

## Vietnam's Tiffany Chung explores the effects of disasters in New York exhibition – in pictures

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### Tiffany Chung's latest solo exhibition explores three historical events and their effects on society.

Vietnamese artist Tiffany Chung, whose work is part of the Central Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale, is having a solo show in New York that offers reflections on human landscapes traumatised by war and natural catastrophes.



Tiffany Chung, 'remapping history: an autopsy of a battle, an excavation of a man's past', 2015, vinyl decal, photographs, videos, archival photographs, found images & audio recording, texts, drawings. Image courtesy the artist.

**Tiffany Chung's** latest solo exhibition at **Tyler Rollins Fine Art** in New York, entitled "**finding one's shadow in ruins and rubble**" (16 April – 26 June 2015), features multimedia works that engage with the lingering effects of destructive manmade and natural disasters. In particular, Chung explores three such historical events, which took place in three distinct geographical locations:

- the 1995 earthquake that devastated Kobe, Japan
- the current conflict in Syria
- the battlefields of the Vietnam War



Tiffany Chung, 'An Lộc, somewhere between 1966-1972', 2015, oil and ink on vellum and paper, 30 x 42 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art.

Through beautifully detailed drawings of maps on vellum and paper, lightboxes and a multimedia installation comprising photographs, text, video and maps, Chung develops narratives that intertwine the documentary and the archival with the poetic and the utopian.



Tiffany Chung, 'An Lộc region – former airfields and old rubber plantations', 2015, oil and ink on vellum and paper, 80 x 63.5 cm. Image courtesy the artist.

Pamela Corey writes in the accompanying catalogue essay:

*Characteristic of Tiffany Chung's broader conceptual and material practice, the lure of the aesthetic serves a critical objective grounded in her commitment to produce unsettling reflections on human landscapes that have been traumatised by warfare, the processes of modernisation and industrialisation, or the forces of nature. Chung's interest in the human responses to such changes is manifested through efforts to map these psychic states using various forms and media [...].*



Tiffany Chung, 'battle of An Lộc – key locations', 2015, oil and ink on vellum and paper, 28 x 19 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art.

World history and personal memory are juxtaposed in a reflection of the artist's long-term research into geographical shifts in countries traumatised by war, human destruction and natural disaster.

Within these contexts, Chung focuses on the growth, decline or disappearance of towns and cities, and explores related issues of urban development, environmental catastrophe and humanitarian crisis. The latter is also the focus of a series of works, part of her "Syrian Project", that Chung presented in the Arsenale's Central Pavilion at the [56th Venice Biennale](#), curated by [Okwui Enwezor](#).



Tiffany Chung, 'The Syria Project', installation view in the exhibition "All the World's Futures" at the 56th Venice Biennale, 2015. Image courtesy Tyler Rollins Fine Art.



Tiffany Chung, 'battle of Lộc Ninh 1972, 2015, oil and ink on vellum and paper, 24 x 18 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art.

Corey explains in the essay how the artist collects the ruins and fragments left behind by such catastrophic events, to create moving artworks that probe into psychological as well as socio-political and historical dimensions:

*For the artist, the social imaginaries that shape the shifting identities of a place are most effectively represented through assembled fragments that challenge the viewer to discern a didactic narrative. The artworks are outcomes yet also starting points within a larger project of psychogeographical inquiry. They are made legible only to a certain extent without extinguishing the poetic ambiguity of the objects and the environments they create.*



Tiffany Chung, 'memories reconstructed', 2015, archival photographs, video, brochures, pamphlets, assorted printed materials, dimensions variable. Installation view at Tyler Rollins Fine Art. Image courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art.



Tiffany Chung, 'national route 13 and abandoned airfields from my father's youth', 2015, oil and ink on vellum and paper, 27 x 27 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art.



Tiffany Chung, 'remapping history: an autopsy of a battle, an excavation of a man's past', 2015, vinyl decal, photographs, videos, archival photographs, found images & audio recording, texts, drawings, dimensions variable. Installation view at Tyler Rollins Fine Art. Image courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art.

In *remapping history: an autopsy of a battle, an excavation of a man's past* (2015), Chung delves into her father's life and his experience of the Vietnam War. Archival fragments of his wartime experience, such as photographs, are placed within a carefully constructed timeline installation that comprises the artist's current investigations of disused and ruined airstrips scattered in southern Vietnam. A haunting audio installation transports the viewer through time, with a close-up of voices speaking in mission codes.



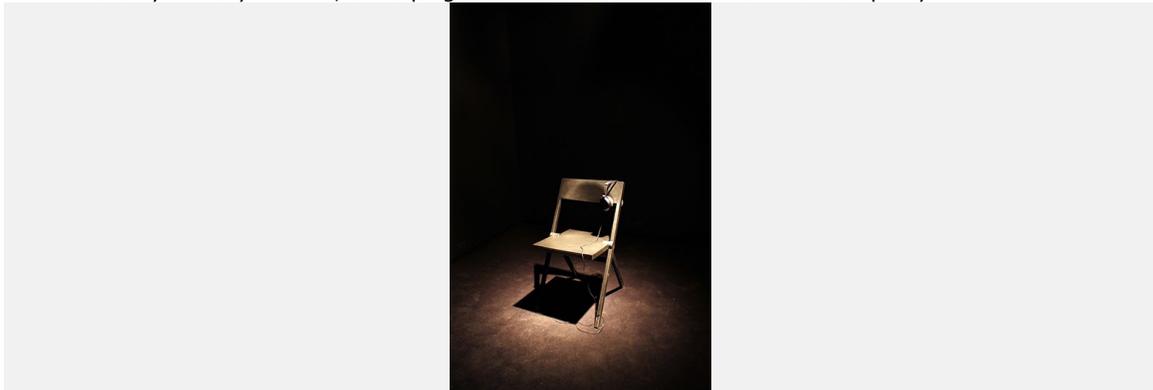
Tiffany Chung, 'Kobe urban planning map after 1995', 2015, oil and ink on vellum and paper, 79 x 100 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art.

A series of works exploring the massive destruction in Kobe, Japan, after the earthquake in 1995, juxtapose the geological with the historical, and the spatial with sociopolitical changes. Archival video, photographs and map drawings present a complex layering of topographies from different historical periods, and include Chung's future predictions and utopian visions.



Tiffany Chung, 'finding one's shadow in ruins and rubble', 2014, 31 hand crafted mahogany wooden boxes, found photographs printed on plexiglass, LED lights, electrical wire, dimensions of boxes range from 18 x 18 x 9 to 41 x 18 x 9 cm, includes 3 wooden display tables, total dimensions: 300 (w) x 75 (d) x 86.5 (h) cm, each table: 100 x 75 x 86.5 cm, edition of 3 + 1 AP. Image courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art.

The work *finding one's shadow in ruins and rubble* (2014) constitutes a poetic portrait of the large-scale urban destruction and refugee crisis created by the civil war in Syria – part of Chung's ongoing research. The installation comprises light boxes arranged as a chaotic cityscape, with images of the contemporary ruins in the Syrian city of Hom, as "a poignant meditation on loss and shattered polity".



Tiffany Chung, 'remapping history: an autopsy of a battle, an excavation of a man's past', 2015, vinyl decal, photographs, videos, archival photographs, found images & audio recording, texts, drawings. Image courtesy the artist.

Corey expresses the weight of Chung's exploration in our perception of global geopolitical events, and the artist's effort in contributing to reverse the ubiquitous collective amnesia that seems to permeate social consciousness:

*[...] this group of three seemingly discrete components, effectively representing disastrous historical and current episodes in Vietnam, Japan, and Syria, finds connection through the artist's larger preoccupation with the persistence of everyday life in the face of such upheaval. Without rendering these catastrophic events commensurable, Chung draws our attention to them as part of a global constellation of crises – crises too often relegated to the margins of public memory and social consciousness.*

**C. A. Xuan Mai Ardia**