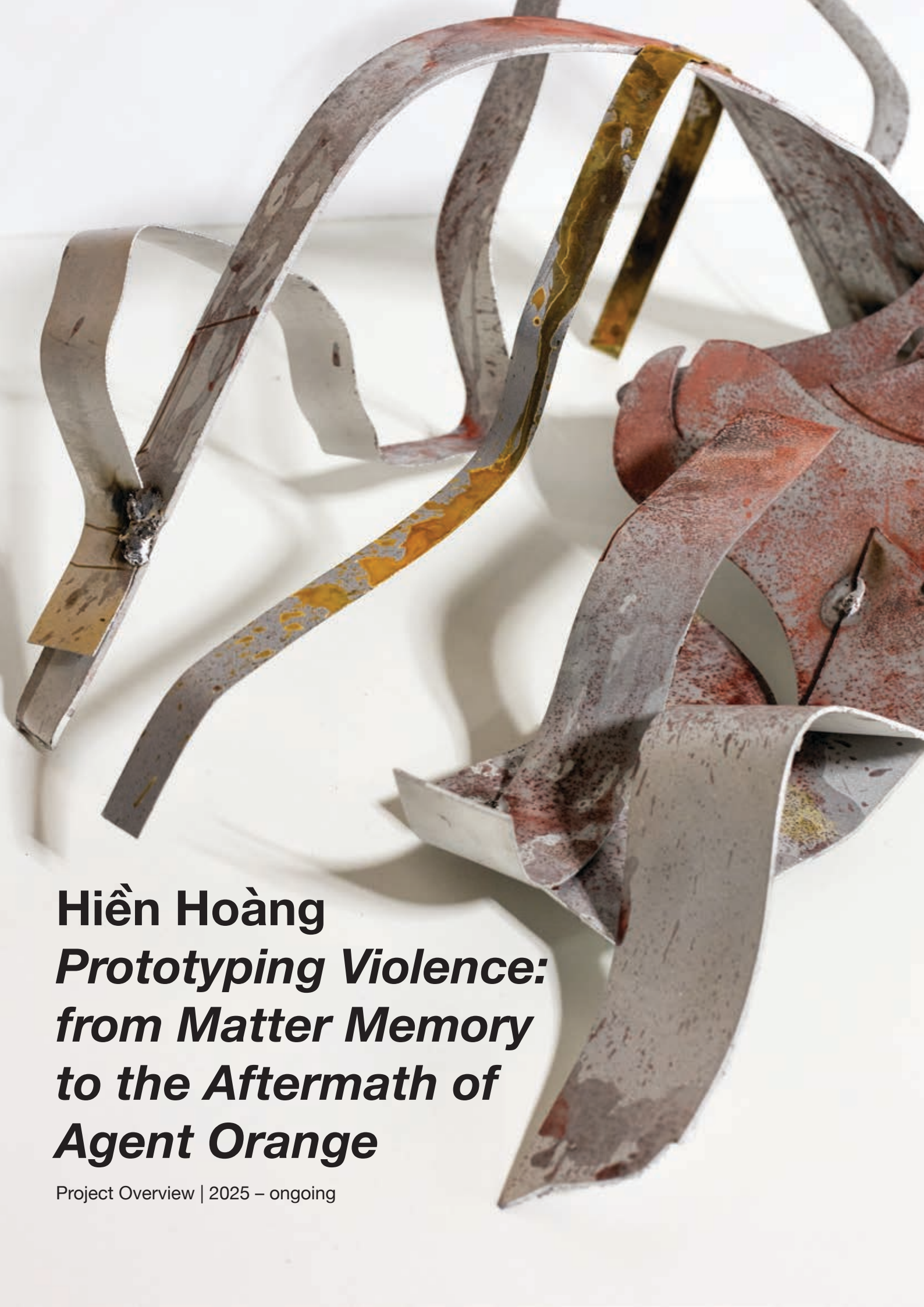


Hiền Hoàng

Prototyping Violence: from Matter Memory to the Aftermath of Agent Orange

Project Overview | 2025 – ongoing

Results of the first defoliation mission of Project Ranch Hand (Agent Orange), January 1962, Ca Mau Peninsula, Vietnam (Photograph courtesy of US Army Chemical Corps, Fort Detrick, Maryland)

Prototyping Violence: From Matter Memory to the Aftermath of Agent Orange

Project Overview

My research investigates how materials and living systems carry the memory of human violence. Through the framework I call **Prototyping Violence**, I explore how artistic experimentation with chemical and biological processes can reveal and re-mediate the **ecological trauma left by Agent Orange and other forms of environmental warfare.**

Building on my earlier projects *Scent from Heaven* and *Garden of Entanglement*, I work with **corrosion, residue, and mycelium growth** as acts of material transformation. These processes mirror the over-activation of energy that defines both chemical destruction and psychological trauma. Each corroded surface or fungal growth becomes a form of material witnessing—a record of how matter absorbs and remembers harm.

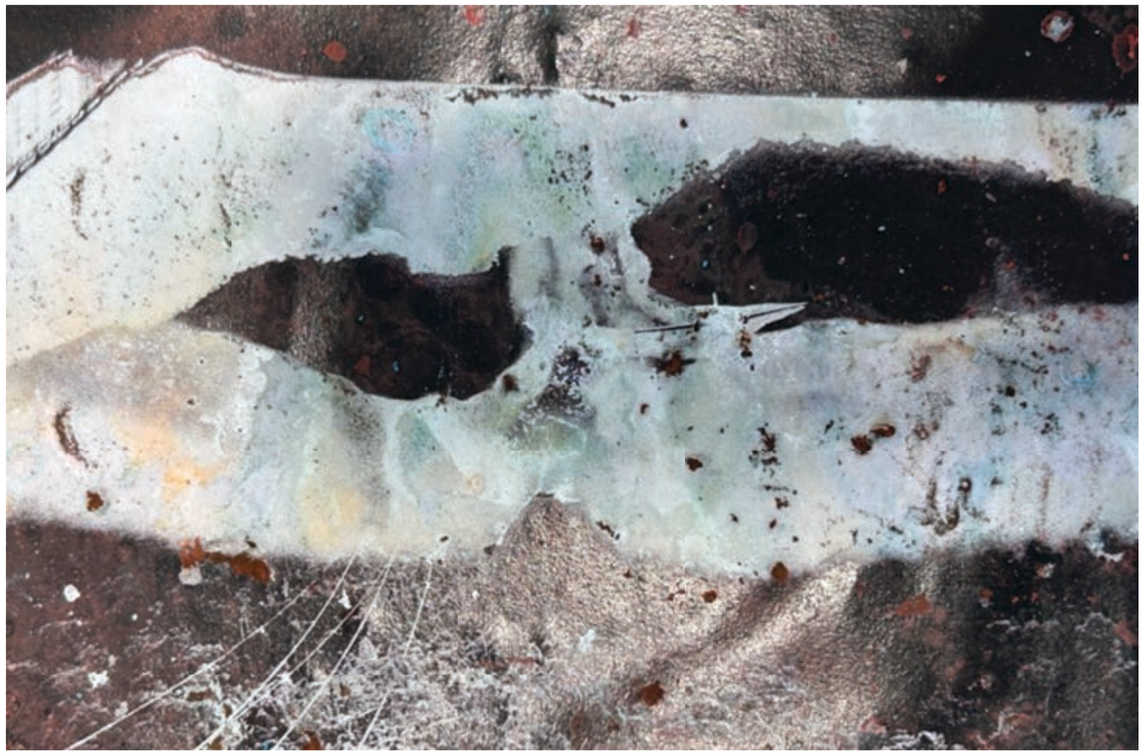
My approach bridges Trauma Studies (Freud, Cathy Caruth), Ecocriticism (Rob Nixon, Jane Bennett), and Science Studies (Bruno Latour). I draw parallels between Freud's notion of trauma as excess excitation and the biochemical overstimulation of Agent Orange, where plants "grew themselves to death." This over-activation links psychological and ecological violence, showing how vitality and collapse coexist within the same energetic field.

In conclusion, Prototyping Violence proposes an artistic framework to sense and re-mediate ecological trauma—an inquiry into how matter corrodes, heals, and remembers.

For more infos:
https://hien-hoang.com/prototyping-violence/

Study with corroded aluminium plate, revealing how matter carries traces and intertwined interactions with the environment. 2025

Archival photograph printed on paper, corrosion residue from Aluminum and Copper Sulfate, 2025.
Image Source: US Army Flight Operations Specialist 4 John Crivello in 1969.



Archival Photographs printed on copy papers, corrosion residue from Aluminum and Copper Sulfate, 2025.

Image Source: Horst Faas. 1963. AP Pres.

Archival Photographs printed on copy papers, corrosion residue from Aluminum and Copper Sulfate, 2025.

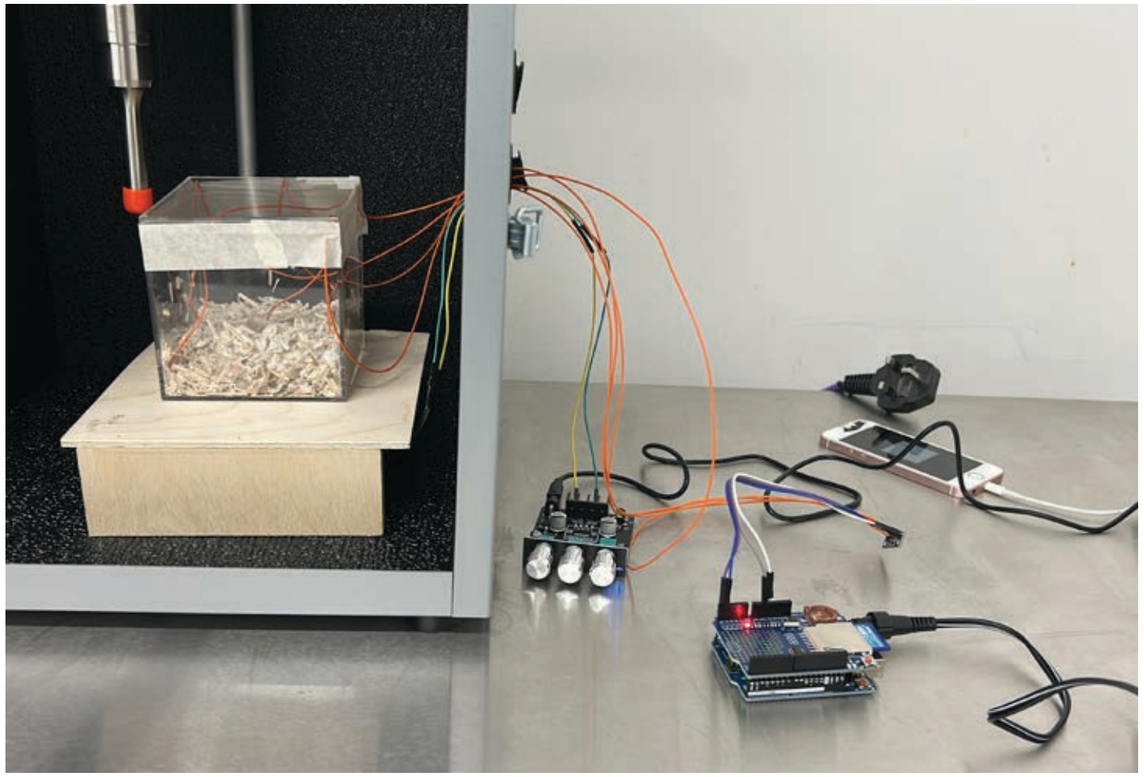
Image Source: Agent Orange Subject Files/The Vietnam Center and Archive/Texas Tech University

Further corrosion studies on UV-printed aluminium plates, from the field trips in Vietnam, January 2026.
Left: A tree growing beyond the wall of Bien Hoa Airbase
Right: A part of the Bien Hoa Airbase - a mega hotspot of Dioxin. Access was denied.

Corrosion study on UV-printed aluminium plates, from the field trips in Vietnam, January 2026.
Left: the old ferry station An Thoi Dong, Bien Hoa. A small amount of Dioxin was found here according to the report of Dong Nai Environmental Office in 2016.
Right: water underneath the Hoa An Bridge in Bien Hoa. This place was also included in the 2016 report of the Dong Nai Environmental Office.

A corroded aluminum sculpture, part of the installation – 2025

Corrosion Sculpture Studies 2025

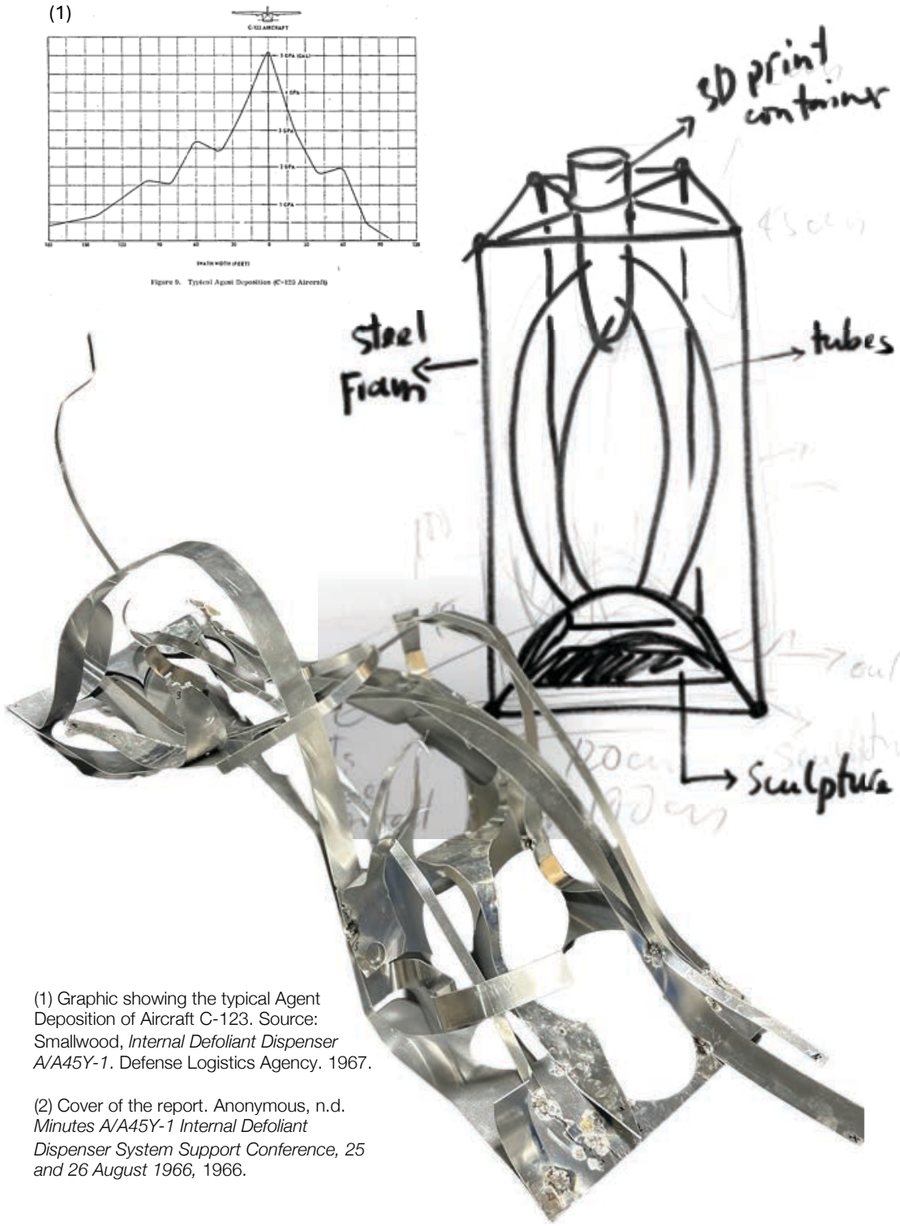


Studies on the biological encounter with Mycelium:
Mycelium is grown with corroded aluminum plates.
Electrical signals were extracted during the process. 2025

Performance “Lullaby” with sonified data extracted from the experiments wiith mycelium and corrosion.
Link: https://youtu.be/j2mVb62E7zc

Sculpture idea, plan, and process:

(1)



(1) Graphic showing the typical Agent Deposition of Aircraft C-123. Source: Smallwood, *Internal Defoliant Dispenser A/A45Y-1*. Defense Logistics Agency. 1967.

(2) Cover of the report. Anonymous, n.d. *Minutes A/A45Y-1 Internal Defoliant Dispenser System Support Conference, 25 and 26 August 1966,* 1966.