

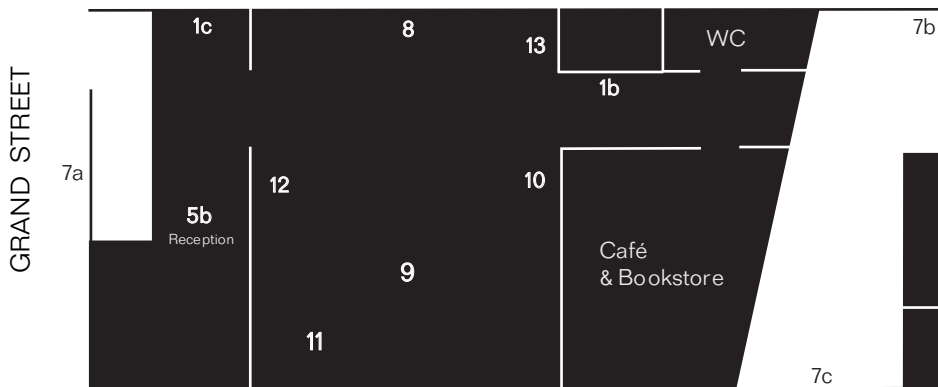
Exhibition Guide

Sung Tieu
Infra-Specter

**March 30 –
September 24, 2023**

Amant

315 Maujer St., Brooklyn, NY 11206
amant.org, @amant.arts

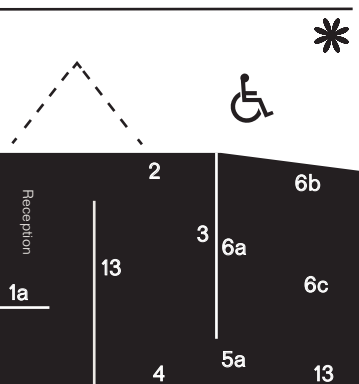


Gallery 932 Grand

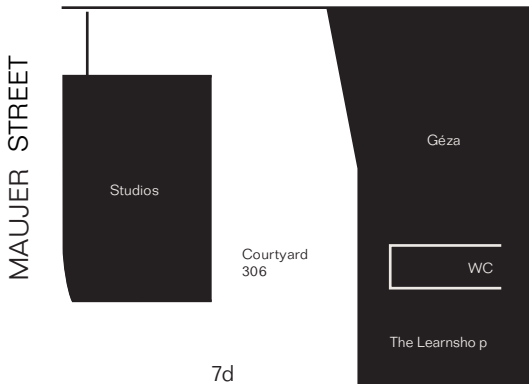
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*multiple locations throughout the gallery spaces
Untitled I, (Infra-Specter), 2023
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Untitled IV, (Infra-Specter), 2023

The *Infra-Specter* is a ghost, exploring the beneath and underlying.

The exhibition brings together a selection of work by Sung Tieu, who approaches artmaking as an exercise in semiotics, adopting language, image, and sound within her installations as a way of complicating the construction of knowledge and meaning.

In *Infra-Specter*, sound functions as a subliminal, ghostly power that circumvents text-based communication. Subversive, vibrational, corporal, and emotional, this sensorial force is difficult to locate and control. While the works on view were made between 2020 and 2023, each of them touches upon notions of opacity, obfuscation, and conjecture, with the nebulous figure of the ghost looming over them. Following an intensive research period, Sung Tieu uses a range of artistic forms to explore the psychological, physical, and political dimension of information technologies and the effects they have on our daily lives.

The works on display examine different forms of spectral knowledge. In particular, the new iteration of *In Cold Print* in gallery 315 scrutinizes the psychological tactics developed during extended political conflicts between the United States and Cuba, as well as the United States and Vietnam. The new commission in gallery 932, *Liability Infrastructure*, focuses on ground vibrations of earthly matter and its disruption through hydraulic fracturing. This new body of work looks at how trade secret laws limit public access to facts, intentionally veiling information for economic and political interests, hence bypassing affected peoples, as well as any social or ecological impacts.

This exhibition extends into the passageways and outdoor spaces and also includes interventions that change over the course of the exhibition period.

In Cold Print

This new iteration of the installation *In Cold Print*, 2020-2023, assembles past and recent works related to Sung Tieu's research into the Havana Syndrome. Through video, text, sculpture, and architectural intervention, Sung Tieu elaborates on her research into the alleged sonic attacks first targeting U.S. and Canadian embassy staff stationed in Havana in 2016. During this period, some diplomats reported feeling an unidentifiable acoustic sensation and subsequently suffering from severe emotional and physical symptoms, including nausea, fatigue, memory loss, and brain injuries. More than 1,500 incidents have since been reported in the U.S. and other countries. Many of the afflicted staff believed they were the victims of a deliberate attack—possibly at the hands of an adversarial government—which a recent report by U.S. intelligence agencies contradicts.

The works in this series attempt to understand and contextualize the attacks, highlighting the impossibility of ever fully knowing what happened. Over the course of the exhibition, the news clippings are featured on display screens in changing iterations. Between March 30 and June 18, the set of works questions the credibility of Havana Syndrome attacks, while between June 22 and September 10, the displays show affirmative evidence of the physical ailments due to Havana Syndrome and its political consequences. Both iterations weave the Havana Syndrome into a wider history of psychological warfare operations, including the deployment of another sonic weapon titled *Ghost Tape No. 10* by PSYOP (Psychological Operations of the U.S. Army) during the war in Vietnam. Other works outline how helicopter landing mats deployed during the war in Vietnam were recycled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as building material to construct large sections of the Mexico-United States border wall and how, in a similar vein, fencing from Japanese internment camps was moved to build other sections of the same wall.

1a
Protective Cover, (Headache), 2022

1b
Protective Cover, (Nausea), 2022

1c
Protective Cover, (Tinnitus), 2022
Sound, powder-coated steel,
wall-mounted cover, tamper-resistant
screws, speaker

The series *Protective Cover, 2022* consists of sculptures that imitate industrial radiator covers. They are completed with tamper-resistant screws all around the edges to disable removal. These security covers typically appear in hospitals, schools, carceral environments, or governmental buildings. They are designed to prevent people from touching hot radiators, as well as impede seating or hiding anything within them. Inside each radiator cover is a sound work that alludes to symptoms commonly associated with the Havana Syndrome: tinnitus, headaches, and nausea.

2
Loyalty Questionnaire, 2021

Drawings on digital print, framed

3
Moving Target Shadow Detection, 2022

3D video simulation, color and sound.
18 min, 55 sec

Modeled and rendered entirely as a 3D animation, the film reconstructs the interior and immediate surrounding of the Hotel Nacional de Cuba in Havana, one of the first-known sites of the type of sonic attack, later known as Havana Syndrome. In Sung Tieu's film, CCTV camera footage and images recorded by a nano-drone lead from the hotel's lobby to an occupied hotel room, where the viewer is confronted with classified documents and TV-news broadcasts about the recent Havana Syndrome attacks around the world. Through ventilation shafts, smoke gradually fills the hotel causing a dizzying effect.

4a
Exposure to Havana Syndrome, Brain Anatomy, Axial Plane, (Sample 4), 2023

4b
Exposure to Havana Syndrome, Brain Anatomy, Axial Plane, (Sample 8), 2023

4c
Exposure to Havana Syndrome, Brain Anatomy, Axial Plane, (Sample 12), 2023

4d
Exposure to Havana Syndrome, Brain Anatomy, Axial Plane, (Sample 16), 2023

4e
Exposure to Havana Syndrome, Brain Anatomy, Axial Plane, (Sample 20), 2023

4f
Exposure to Havana Syndrome, Brain Anatomy, Axial Plane, (Sample 24), 2023

Engraving on stainless steel mirror, screws

In 2018, a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, under chairman Marco Rubio, released a reconstructed recording of the so-called Havana Syndrome attacks, based on medically confirmed witness accounts of the supposed incidents. For the series *Exposure to Havana Syndrome, 2020*-ongoing, Sung Tieu exposed herself to that sonic reconstruction and captured MRI images of her brain activity. These self-portraits are then engraved onto reflective, stainless-steel plates. The works use scientific imagery as a form of evidence and/or counterevidence, speculating on the physical and psychological effects of the Havana Syndrome, which the medical field often struggles to clearly diagnose based on the reported ailments.

5a
Anti-Vandal Clock, (Havana), 2022

5b
Anti-Vandal Clock, (Hanoi), 2022

Programmed LED screen, polyester powder-coated steel casing, anti-vandal polycarbonate, tamper-resistant screws

Spread across all spaces of Amant, the *Anti-Vandal Clock* works display two different local times: in Havana and

Hanoi, cities in which Havana Syndrome attacks have been reported. At the same time, these places are connected through the history of the Cold War.

Between March 30 and June 18, 2023:

6a

An American Story – From Japanese Internment to Mexican Border Wall, 2020

5-image looped file, two 75" display TV screens, (1 min 30 sec loop each)

6b

Sonic Weapon or Mass Hysteria?, 2020

2-image looped file, 75" display TV screen, (1 min 30 sec loop each)

6c

Back on Track, 2020

2-image looped file, 75" display TV screen, (1 min 30 sec loop each)

Between June 22 and September 10, 2023:

6a

Recycling – Army Style, 2020

4-image looped file, two 75" display TV screens, (1 min 30 sec loop each)

6b

Sonic Weapon Disrupts Diplomatic Relations, 2020

2-image looped file, 75" display TV screen, (1 min 30 sec loop each)

6c

From PSYOPs to MISO, A Look Back at the Infamous Department's History, 2020

2-image looped file, 75" display TV screen, (1 min 30 sec loop each)

Army's PSYOP division as part of Operation Wandering Soul during the War in Vietnam, in which deep-seated ancient Vietnamese spiritual beliefs were exploited and weaponized. The digital news stories pictured in the work were developed from factual research with the journalistic advice of Caspar Shaller.

Four commercial display screens show text and image-based works whose content changes over the course of the exhibition. These texts, written as news clippings, reveal Sung Tieu's research into the psychological dimension of acoustic warfare and its relationship to geopolitics and borders. She links the Havana Syndrome to a wider history of sonic weaponry and another acoustic attack in particular Ghost Tape No. 10, a sound weapon developed by the U.S.

Liability Infrastructure

Liability Infrastructure, 2023 is a new commission comprising sound, a large-scale mural, text, and sculptural elements. Intrigued by the pipeline infrastructure that is currently in its planning stages near the museum, Sung Tieu traces the pipeline system as a collection of below-ground infrastructures whose functions and impact are hidden within a complex network, extending far beyond its subterranean locality.

For this project, the artist directs her focus towards understanding the various chemical ingredients used in the hydraulic fracturing process to extract shale gas. *Mural for America, 2023* brings together all publicly known, as well as unknown, chemicals involved in the gas extraction process and protected under current trade secret laws. For this work, she analyzed a large dataset provided by FracFocus, an online national chemical disclosure registry. The resulting work lists each chemical with its CAS number, a unique identification number assigned by the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS). Nearly 2,000 engraved plaques feature the chemical codes; together they underscore the large scope of information involved while highlighting the limits of language, knowledge, and the law, especially given that current legal regulations under the Toxic Substances Control Act protect certain ingredients as trade secrets or proprietary information.

Reverberations I-III, 2023, a sound installation that echoes the sonic vibrations of the earth near various hydraulic fracturing well sites, occupies the main space of the gallery. It makes audible what happens to the earth when such activity takes place underground.

7a
Proximity Relation, Body vs. Infrastructure, 0001, 2023

7b
Proximity Relation, Body vs. Infrastructure, 0002, 2023

7c
Proximity Relation, Body vs. Infrastructure, 0003, 2023

7d
Proximity Relation, Body vs. Infrastructure, 0004, 2023

Engraving on stainless steel metal, installed on Amant's entrance facade, 315 Maujer Street and 932 Grand Street

Proximity Relation, Body vs. Infrastructure, 2023 is a series of stainless steel engraved signs in which Sung Tieu measures the closest point between a viewer reading the sign and the currently halted Metropolitan Natural Gas Reliability Project (more commonly known as the "North Brooklyn Pipeline"), a gas pipeline project developed by British company National Grid in the surrounding neighborhood. The work highlights the invisible, below-ground infrastructure, either already built or in its planning stages.

8
Mural for America, 2023

1,900 stainless steel plaques, engraved, screws

Play Day, 2023

With the help of data scientist Gary Allison and physician Dusty Horwitt (Physicians for Social Responsibility), Sung Tieu analyzed around five million entries on FracFocus, a national hydraulic fracturing chemical disclosure registry managed by the Ground Water Protection Council (GWPC). From these data, she compiled a comprehensive list of known, proprietary, and trade secret ingredients involved in the hydraulic fracturing drilling process, with either its CAS number or its specification as a proprietary or trade secret ingredient. Due to the nature of

trade secret ingredients, the exact amount of chemicals involved in the hydraulic fracturing process remains unknown. As a living mural, ingredients in this list can change once amendments in federal and state laws allow greater public access to trade secret information.

9a
Reverberations (Marshall County, WV), 2023

9b
Reverberations (Greene County, PA), 2023

9c
Reverberations (Ryerson Station State County, PA), 2023

Steel pipe, speakers, amplifier

Reverberations, 2023 is a sound installation inside steel pipes that cross the gallery floor. For this project, Sung Tieu traveled to several hydraulic fracturing sites in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, capturing the vibrations of the soil near fracking wells. The raw pipes function as instruments facilitating the transmission of sound and its vibrations like a spectral echo.

10
Broken Words, False Measures, 2023

Transcribed letter printed on paper, framed

11
There Is Green Gas in Ohio State, 2023

Newspaper print, rocking chairs

Text-based works from the series *Newspapers 1969 – ongoing* are integrated into several of Sung Tieu's projects and contribute to a further reading of her work. The news article in this installation focuses on how Ohio Republican Governor Mike DeWine aims to relabel natural gas as "green energy," emphasizing the fight over language and the absurdities as well as the efficacy of this pursuit. The work mimics the mechanisms it criticizes, recreating perceptual psychological situations pointing to relevant urgencies.

12

Living, Drinking, Eating, 2023

Wood, jars, water taken near
fracking well sites

13

Untitled I, (Infra-Specter), 2023

Untitled II, (Infra-Specter), 2023

Untitled III, (Infra-Specter), 2023

Untitled IV, (Infra-Specter), 2023

Stainless steel stool

A group of stainless steel stools bolted to the wall is spread across the various gallery spaces, where Sung Tieu invites visitors to take a seat. Similar to the radiator covers and clocks, these stools are typically found in institutional spaces. Given their harsh design, they generate an atmosphere of austerity and discomfort, thus limiting the amount of time one is willing to spend resting on them.

Sung Tieu is a Vietnamese-born artist based in Berlin. Her artistic practice spans a variety of mediums including sound, video, sculpture, photography, public interventions, and writing.

Recent solo exhibitions include Mudam, Luxembourg (2022), Kunstmuseum Bonn (2021); Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig (2021); Nottingham Contemporary (2020); and Haus der Kunst, Munich (2020). Her work was included in the 34th Bienal de São Paulo and has been exhibited at Museion, Bolzano; Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland; Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt; GAMeC Museum, Bergamo; and Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; and Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taiwan, among others. In 2021, she was awarded the Frieze Artist Award and the Audience Award of the German National Art Prize.

All programs are supported by Amant. Special thanks to the Goethe-Institut, New York for their contribution to this exhibition.

***Infra-Specter* is presented concurrently with Sung Tieu's exhibition *Civic Floor* at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts (April 3–July 16, 2023).**

Sung Tieu would like to thank: Gary Allison, Kate Aronoff, Emalin, Nick Estes, Galerie Barbara Weiss, Jana Gharzeddine, Dusty Horwitt, Gunar Laube, Olivier Mourgue D'Algue, Phillip Opsasnick, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Sane Energy Project, Sfeir-Semler Matt Volz, Miriam Wierzchoslawska.

Sound editing by Alexis Chan and Christian Cahill

All works, unless otherwise indicated, are courtesy of the artist; Emalin, London; Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin; and Sfeir-Semler, Beirut/Hamburg, and private lenders. *Moving Target Shadow Detection*, 2022, co-commissioned by Forma and Frieze.

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Brooklyn, NY. We are a
non-collecting learning
institution, which gives us
the freedom to focus on
experimentation, process,
and dialogue through
exhibitions, public programs,
and artist residencies.**

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Thursday–Sunday,

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