

## Sung Tieu

### ***No Gods, No Masters 2017***

HD video, colour, sound; 19 minutes 13 seconds

### ***Memory Dispute 2017***

HD video, black-and-white, sound; 22 minutes 42 seconds

*Memory Dispute* and *No Gods, No Masters* are two video works made by Tieu during several periods of research in Vietnam and reflect her interest in forms of warfare—chemical, sonic, psychological—deployed by the United States of America during the war in Vietnam, 1955–75, and more broadly during the Cold War era.

*No Gods, No Masters* takes ‘Ghost Tape No.10’ as its starting point. This sonic and psychological weapon, deployed by the U.S. Armed Forces, fabricated the ghostly, disembodied voice of a fictional dead Viet Cong soldier, telling his comrades that his spirit wanders the earth aimlessly since he died a senseless death in war. Targeting the spiritual beliefs of local Vietnamese populations, the weapon sought to lower morale and encourage soldiers to return home. *No Gods, No Masters* is filmed at sites where the weapon was deployed. This imagery is interspersed with footage of Tieu’s family conducting a ritual to communicate with her late grandmother, who advises Tieu to find a more stable life than that of an artist.

Made in the same year, *Memory Dispute* features footage of landscapes that were attacked with Agent Orange and napalm, a chemical weapon used by the U.S. Armed Forces and causing severe burns. The use of both chemical weapons was outlawed in the 1970s and ‘80s. Alongside these images of landscape is footage of a cosmetic procedure prevalent in Vietnam undertaken to whiten skin and which contains an unknown chemical mix available only on the black-market.

## Sung Tieu

### ***The Ruling 2023***

engraved and varnished doussie and iroko woods, brackets

### ***Head Tax (Red) 2023***

printed paper

### ***Head Tax (Beige) 2023***

printed paper

### ***Yeast and Spirits 2023***

various alcohols injected into bread loaves

Co-commissioned by Monash University Museum of Art |  
MUMA and Ordet, Milan

French colonial rule controlled much of the eastern and southern coasts of mainland Southeast Asia, across Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, from the 19th Century to the 1950s.

*The Ruling* takes as its starting point bureaucratic processes deployed by French administrators in the region during this period, to think about standardisation, measurability and quantifiability as tools of extraction.

Prior to the colonisation of Vietnam, land was measured using the *thước đo đất (or điền xích) ruler*. Under French colonisation, the southern region of Vietnam was the first to convert to the metric system. Consequently, the original ruler (equivalent to 47cm) was standardised to a shorter unit of 40cm which impacted the way land was measured and taxed. *The Ruling* features both units of measurements side by side as two sets of wooden rulers. The shorter 40cm rulers, which rest on top of the original rulers, are etched with historical statistics pertaining to land ownership, profits and taxation recorded by the French authorities.

*Yeast and Spirits* recalls the implementation of the infamous alcohol monopoly across the region under French rule. For this installation, the artist has injected each bread loaf with seven centilitres of alcohol, metaphorically returning the seven centimetres that were removed from the *thước đo đất ruler*. The oppressive control of all alcohol production, distribution and sales led to a black market in which mostly local women smuggled alcohol through various means in an attempt to subvert the bureaucratic control of the coloniser.

**Steven Rhall**

***Birrarung Mews 2024***

vinyl installation

Commissioned by Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA  
with generous support from the MUMA Contemporaries

*Birrarung Mews*, a large-scale vinyl treatment on MUMA's front windows, employs the visual language of development advertising and construction hoarding. The work points to the role of property ownership and development in the ongoing colonisation of Australia. The fictional Birrarung Mews estate imagines a future in which land is returned to First Peoples and the implications of reorienting relationships with Country in the wake of settler colonialism. The work also addresses the disingenuous use of seemingly inclusive language and visual aesthetics by property developers when selling land, housing and lifestyle.

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## Steven Rhall

### ***Welcome to 37°56'19.3S 144°35'37.2E 2023***

digital video, colour, sound; 17 minutes 51 seconds

During a residency Rhall undertook at the Wyndham Refuse Disposal Facility in 2017, he encountered an Occupational Health and Safety induction video used by the City of Wyndham for external contractors. In this work, Rhall has brought together the induction video and a text often used for a Welcome to Country, with the specifics of Country name left blank. The work's title refers to the geo-location of the Refuse Disposal Facility and the layers of history embedded on Country. Rhall explores ways that an ancient cultural protocol—the Welcome to Country—collides with the bureaucratic structures of a local government council and the abstraction of language. These questions are especially pertinent for Rhall in his role as a First Nations Creative Arts Officer for local government.

**Steven Rhall**

***Institutional Interface 2024***

5 inkjet prints, 5 live video streams

Commissioned by Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA  
with generous support from the MUMA Contemporaries

This new work stems from Rhall's involvement in the Yalingwa Curatorial Symposium of First Nations arts workers and creatives. Rhall has worked with four other people who—like him—hold identified First Nations roles within organisations across the arts and health sectors. The work encompasses a photograph of each participant's desk and a continuous live stream video from their place of work. *Institutional Interface* speaks to the complexities of advocating for First Nations empowerment within bureaucratic infrastructures. It highlights the tension between agency and control, and between visibility and surveillance for those in identified roles.

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