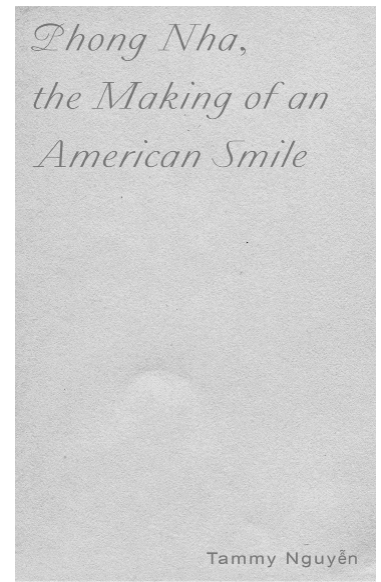


Tammy Nguyễn

Phong Nha, the Making of An American Smile

Phong Nha, the Making of an American Smile is a story about a girl who was born missing two of her front teeth and the journey it took to correct this defect. It is also a story about cave formations in Phong Nha, Vietnam; a manmade island named Forest City; and the famous tale of three prisoners staring at shadows in a cave. Nguyen moves through autobiography, politics, geology, and philosophy, revealing fissures in the notion of shared truth while illuminating how stories, true or not, often serve as moral compasses.

The Phong Nha Karst is located in the Annamite Mountains, which spread across the borders of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. “Phong” is a Vietnamese word, derived from the Chinese word—“fung” in Cantonese or “feng” in Mandarin—for “wind.” “Nha” is Vietnamese for “teeth,” though it is more commonly combined with other words to describe things related to teeth. For example, “Nha si” means dentist; “Nha khoa” means “dentistry.” According to Chinese mythology, the Phong Nha Karst is the Earth’s teeth, carved by wind.



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Tammy Nguyễn is a multimedia artist and writer whose work spans painting, drawing, printmaking, and publishing. 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 and an MFA from Yale. Her work has been exhibited widely and is included in the collections of Yale University, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and several other museums.

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