

# Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard  
Houston, Texas 77006  
CAMH.ORG | CAMH.SHOP

Press Release

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Exhibition

## *Diane Severin Nguyen:* *IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS*

October 28, 2022–February 26, 2023



Installation view of *Diane Severin Nguyen: IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS* at SculptureCenter, New York, 2021. Photo by Charles Benton.

HOUSTON, TX (August 17, 2022) — Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is pleased to announce *Diane Severin Nguyen: IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS*, the first solo museum exhibition for New York and Los Angeles-based artist Diane Severin Nguyen (b. 1990), featuring a recent video installation, photographs, a site-specific architectural intervention, and the artist's first public art commission in the form of billboards located throughout Houston.

#DianeSeverinNguyen  
#IFREVOLUTIONISASICKNESS  
#atCAMH

### Press Contact

For high-resolution images or  
media inquiries, contact:

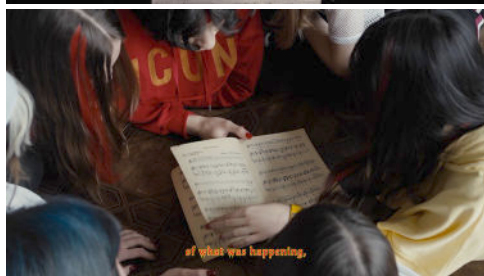
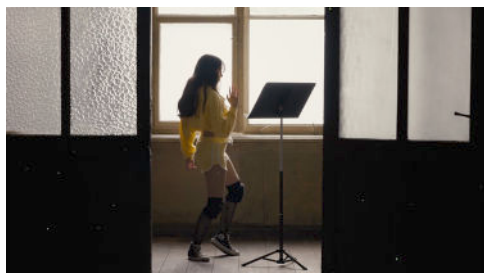
Michael Robinson  
Communications and Marketing  
Manager  
mrobinson@camh.org  
713.284.8255

The exhibition is built around the titular video, *IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS*. Set in Warsaw, Poland, the film loosely follows the character of an orphaned Vietnamese child who is taken in by a South Korean pop-inspired dance group. Widely popular within a Polish youth subculture, K-pop is used by the artist as a way to trace a relationship between Eastern Europe and Asia with roots in Cold War allegiances. Anchored in the visual and political context of the Vietnamese community of Poland—which is comprised of both Northerners who migrated before the fall of the Iron Curtain and Southerners who came in the long aftermath of the Vietnam War—Nguyen's video reckons with the process of finding shared symbols and naming oneself from within another's regime. Featuring voiceovers (in Polish, Vietnamese, and English), culled from writing on revolutionary practice by the likes

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Diane Severin Nguyen, *IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS* (video stills), 2021. 4K video with sound. 18:53 minutes. Courtesy the artist and Bureau, New York.



Diane Severin Nguyen, *Kill This Love*, 2021. LightJet C-print, steel frame, 30 x 24 inches. Collection of J. Patrick Collins. Image courtesy the artist and Bureau, New York. Photo by Dario Lasagni.

Hannah Arendt, Ulrike Meinhof, and Mao Zedong among others, the work is a melodious inquiry into the power of collectivity versus the peril of the clique, one that identifies youth culture as a critical site of revolutionary power. *IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS* probes the uncomfortable space between propaganda and protest, revolutionary rhetoric and its commoditization.

In addition to Nguyen's video work, the exhibition includes a selection of the artist's highly-staged, close-up photographs depicting assemblages of both natural and synthetic materials. The artist captures moments "of becoming or unbecoming" liminal spaces in which an image is nearly, but not quite, recognizable as depicting a particular thing. This strategy is rooted in Nguyen's interest in the processes by which we differentiate objects—and ourselves—from the world around us.

CAMH's presentation will also include an architectural intervention formed onsite within the exhibition in direct response to the gallery space. Offsite, it will also feature Nguyen's first public art project in the form of two commercial billboards located along Bellaire Boulevard and in the Midtown neighborhoods of Houston. Like Poland, Houston is a key site in the post-Vietnam War diaspora, and currently holds the U.S.'s largest population of Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans outside of California. Central to both moving image and photographic work is an understanding of the contingency of identity formation in relation to visual culture.

Nguyen's solo exhibition continues CAMH's longstanding commitment to supporting the work of artist's early in their careers, as well as the institution's mission to engage Houston communities beyond the Museum.

*Diane Severin Nguyen: IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS* is co-organized by Myriam Ben Salah, Executive Director and Chief Curator, the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, and Sohrab Mohebbi, Director, SculptureCenter, New York. Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH)'s presentation is organized by Rebecca Matalon, Curator.

### About the Artist

Diane Severin Nguyen (b. 1990, Carson, California) is an artist who works with photography and time-based media. Nguyen earned an MFA from Bard College in 2020 and a BA from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2013. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *Between Two Solitudes*, Stereo, Warsaw; *Tyrant Star* (online exhibition), Carnegie Museum of Art (CMOA), Pittsburgh;

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Diane Severin Nguyen, *As if it's your last*, 2021. LightJet C-print, steel frame. 30 x 24 inches. Collection of J. Patrick Collins. Image courtesy the artist and Bureau, New York. Photo by Dario Lasagni.

### CAMH Mission

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally.

### General Information

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, in the heart of Houston's Museum District.

### Hours

Wed 11AM–6PM  
Thu 11AM–9PM  
Fri 11AM–6PM  
Sat 11AM–6PM  
Sun 11AM–6PM

Admission is always free. For more information, visit CAMH.ORG or call 713.284.8250.

*Reoccurring Afterlife*, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong; *Minor twin worlds* with Brandon Ndife, Bureau, New York; and *Flesh Before Body*, Bad Reputation, Los Angeles; all 2019. Recent group exhibitions include *Is it morning for you yet?: 58th Carnegie International*, CMOA, Pittsburgh, 2022; *Greater New York*, MoMA PS1, New York, 2021; *Made in L.A. 2020: a version*, Hammer Museum and The Huntington, Los Angeles, 2020–2021; and *Bodies of Water: 13th Shanghai Biennale*, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, 2021.

### About Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally. Established in 1948, CAMH is one of the oldest non-collecting contemporary art museums in the country, and is internationally known for presenting pivotal and landmark work by artists recognized as the most important of the 20th and 21st centuries. CAMH's mandate is to be present, to connect artists and audiences through the urgent issues of our time, and to adventurously promote the catalytic possibilities of contemporary art. CAMH's programming, both in and beyond the Museum, is presented free to the public, and advocates for artists' essential role in society.

### Support

*Diane Severin Nguyen: IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS* has been made possible by the patrons, benefactors and donors to CAMH's Major Exhibition Fund: Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, Sissy and Denny Kempner, MD Anderson Foundation, Rea Charitable Trust, Louisa Stude Sarofim, The Sarofim Foundation, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

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*Arts and Culture Texas Magazine* is the exclusive media sponsor of CAMH's presentation of *Diane Severin Nguyen: IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS*.