

Tammy Nguyen

O

From a dentist's office in San Francisco to the caves of the Phong Nha Karst, Tammy Nguyen's *O* sounds the depths of personal, mineral, and geopolitical histories of Vietnam. In this many-threaded narrative, a wind that carved mountains whistles through a young girl's teeth. The electric green of a plastic forest glints off of glazed porcelain. The shape of a bowl becomes the mouth of a cave. What emerges is a story without a center: an anti-allegory that finds its meaning in echoes and refracted light, a book stitched together by the *O* woven through the work as its visual spine and sonic refrain.

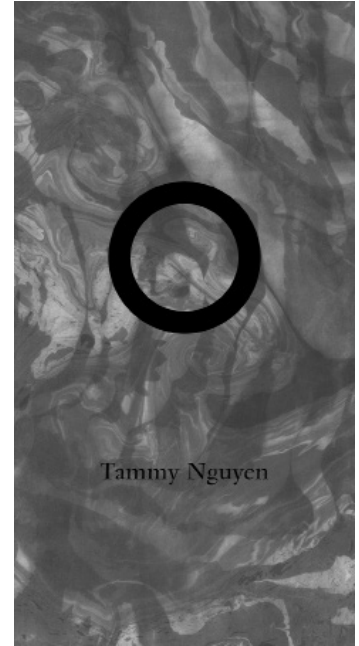
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Tammy Nguyen's *O* should be filed under "Unclassifiable." It is a memoir about her uncle, a pilot in the South Vietnamese Air Force who chose David as his American name because he defeated Goliath: a recounting of all the procedures the author went through because she was born with a genetic disorder that caused her to be missing two front teeth; an introduction to Vietnam's manmade and natural landmarks, including the Ho Chi Minh Trail and a series of caves at least 400 million years old; a guide to real estate investment opportunities on a manmade island near Singapore, where the real estate agent claims there is "no climate change": a compressed history and status accounting of wealthy Vietnamese families who lived in San Francisco; a report on the author's visit to a small factory in New York that makes dentures and implants; an updated disquisition on Plato's Cave; a primer on porcelain; a dream in which all the previous narratives meet. *O* is a major addition to diasporic literature. Already an accomplished artist, who has exhibited internationally, Nguyen proves herself to be an equally powerful and engaging writer. *O* belongs on a shelf with Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* and Sophia Al-Maria's *The Girl Who Fell to Earth: A Memoir*.

— JOHN YAU



Tammy Nguyen is a multimedia artist and writer 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.



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