ALMINE RECH

Thu-Van Tran
No Longer Day, Not Yet Night

May 29 — Aug 8, 2026 | Shanghai

Almine Rech Shanghai is pleased to present 'No Longer Day, Not Yet Night', Thu-Van Tran's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from May 29 to August 8, 2026. This project has been officially included in the 2026 edition of the Croisements Festival. Special thanks go to the Consulate General of France in Shanghai and the Institut Français de Chine for their generous support.

During the United States-Vietnam War (1955–75), the US military developed and deployed a series of chemical weapons in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, known collectively as the Rainbow Herbicides. Agent Orange was the most notorious, but its siblings—Agents Green, Pink, Purple, Blue, and White—were equally destructive. 90% of these chemicals were used for defoliation, primarily to remove the forest cover under which Viet Cong guerilla soldiers were moving, and 10% were used for crop destruction to disrupt food supplies.[1] These herbicides' effects on the environment, foodways and health are enduring.

In her long-running series *Colors of Grey* (2012–present), from which the works in 'No Longer Day, Not Yet Night' are drawn, artist Thu-Van Tran recasts this history. Tran first discovered the name of the operation, Operation Ranch Hand (1962-71), under which these herbicides were sprayed in the US Army's archives at the National Library of Congress. Cloaked in euphemism, the codenames of war with their apparent innocence, even lyricism, belied their horrific consequences.

Against this linguistic concealment, Tran developed a painterly protocol that acts both with and against obfuscation. In *Colors of Grey*, Tran first primes her canvases with wet lime plaster, mimicking the materiality and monumentality of wall frescoes. Then, working in thin layers, and color by color, Tran applies each color in a drippy, hazy wash, allowing each layer to be absorbed into the drying lime plaster surface at different rates, and therefore depths. If we were once taught in art history that the language of drips was for macho artists to empty themselves onto the canvas, Tran's transparent drips are humane, intimate, fragile in their mortality and yet temporally expansive in incorporating what Tran calls the "mineral time"[2] of marble dust. Most of all, it is uninterested in telling grand mythologies.

In the series, greys are produced through a chromatic oxymoron where color is both negative and generative. When two complementary colors mix—for example, green and red, yellow and purple, blue and orange—they lose chroma, cancelling each other out to yield a chromatic grey. In turn, the grey color field produces a liminal space that carries residues of its component hues. Multiple, sometimes antagonistic, presences are held in a zone of suspension. Hues approach and recede. Every gesture remains visible as a deposit, stratified into depth like sediment. If the military logic behind the Rainbow Herbicides sought to make land fully legible and render life available to control, Tran refuses such certainties. She is here intervening in one of war's most lasting instruments: seeing as an agent of discipline and representation as a way of managing and imagining the real. Grey, then, is an inevitability, both a visual condition and a conceptual position that seeks to rewrite the terms of the gaze. In the transparency of grey, Tran produces an order where hierarchy retreats.

Today, Agent Orange carries a heavy moral charge. It has become a synecdoche for science gone wrong, a failure of empathy and collective humanity. The term "ecocide" was popularized in relation to it: in 1972, Swedish statesman Olof Palme accused the United States of ecocide during the Vietnam War. Yet it too can function as a cover, an alibi that "allows us to proceed without looking too closely at what happened and confronting where we are in history."[3] Instead of offering critique, and in doing so reproduce the aestheticized violence of war, Tran offers a contrapuntal language. She is providing a "reciprocity of intensities."[4] Her abstraction does not retreat from politics. Recent works in the series have turned towards other contemporary landscapes marked by devastation and violence, including Palestine, where chromatic tensions between the complementary colors of red and green become inseparable from questions of territory, mourning, and erasure. *Colors of Grey* insists that history and politics may be encountered through atmosphere, affect, and perception. The image becomes a volatile site where boundaries collapse, a moral position that resists moralism. The beautiful crime no longer charms: it convulses, disorienting the eye long enough to dislodge it from domination's rehearsed vantage point.

Tran's work turns on an analytic tension between singularity and multiplicity, between fixity and plurality. Consonance and dissonance arrive hand in hand. Like Josef Albers's color studies, or Ludwig Wittgenstein's language-games, these paintings remind us that perception itself is slippery, shaped by relation, context, and contradiction. The oxymoronic title of the exhibition reflects this condition. It names a threshold that is neither one state nor another, but a durational interval in which oppositions lose their certainty. Day has receded, but night has not yet fully arrived. Vision is possible but compromised. Forms remain perceptible, but only partially.

— Sheau Yun Lim, curator and writer

1. Diane Niblack Fox, "Chemical Politics and the Hazards of Modern Warfare: Agent Orange," in Synthetic Planet, ed. Monica J. Casper (Routledge, 2003).
2. Interview with the artist, March 17, 2026.
3. Fox, 47.
4. Interview with the artist, March 17, 2026.