

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tammy Nguyen**  
***Freehold***

June 26 - August 8, 2021

Opening Reception: Sat. June 26, 4-7PM

\* RSVP required

Artist-led Tours: Sat. July 17, 2:30–4 PM

Virtual Artist Talk: Thurs. July 29, 7 PM



Tammy Nguyen, *Man* (detail), 2021.  
Watercolor, vinyl paint, pastel, and metal leaf  
on paper stretched over panel, 60 x 36 inches.

The works that comprise Tammy Nguyen’s solo exhibition *Freehold* are inspired by the artist’s research and writing about Forest City, a tax free, man-made island in Johor, Malaysia, located along the Singapore Strait and adjacent to the Strait of Malacca—one of the busiest trade conduits in the world. With the goal of attracting visitors and investors, Forest City follows a utopian model, proclaiming that it “will be a smart and green futuristic city,” and through the combination of geography and design will “create an ideal, idyllic and technology-driven living and working space ecosystem.” When the artist herself posed as an investor to visit the island, her guide informed her that there was “no climate change here.” Malaysia, he explained, does not suffer from natural disasters like its neighboring countries, making it one of the best places to retire in the world. Nguyen’s rendering of Forest City considers the provocative nature of this statement to imagine it as a place where no change takes place because all the goals of health and wealth have been met. It has reached a capital ideal, so change is no longer needed.

The exhibition brings together three new bodies of work: two series of paintings and a series of twelve collaged prints, each marking an hour on a traditional clock. A flag, in material and photographed form, frames the exhibition, proposing an ideology that underpins all of the works. Considered by the artist as a “perfect flag,” it is composed of a white circle in the center for the sacred sun, surrounded by 12 evenly spaced, alternating stripes in blue and green, representing the unchanging land and water.

Within the paintings and collages, Nguyen presents the visual tropes to which Forest City seems to aspire: the Marlboro cowboy for rugged individualism, a spa woman for leisure, and a standing ape which alludes to King Kong and the new movie studios located in Forest City, an area regionally similar to where the movie was originally filmed. Crucially Nguyen’s works remove the hierarchy between the subject and background, merging figures with their environments. The iconic images are broken down by tropical flora, abstraction of shapes, and the movement of her marks. Together, the works in *Freehold* propose the fiction of a stabilized geographic realm to address the fantasy, arrogance, and shortcomings of human ambition.

# S m a c k M e l l o n

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## Bio:

Tammy Nguyen is a multimedia artist whose work spans painting, drawing, printmaking, and publishing. Intersecting geopolitical realities with fiction, her practice addresses lesser-known histories through a blend of myth and visual narrative. She is the founder of Passenger Pigeon Press, an independent press that joins the work of scientists, journalists, creative writers, and artists to create politically nuanced and cross-disciplinary projects. Born in San Francisco, Nguyen received a BFA from Cooper Union in 2007. The year following, she received a Fulbright scholarship to study lacquer painting in Vietnam, where she remained and worked with a ceramics company for three years thereafter. Nguyen received an MFA from Yale in 2013 and was awarded the Van Lier Fellowship at Wave Hill in 2014. She has exhibited at the Rubin Museum, The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, the Bronx Museum, and Five Myles among others. Her work is included in the collections of Yale University, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, MIT Library, the Seattle Art Museum, the Walker Art Center Library, and the Museum of Modern Art Library. She is an Assistant Professor of Art at Wesleyan University and represented by Hesse Flatow in New York City.

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