh dirt lining it, *history as hypnosis* is presented in a triptych. The yellow on orange poem “Cu,” by the artist’s brother Matthew Nguyen, unravels an absurd narrative, in which the story starts to fray at the seams, as if it were the navel of a dream. We barely catch a glimpse of a decaying American dream through clichés like the core memory of the prom limo, the motivational pep of “lighten up, it’s the thought that counts,” and the immigrant strife encapsulated in “or maybe you’re just trying to learn English and get a job”. The narrative of a childhood outing in a limo is interrupted by Chu’s and Cu’s, voices from a different language, eerie and repetitive like a bird call, or an error script calling upon yet unable to conjure the long aftermaths of the American War in Vietnam.

While the narrative seems to run on some transmutation of memory, the moving image contemplates its complete severance, mechanically, traumatically. The blue lit limo slowly drives through a cold carwash as three women in various forms of white care labor attire sit in the back seat, a dead man’s body in the soil underneath their feet. The limo’s route from a desert canyon to the depths of the urban landscape, rest stops, cell phone stores, strip malls, laundromats, and karaoke bars, follows these women, in search of a man named X, through an awkward reintegration into the material world and its sociality. With their blackened teeth and long white earphones delivering monotone and didactic tech-speak, the women face a squalid American landscape that is rife with threatening gestures that recall the memory erased: a helicopter above, questioning eyes wondering who they are, a barber pointing a hairdryer towards them as if it were a gun.

In the next room, material is fragmented across a green factory floor surrounded by yellow PVC walls. The main video *Aisle 9* displayed on a single screen is flanked by A-frame carts that bear its archival and conceptual scaffolding: citations, credits, licensing documents for a previously censored love song used in the film, customs paperwork for the artwork in the exhibition. *Aisle 9* is set in a family-owned hosiery factory where Helena, the matriarch of the company, has rented out part of their space to a start-up, World Global Services, in order to avoid layoffs. As mysterious boxes begin accumulating in the large vacant areas, the workers continue their daily socialization, working, smoking, and playing archery. One night, an arrow sails into *Aisle 9*, pierces one of the boxes, and the staff slowly realize that they are in the midst of the stuff of people’s everyday life: video diaries, home movies, artist films, and prosumer content that have been censored by the government, boxed up, shipped away. “Niệm Khúc Cuối” (The Last Song) is the first memory that is unearthed from these boxes, a song that was banned in Vietnam not because it was too political but because it was too romantic, not patriotic enough. The workers turn *Aisle 9* into a viewing station, adding to their night time activities the intake and study of these memories.

Prosthetic Memory references Allison Landberg's book by the same name, which argues that through mass media, people may acquire the experience of historical events that they themselves did not live through. The workers of *Aisle 9* transform a censorious process of a state regime in which memories are severed from their organic containers, made prosthetic. Even as they re-enter circulation, they are mediated by screens, disembodied.

The exhibition ends with a textile work taking the deadpan form of a hanging political flag. The embroidered text stems from Nguyen's engagement with the work of theorist, writer, and activist Silvia Federici, known for her research into the intersection of capitalism, labor, and gender. In dialogue with Federici, Alison Nguyen embroiders a stanza of her 1985 poem "In Praise of Conspiracy Theory" onto the flag:

*Come, then,
let us sing praises
to the conspiracy theory of history.
For as long as there are men
who sit and plan deeds
that cause any of us to die,
no conceptual flight
or verbal trick
will stop me from concluding
they are conspiring against us.*

Text by Lara Fresko Madra
Assistant Professor and Luma Fellow at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

About the artist



Alison Nguyen is visual artist and filmmaker working across video, installation, performance, and sculpture. Her work, often speculative, absurd, and performative, is strongly grounded in the real. She combines the particulars of the personal with an exploration into broader forces of history, specifically those entwined with technology.

Nguyen's work has been presented at the Museum of Modern Art; MIT List Center for Visual Arts; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea; e-flux; Frieze Seoul Film; The International Studio & Curatorial Program; Ann Arbor Film Festival, among others.

Alison Nguyen received her M.F.A. in Visual Art from Columbia University and her B.A. in Literary Arts from Brown University. Nguyen is a 2023-2024 Studio Artist at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program.

Artist website
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艾莉森·阮《義肢記憶》

Alison Nguyen: Prosthetic Memory

2025 年 5 月 7 日至 7 月 26 日

開幕酒會：2025 年 5 月 7 日（星期三）下午 5 時至 7 時

地址：台北內湖區瑞光路 390 號一樓 gdm 燦樂

gdm 燦樂畫廊（曾用名：世界畫廊）台北空間欣然呈現「艾莉森·阮：義肢記憶」，本次展覽是藝術家在亞洲的首次個展，涵蓋兩組多頻道影像作品《歷史幻夢》（history as hypnosis, 2023）和《第九通道》（Aisle 9, 2025）結合現成品雕塑的大型沉浸式裝置。阮的創作過程融合個人元素與廣泛的歷史研究，將訪談、理論、檔案片段和推測性敘事編織成多層次的視覺和聲音體驗。其電影通過詼諧的對白，質疑被記錄的歷史與對象，及其記錄方式。《義肢記憶》邀請觀眾思考科技及媒體如何介入歷史，並對身份、勞動以及文化記憶上的政治關係激發深刻反思。

置身於彩色斑斕、若隱若現的半透明工業 PVC 簾幕圍築的兩個開放式空間，艾莉森·阮的《義肢記憶》凸顯荒謬性，演繹在苛刻審視的體系中，意識、記憶和歷史面臨割裂的威脅，仍頑強存續的夢境與記憶。

一輛白色禮車被切成兩半，裡面流出大量土壤。《歷史幻夢》以三頻道錄像的形式呈現。電影由藝術家的哥哥馬修·阮（Matthew Nguyen）創作的詩文《老二》（Cu）打開序幕，展開荒謬的敘事，像夢境般逐漸磨損，變得模糊。禮車的意象、勵志口號「別緊張，心意到就好」，或是記載著移民糾紛的對白「或許你只是為了學英文和找工作」，觀眾僅能透過這些零碎片段窺見腐朽的美國夢。那段童年禮車出遊的敘事，不斷被「Chu」和「Cu」的異語打斷——這些聲響如鳥囀般詭異，不斷重複，又像亂碼的召喚，卻始終無法喚醒美國在越南戰爭中留下來的漫長痕跡。

敘事看似在記憶的蛻變中流轉，移動影像卻以機械且創傷性的方式凝視著自身的斷裂。發出藍色冷光的禮車緩緩駛過自動洗車機，三位穿著不同全白色工作服的女性坐在後座，腳下的土壤中埋著一具屍體。禮車從沙漠駛到城市，途經休息站、手機商店、連鎖商場、自助洗衣店和卡拉 OK 酒吧等場景。女性們在彳亍的狀態下重回物質世界及進行社交，不斷重整前行，尋覓名為 X 的男子。她們帶著染黑齒，掛在耳朵的異長白色耳機播放著說教式的機械化科技術語。直升機在空中掠過，路人質疑的目光，探究駕駛員的身份，一位理髮師將吹風機當作槍指向她們，旅途中的際遇反映各種美國社會光怪陸離、汙穢、陰暗的景象，女性們被抹去的記憶被喚起。

在另一空間，《第九通道》以碎片式呈現在被黃色 PVC 簾幕包圍的綠色工廠地板上。《第九通道》於單螢幕放映，兩側的 A 型推車展示藝術家的創作幕後片段與研究資料，如文獻引用、演職人員名單、作品中出現的被禁越南情歌的版權授權書，以及展覽作品運輸的海關文件。《第九通道》的背景設定在一間家族經營的絲襪工廠。為了避免裁員，女主人海蓮娜將工廠部分空間轉租給了一家名為「世界全球服務」的新創企業。隨著新租戶的神秘箱子源源不斷地湧入倉庫，工作人員開始起疑心。大伙兒工作結束後，晚上習慣留在工廠閒聊、抽煙和練習射箭。某個晚上，一支箭被誤射擊中於放置在第九通道的箱子，工作人員才發現這些神秘的箱子裡裝的是日常物品——包括日記、家庭錄像、藝術電影以及被政府審查的生產性消費者輿論內容等。《Niệm Khúc Cuối》（中譯：最後一曲）是工作人員從這些箱子裡發掘的第一段記憶——這為一首越南情歌，它並非因為政治敏感，而是因為過度浪漫，內容的愛國成分不足遭禁。自此，工作人員將絲襪工廠的第九通道變成了一個觀影站，將窺視這些被審查的記憶變成他們的夜間活動。

展覽名稱參考學者艾莉森·蘭茲伯格（Allison Landsberg）的著作《義肢記憶》，主張人們可透過大眾媒體得以瞭解未曾親歷的歷史事件。在《第九通道》，化為「義肢」的國家審查內容被工作人員作出轉化。這些記憶即使重新流轉，仍是透過螢幕轉播，從有機載體強行割離，處於一種脫離軀體的状态。

「艾莉森·阮：義肢記憶」以一件看似政治旗幟的作品結尾。旗幟上的文字源自理論家、作家、兼行動主義者西爾維婭·費代裡奇（Silvia Federici），其學術研究聚焦資本主義、勞工利益和女權主義。呼應費代裡奇的理論，艾莉森·阮將其 1985 年詩作《陰謀論頌》（In Praise of Conspiracy Theory）的節句刺繡於旗幟之上：

來吧，
讓我們歌頌
歷史陰謀論的詩篇。
只要仍有男人
坐著策劃
致人於死的行徑，
任何概念的飛翔
或語言詭計
都無法阻止我斷言
他們正合謀對抗我們。

文：拉拉·弗雷斯科·馬德拉（Lara Fresko Madra）
紐約巴德學院策展研究中心助理教授兼 Luma 基金會學者

關於藝術家



艾莉森·阮（Alison Nguyen）是一位橫跨錄像、裝置、行為表演與雕塑領域的視覺藝術家兼電影人。她的創作常帶有推測性、荒謬與表演的元素，卻始終緊貼現實。她結合個人經驗的細節與歷史的探索，尤其聚焦在與科技糾纏的歷史敘事上。

阮的作品曾展演於紐約現代藝術博物館、麻省理工學院李斯特視覺藝術中心、韓國國立現代美術館、e-flux、斐列茲藝博會首爾電影單元、國際工作室與策展計畫、與安亞伯電影節等。

阮在布朗大學獲得文學學士學位，並在哥倫比亞大學取得藝術創作碩士學位。她是 2023-24 年惠特尼美國藝術博物館獨立研究計劃的工作室藝術家。

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