



# Futur tense

ARLETTE

QUYNH-ANH

TRẦN

The vertical adjustment range of  
the glassblowing light

ara

## *Future Tense*

Text by Carlos Quijon Jr.

Within the framework of Third World idealism and speculative futurism is a slippage that structures imaginations of global world order. It is a slippage that allows for and speaks to the mutual constitution of categories, relationships to which orient Third World imaginaries: independence and ideology, postcolonial subjectivity and its neocolonial technomediations (particularly in the technology of the exhibition), and vision as future-orientation vis-à-vis vision as phantasm or mirage. This is a productive slippage, especially from the vantage point of the contemporary moment where it unsettles the promised futurity of geopolitical projections and allows us to recast their teleologies.

In *Future Tense*, Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran cultivates these slippages, staging a Third World Pavilion where “the future is refracted through the prism of speculative Third World spirits and visions.” In Tran’s work, this cultivation is not an expunging of these unpredictable or unwieldy spirits and visions. She allows these slippages to shift and shape the contemporary narrations of Third World idealisms: from the vision of a Third World future to visions of aborted post-Cold War futures. In this sense, the exhibition does not become a project of preventing or disciplining these slippages. Instead, it becomes the more choreographic channeling or conducting of the idealist dreaming that shaped these imaginations and their unraveling.

Taking cue from the development of World Expos in the 1960s, particularly the artist’s research on the New York World’s Fair in 1964 and the Osaka Expo in 1970, *Future Tense* is a scenographic experiment. For the artist: “It manifests not the destructive, techno-optimistic futurism that prides itself on Western capitalist modernity, often depicted in resolute lines, solidified and monumental materials, expressing the virile power of patriarchal politics.” By appropriating the built and visual language of the expo pavilion, *Future Tense* performs not a critical exorcism of these mystifications, but instead stages a séance—in which discursive, architectonic, and historical aspects are allowed to interact and interface with one another.

In other words, instead of the cathartic purging of these spirits and visions, casting the artistic project as an activity of séance reconfigures the Pavilion as a medium capable of mediating and remediating its potencies. The pavilion becomes the medium, not just literally as a form – the pavilion, the exhibition, the installation – but also medium in the sense of a conduit for these spirits, visions, dreams. This affinity for staging and re-presenting finds congruence in the séance and the scene. The scenographic becomes a method of séance, the opening up of a medium for carrying through or channeling these spirits, specters, phantasms.

In *Future Tense*, the exhibition space is divided into a more immersive and sensuous darkened area and a more intimate illuminated area. At the center of the space, within the darkened area, is *Quantum Palm*, “a large-scale sonic and thermal sculpture made of glass, joss-paper origami flowers dipped in clay, steel, and motor.” For the artist: “The *Quantum Palm* appears as a high-tech object, yet its core reference is the talipot palm in bloom. Native to Southeast and South Asia and later transplanted to South America, the talipot lives for decades, flowering once before it dies. This single, terminal bloom becomes a quiet image of sacrificial time spent all at once—a slow cancellation of the future.”

*Quantum Palm* exceptionally plays out the slippage alluded to earlier. The form itself slips from organic matter to synthetic form, synthetic matter to organic form. The talipot palm becomes an apparatus of glass, paper, and motor. Through the reference to the talipot palm, the monument acquires delicacy—ornate foliage and intricate flowers. The structure becomes simultaneously monument and landscape. In the performances developed for the exhibition, the sculpture becomes part of the performance environment—as a shadow play theater using moving spotlights.

This formal slippage extends to other works in the exhibition. In *Atlas of Nations*, an ongoing project that started in 2024, imaginations of sovereignty are warped by the artist’s affective responses to place. Tran uses various

3D scan data that she has collected throughout her travels to create prints (UV print engraving). What comes out of this rendering are abstract patterns that appear to be suspended in a void: the certainty and finitude of cartographic representation mutates into fragments of organic forms floating or unfurling.

The monumental and spectacular unconscious of the pavilion is further diffused by its interests in the sonic and the thermal. In *Invisible Anthem*, mouth-blown glass tubes are fitted with a coil of metal. The metal is heated and air expands as it passes through it, creating sound. In collaboration with composer Nursalim Yadi Anugerah, Tran created a sound work using this thermoacoustic apparatus. The instrument produces a low drone, a hum that suffuses the entirety of the space. It is an atmospheric annotation that mediates the built component of the exhibition, renders it as an extensive environment. The interest is also explored in the video work titled *Invisible Monument*. Inspired by the idea of the “invisible monument” conceptualized by architects Kenzo Tange and Arata Isozaki for Osaka Expo ‘70 which “contemplates about the connection of space, infrastructure, technology and the network of spectators and intruders.” Tran describes the work as “an abstract moving image remix of various sources, from archives to thermal footage of glassblowing craftsmanship, and at times being manipulated by AI generative tool.”

The invisibility alluded in these works’ titles provides a counterpoint to the visual and architectural imaginary of the pavilion, the logic of sheer visibility and presentation of expositions and exhibitions. It also speaks to how *Future Tense* can be read as a séance. Both the sonic and the thermal are nonvisual sensuous phenomena that haunt—so to speak—the built aspects of the pavilion.

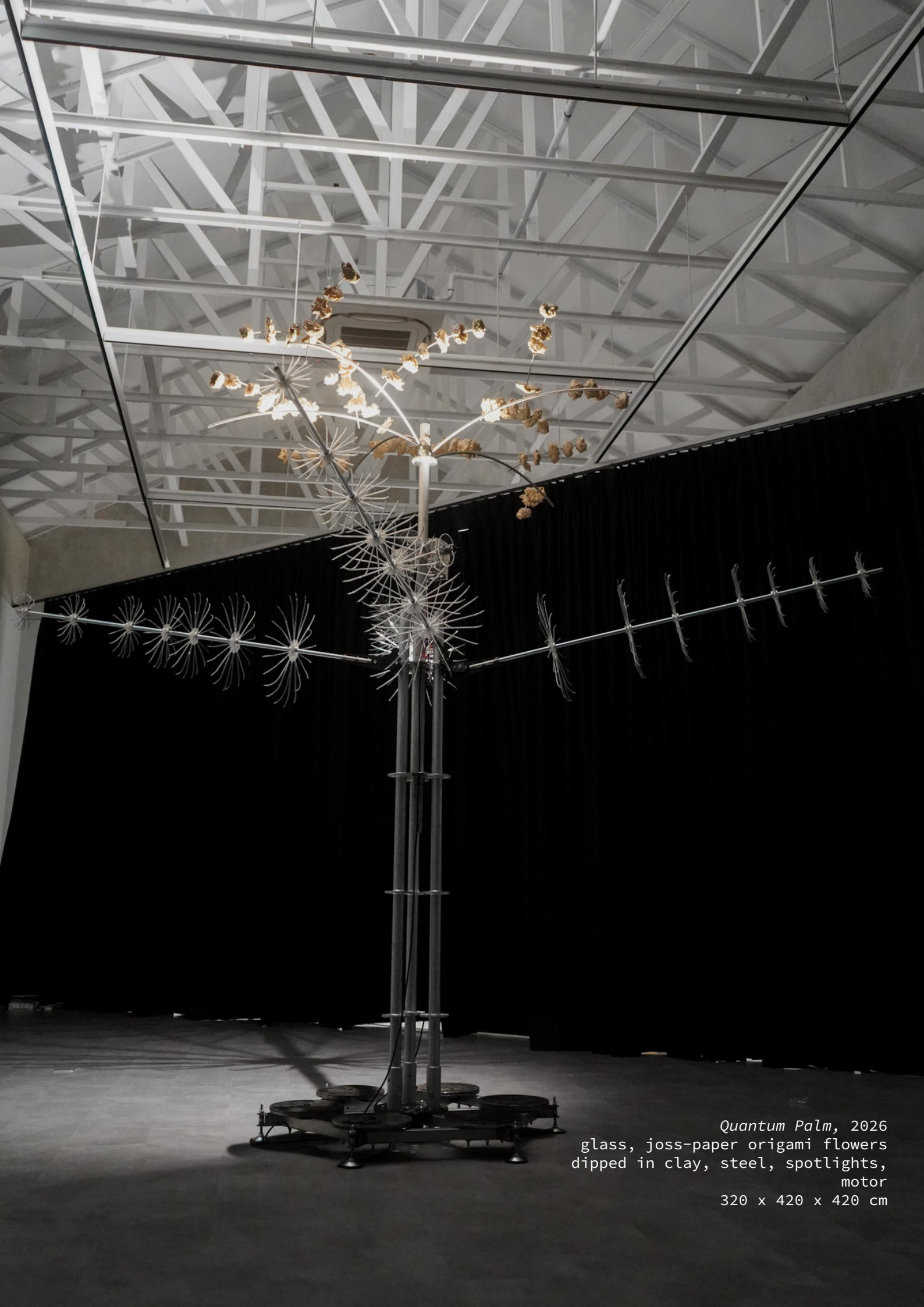
The spectrality of the sonic and the thermal aspects of the works in the exhibition displace the monumentality of the pavilion form in other ways as well. For *Future Tense*, Tran has developed a choreographic score that activates some of the works at specific timings as part of the performance.

*Quantum Palm, Invisible Anthem, Invisible Monument* play at specific intervals set by the score: lights and shadows traveling across the space, drone of the thermoacoustic instruments, video. This is a temporal and choreographic configuration that conjugates the exhibition in time and space. For the artist: “A lot of the works seem to move between states, silent and sounding, still and moving, material and projected, dormant and active. The exhibition feels less like one stable scene and more like several temporal systems coexisting, becoming active and latent at different moments.”

In playing with the temporal and the atmospheric, we are keen on inflections of “tense”—both in the sense of time but also (affective or social) state. These displacements of the monumental lean into the register of Third World imaginations that center on spirits, visions, and dreams, presenting a way of interrogating them without negating the polysemous potency of such immaterial frameworks for motivations and commitments. In contrast to the monumental’s architectures of idealization and dreaming, the visions of the Third World is a more precarious condition of atmospheric alloverness—a longing, a feeling, an intention that persists and persuades—sovereignty and solidarity—which the exhibition evokes, carries through, and holds under erasure, simultaneously.

#### About the Writer

Carlos Quijon, Jr. is Chief Curator of the Cultural Center of the Philippines Contemporary Art Museum. He was the inaugural C-MAP Fellow for Southeast and East Asia at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (2024-26) and was a fellow of the research platform “Modern Art Histories in and across Africa, South and Southeast Asia” (MAHASSA), convened by the Getty Foundation’s Connecting Art Histories project. He has written exhibition reviews for publications such as e-flux, Frieze, and Artforum. His essays are part of the books *Writing Presently* (Manila: Philippine Contemporary Art Network, 2019), *From a History of Exhibitions Towards a Future of Exhibition-Making: China and Southeast Asia* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019), and *SEA: Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia* (Berlin: Weiss Publications, 2022).



*Quantum Palm*, 2026  
glass, joss-paper origami flowers  
dipped in clay, steel, spotlights,  
motor  
320 x 420 x 420 cm



*SGN\_Grace*, 2026  
UV print engraving, backlit  
aluminum frame  
100 x 100 x 6.5 cm  
Edition of 3+1AP





*RVN\_Fengshui*, 2024-2026

UV print engraving, backlit aluminum frame

98 x 200 6.5 cm

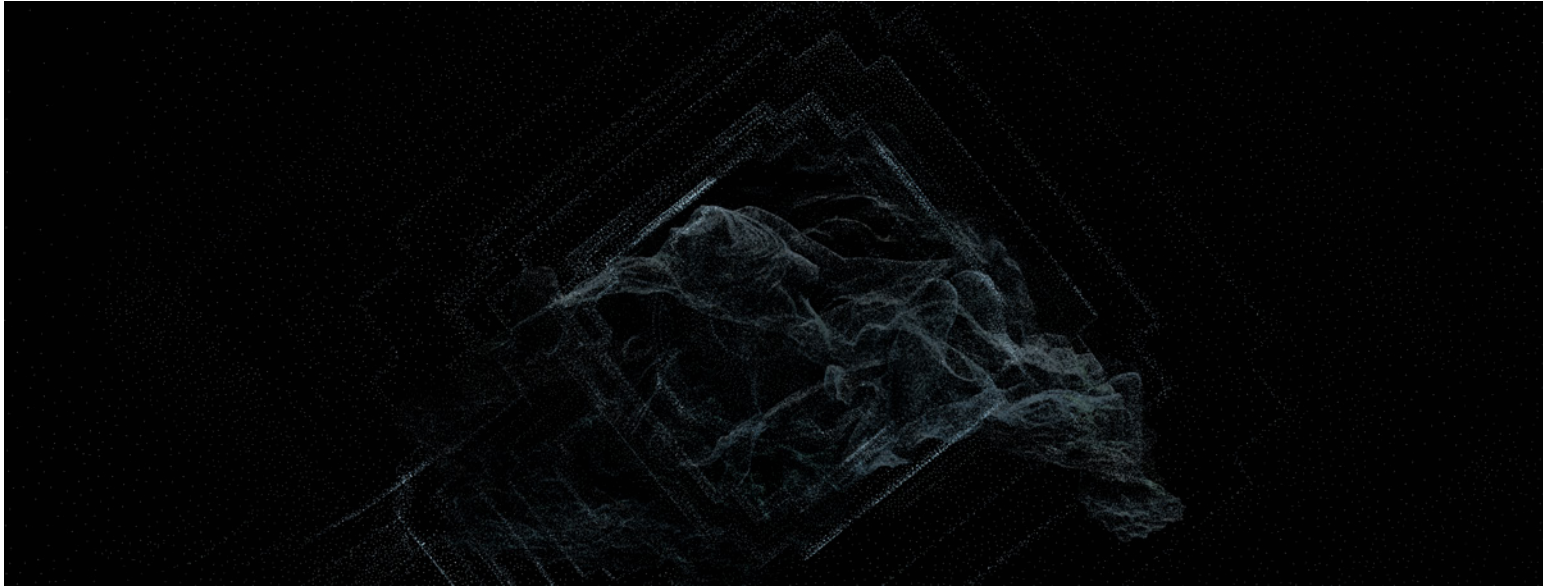
Edition of 3+1AP



*HUI\_Consanguinity*, 2024-2026  
UV print engraving, backlit aluminum frame  
100 x 90 x 6.5 cm  
Edition of 3+1AP



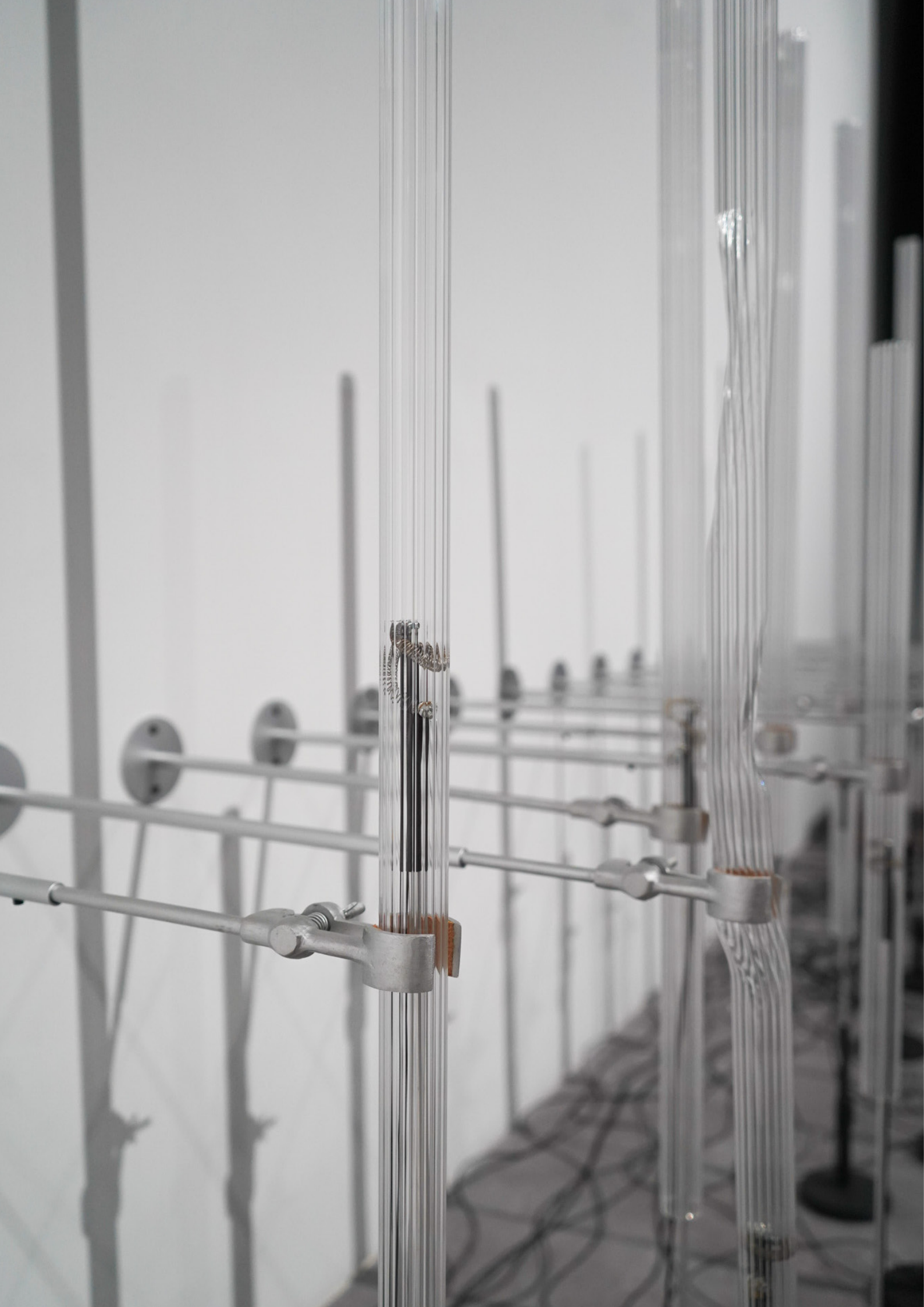
*HUI Land of Underworld*, 2024-2026  
UV print engraving, backlit aluminum frame  
100 x 73 x 6.5 cm  
Edition of 3+1AP



*ICT Monument, 2024-2026*  
UV print engraving, backlit aluminum frame  
55 x 145 x 6.5 cm  
Edition of 3+1AP



*Invisible Anthem, 2026*  
(in collaboration with Nursalim Yadi Anugerah)  
glass tube, metal, cooper, micro controller,  
heater system  
variable dimensions





*Occupying The Moderns, 2026*  
serigraphy, acrylic, ink, mylar paper, natural  
mica mineral  
33.7 x 46 cm each (5 panels)

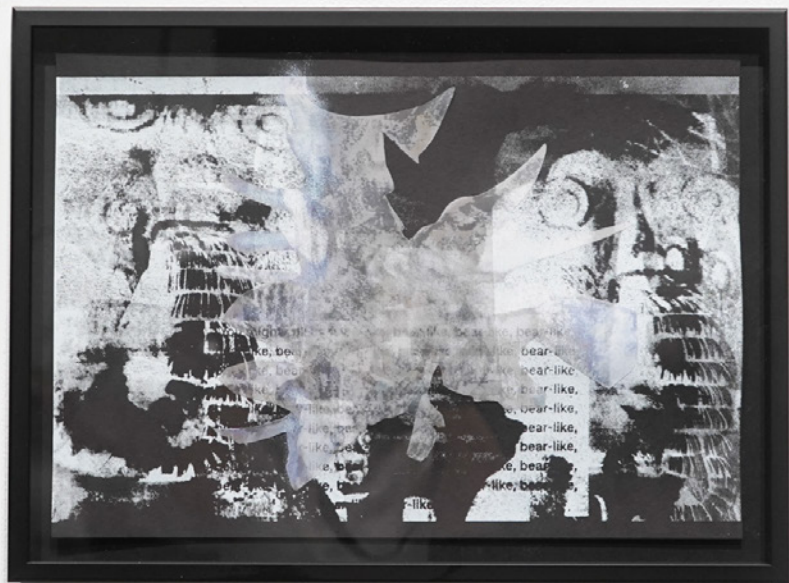


When your writers romance about the future, they imagine a progress towards some kind of utopia where beings like themselves live in unmitigated bliss.











*The Obligation Toward the Difficult Whole,*  
2026  
joss-paper bóng rỗi tower dipped in clay,  
glaze, metal, wheels  
100 x 60 x 50 cm









*Technochrome Diplomatic Gift, 2026*  
serigraphy on paper  
41 x 59 cm  
Edition of 5 + 2APs



*The Twirling Ambassador*, 2026  
serigraphy on paper  
41 x 59 cm  
Edition of 5 + 2APs

## Artists' Bio



Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran is an art laborer based in Ho Chi Minh City. She creates art both collectively and individually and also curates and writes. Her artworks combine politics and sci-fi aesthetics through the use of animation, 3D design, historical archives, and architecture. Arlette is fascinated by the idea of a futuristic Third World utopia where political ideals are reimagined, and humans and non-human beings coexist and merge. She presents a non-linear and absurd interpretation of modern histories that challenges the dominant post-Cold War narratives about the Third World.

Recent solo shows include *PLATTENLOTUS*, station urbaner kulturen/nGbK Hellersdorf, Berlin (2025), and *iii.x\_Unrealized Utopia*, at Gallery Medium, Ho Chi Minh City (2024). Arlette recently concluded her residency at Cité internationale des arts, supported by The Art Explora Foundation (2026). In 2026, she is also awarded a grant from The Graham Foundation for her latest research *Future Tense - Queering The Third World Architecture*.



Nursalim Yadi Anugerah is an Indonesian artist, composer, and environmentalist based in Borneo, whose practice centers on sonic experimentation engaging with indigenous cosmologies, cultural heritage, eco-violence, and technological appropriation. Through extended durations and alternate tuning systems, his works probe timbral and temporal space, foregrounding psychoacoustic phenomena, gradual variations in texture, overtone complexity, and harmonic resonance. His works have been performed and presented at festivals including CTM Festival (2026), transmediale (2026), Time:Spans Festival (2025), Holland Festival (2025, 2021).

# CV

Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran

b. 1987

Lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

## EDUCATION

2019 – 2022

MA – Aesthetics & Politics, California Institute of the Arts,  
California, United States

2009 – 2013

BA – Art History and Philosophy, Freie Universitat Berlin, Humboldt  
University, University Greifswald, Germany & Charles University in  
Prague, Czech

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2026 Future Tense, ara contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia

2025 *PLATTENLOTUS*, station urbaner kulturen/nGbK Hellersdorf, Berlin,  
Germany

2024 *iii.x\_Unrealized Utopia*, Gallery Medium, Ho Chi Minh City,  
Vietnam

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026

*I will tell you when I am home*, ara contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia

2025

Art Jakarta 2025, ara contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia

*The Utopia of Rules*, TWorks, Singapore

*Bảy nổi ba chìm – Seven up Three down*, Hessel Museum of Art, New York,  
United States

Official Selection of the International Film Festival Rotterdam &  
Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen, Germany

2024

*REFUGE*, Lagos Biennial 2024, Lagos, Nigeria

*Dream Screen*, Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea

*Cloud Chamber*, Para Site, Hong Kong

*the future is present, the harbinger is home*, Prospect New Orleans 6,  
United States

2023

*Revolutionary Romances*, Transkulturelle Kunstgeschichte in der DDR:  
*Albertinum*, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Germany

2022

*Posthuman: Story Telling for Earthly Survival*, Asia Culture Center, Gwangju, South Korea

2018

*A beast, a god, and a line*, Dhaka Art Summit '18, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
*Carnegie International 57th ed.*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, United States

2017

*Cosmopolis #1: Collective Intelligence*, Art Labor Collective, Centre Pompidou Paris, Paris, France

*Asian Art Biennale*, Art Labor Collective, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan

2015

*Color Wheel's Journey*, Art Labor Collective, HCMC Eye Hospital, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

2014

*Haunted Threshold*, Art Labor Collective, Göttingen Kunstverein, Göttingen, Germany

2010

*Syntax and Diction*, Sàn Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

## RESIDENCIES

2026 Art Explora – Cité internationale des arts, Paris, France

2022 Artist-in-residence at the Asia Culture Center, Gwangju, Korea

## COLLECTIONS

Nguyen Art Foundation, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

## SELECTED AWARDS AND PRIZES

2026 Graham Foundation Individual Grant

2025 Asian Cultural Council's New York Fellowship Program

2023 Teiger Foundation Research Grant

# ara

Jalan Tulodong Bawah I no 16,  
South Jakarta 12190  
Indonesia

[www.aracontemporary.id](http://www.aracontemporary.id)  
[info@aracontemporary.id](mailto:info@aracontemporary.id)  
[@aracontemporary.id](#)