

Tia-Thuy Nguyen

Fields of Resonance

Aug 28 — Oct 31, 2026 | Shanghai

Almine Rech Shanghai is pleased to present 'Fields of Resonance', Tia-Thuy Nguyen's third solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from August 28 to October 31, 2026.

Cloudscapes are endlessly mutable. Yet observed from the same place over the course of a year, they reveal recurring patterns of their own. Much like climate, every place is marked by recurring patterns of cloud cover—dense or sparse, light or heavy, each season bringing with it a familiar sky.

Towering cumulus clouds—a familiar presence in the skies of Vietnamese artist Tia-Thuy Nguyen's hometown—occasionally appear in continental landscapes far drier than Vietnam. When they do, they can leave people, half in jest, wondering: *Am I still here? Or have I somehow arrived in another city?* Fleeting and ever-changing, clouds possess a quiet yet remarkable ability to unsettle our confidence in the reality we inhabit, if only for a moment.

What, then, is reality? Is it the objective world that exists beyond the self? Is it, as Descartes proposed, grounded in the certainty of "I think, therefore I am"? Is it, in Merleau-Ponty's words, "what I live through"? Or might it be closer to Zhuangzi's vision, in which the self and the cosmos arise together, and all things and I exist as one?

Reality may also be understood as something that emerges through the continual encounter between the self and the world—through mutual influence, resonance, and becoming. The title of Nguyen's ongoing painting series, *I, my, me, cloud* (2018–present), offers an important clue. The cloud is preceded by three different forms of the self. For Nguyen, clouds were first bound to memories of her father, a pilot who served in the Vietnam War. Years later, as she travelled between Asia and Europe, observing and documenting cloudscapes became both a visual diary and an enduring source of inspiration. By recreating clouds in her paintings, Nguyen gives tangible form to the resonance between herself and the natural world. As she writes: "I do not paint nature. I paint the natural energy that flows within me. I paint the vibrations within, carrying a beauty that is free and unbound." This experience of discovering freedom through becoming one with nature recalls Su Shi's celebrated prose poem *Former Ode on the Red Cliff*: "Vast and boundless, we seemed to ride upon the wind through empty space, not knowing where we would stop. We floated as if detached from the world, and become winged immortals."

For her first solo exhibition in China, 'Fields of Resonance', Nguyen brings together nearly twenty paintings, sculptures, and installations. Beyond the recurring motif of clouds lies something more fundamental: a sustained resonance between the artist and the natural world.

The monumental mixed-media painting *Fairer than a Fairy* immerses viewers in a celestial cloudscape, where radiant clouds unfold across the surface in shimmering expanses of light. The work extends Nguyen's background in fashion and her longstanding engagement with Vietnamese craft traditions through the generous use of beads and sequins, while extending beyond the picture plane. Intricate bead embroidery lends the clouds a sculptural presence, transforming the canvas into a richly textured terrain. As the viewer's gaze drifts across its surface—rising and falling through densely layered forms, passing from shadow into light—looking becomes a journey through the cloudscape itself, where each shift in perspective offers the possibility of another opening in the sky.

Nguyen works with materials that span strikingly different qualities. Alongside delicate materials such as beads, sequins, thread, and quartz—materials that invite careful handling—Nguyen also works with stainless steel, a material capable of withstanding time and the elements. The series *The Pause Between Storms* marks the first time the artist has presented her stainless-steel weaving technique. Here, Nguyen presents her stainless-steel weaving technique for the first time. Fine strands of stainless steel are transformed through the traditionally feminine act of weaving into intricate cloudscapes of remarkable delicacy. Seen from a distance, their finely woven lines and restrained gray palette recall seventeenth- and eighteenth-century landscape etchings. Yet unlike the illusionistic spaces constructed on the flat surface of a print, these woven forms occupy real space. They are at once gentle and resilient, while every knot, every bend, and every fold bears the traces of the hand, preserving the singular narrative of its making.

In *Enduring Vitality*, stainless steel replaces the pencil line, tracing the twisting, upward-reaching branches of towering trees. Nguyen first pulls the image away from the flat surface, then redistributes it across the gallery's floor and walls. In doing so, the spatial illusion produced by perspective is both staged and exposed. Seeing is not merely a means of encountering reality, but also of shaping it. Once perception is released from the constraints of a single viewpoint, reality ceases to settle into a fixed answer. Instead, it begins to dissolve and expand, opening onto new forms of experience.

— Ying, writer and editor