

Tiffany Chung: Scratching the Walls of Memory

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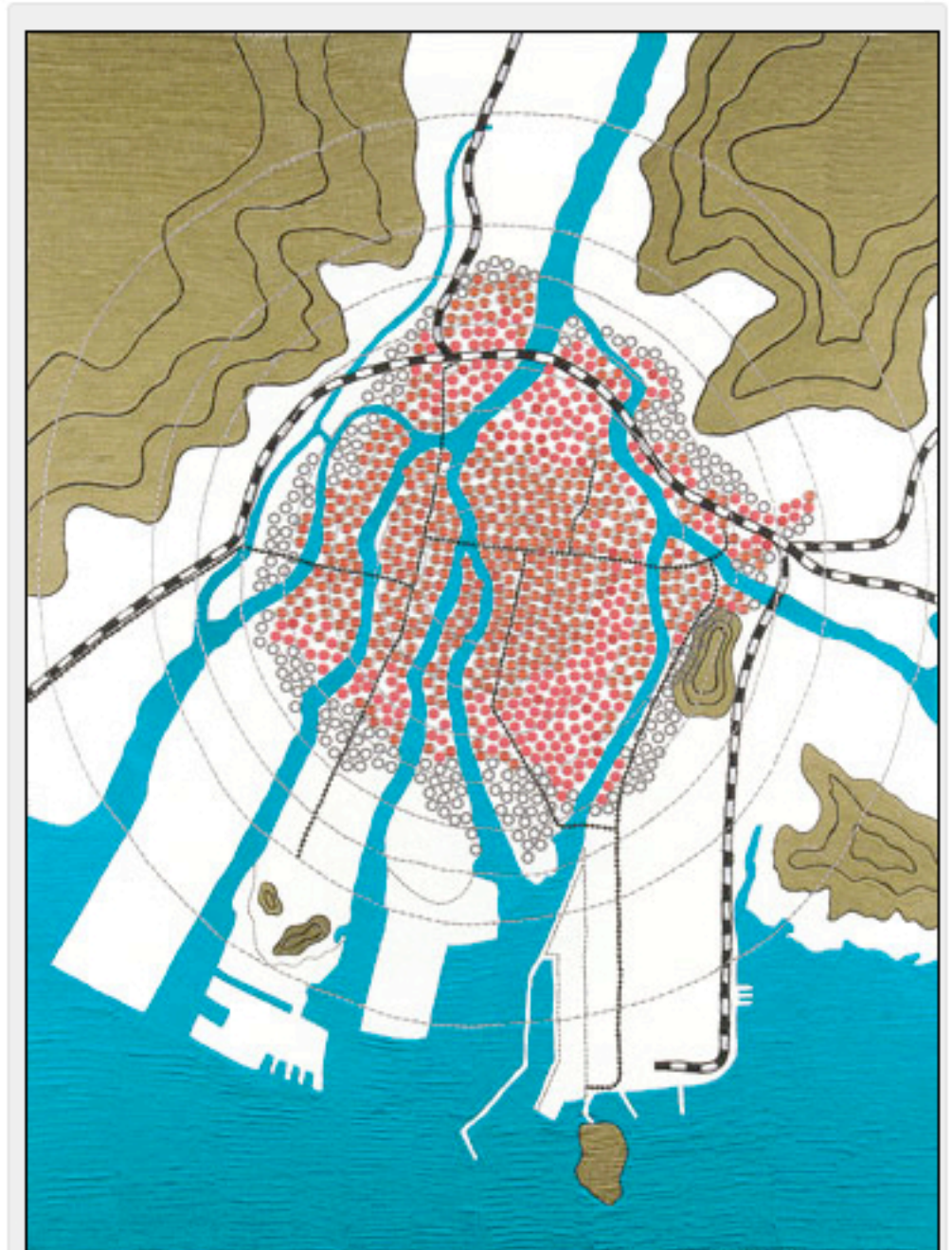
By [Valerie Gladstone](#)

For her second solo exhibition at Tyler Rollins, Vietnamese artist Tiffany Chung has created a series of works inspired by maps of once war-ravaged or contested regions of the world, including the Berlin Wall, Iraq, Tibet, Cambodia, the Vietnamese DMZ and the atomic bomb blast zones in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While in her last show she showed a decidedly pop aesthetic in her sculptures, videos, photographs and performance work, she moves into a more dramatic and narrative period now, where history and personal stories figure prominently.

On first glance, her works appear to be simply beautiful, delicate and lacey abstractions, painted in subdued blues and reds and golds. But on further examination, they reveal themselves as copies of old maps, embroidered with railways, roads and rivers. These are attached with metal grommets and buttons, with every area mapped with colored dots and eyelets. They are all exceedingly touching and poetic records of pain, suffering and desperation. By punctuating them with sharp metal objects, she adds to their tactile effect, drawing you into the horrendous realities of war.

Her titles refer very specifically to historic events, such as the separation of northern and southern Vietnam by the "DMZ-17th Parallel." On a mostly white canvas, thin lines like barbed wire confine hundreds of tiny circles, representing people, whereas outside the boundary, wavy brown lines, almost like ribbons, float free. Five red dots, like bloodstains, mark unknown horrors.

"Berlin Wall" looks like a red, black, blue and gold explosion on the canvas, with metal grommets outlining the different areas of political control. As in all her works, buttons or beads represent the populous, which is confined by arbitrary boundaries. The combination of beauty and horror is deeply affecting. With her considerable gifts, she forces us to acknowledge them both at the same time.



"Hiroshima," by Tiffany Chung.