

**Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn**

*Presence in Absentia: 3 Disappearing Portraits*

Skånes konstförening

SEPT 18–OCT 17

ENGLISH

Artist talk: SEPT 18 at 13:00–14:30

Performance: OCT 17 at 15:00

## Curatorial Statement

Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn's *Presence in Absentia* draws from the Buddhist tradition of mandalas: intricate, laborious designs that symbolize the universe—and that are created to be destroyed. This work is an exploration of love, kinship, and power in the face of colonial violence, history, and the unyielding force of time.

The work features large-scale portraits drawn in colored sand. The artist based the images on family photographs inherited from her great-grandfather Nguyễn Khương (1894–1974). On October 17th, to mark the end of the exhibition, these artworks will be swept away in a performance by artist and choreographer Khamlane Halsackda.

*Presence in Absentia* is Nguyễn's latest work to emerge from her PhD research at Konstfack and KTH Royal Institute of Technology. But her examination of the fragility of the portraits and of their photographic source materials—of the stories and lives of those who appear in them—go beyond artistic research and applied decolonial theory.

Through the tensions between the bright colors, large sizes, and fragile material, this work navigates an experience familiar to many diasporic people: the paradox of constant loss and gain. These portraits are a loving, playful remembrance of the artist's relatives, but with only stories and some photographs as support, remembrance can become fraught. What we think we remember may not be accurate, or we may not have been told the whole story—and there's a special grief that comes with this kind of uncertainty.

These artworks exist loudly and proudly—but always on the edge of disappearing. However, the aliveness of their appearance *enhances* the overall experience of their temporary nature and the inevitable "death" of the images. And that death isn't permanent either. The works can be remade. Some stories can be resurrected.

*Presence in Absentia* transforms photo negatives into a space for tensions to coexist. The portraits are full of happiness *and* pain *and* love *and* grief, which makes sense. The experiences and histories behind the works aren't straightforward either. The work isn't about *either/or* thinking—*Presence in Absentia* invites us to feel it all at once.

C. Grace Chang, Curator



## Artist Bio

Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn is a visual artist using archives and a broad range of media to investigate issues of historicity, collectivity, utopian politics and multiculturalism via feminist theories. Currently based in Paris, she is a PhD candidate in the 'Art, Technology and Design' program at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design and KTH Royal Institute of Technology. Nguyễn previously completed the Whitney Independent Study Program, New York, in 2011, having obtained her MFA and a post-graduate diploma in Critical Studies from the Malmö Art Academy in 2005, and a BFA from Concordia University, Montreal in 2003.

Her work has been shown internationally, including at the Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm (2021); Trinity Square Video, Toronto (2019); The Július Koller Society, Bratislava (2019); CAMPLE LINE, Dumfries (2019); Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah (2018); Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Philadelphia (2018); MAMA, Rotterdam (2018); SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin (2017); EFA Project Space, New York (2016); Mercer Union, Toronto (2015); MTL BNL at the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal (2014); Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany (2013); Apexart, New York (2013). In 2017, Nguyễn was the Audain Visual Artist in Residence at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, and participated in the fourth cycle of NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore's Residencies Program.