

Hiền Hoàng



Portfolio 2026

<https://hien-hoang.com>

Fig. 1: Hiên Hoàng, *The Base*,
part of *Slow Sculpture* (2026–
ongoing), corroded steel, back
side view, 90 × 90 × 45 cm



How to Touch the Elephant

Ecological Trauma in post-Agent Orange
Landscapes in Vietnam

How to Touch the Elephant (2025–ongoing) attends to the ecological trauma of post-Agent Orange landscapes in Vietnam. This research-based, interdisciplinary project argues that the slow and multigenerational character of ecological violence needs to be attended to through shifting modes of witnessing, moving between studio-based and site-based practices.

Agent Orange was among the herbicides deployed by the U.S. military during Operation Ranch Hand from 1961 to 1971. It saturated the land, and the bodies living on it, with dioxin, one of the most toxic substances known. Decades later, the landscapes and the bodies still carry it. Yet juridical and forensic frameworks have repeatedly failed to establish legal accountability for this contamination. This research turns to practice-based artistic inquiry as an alternative form of witnessing. **It asks what it means to touch the post-Agent Orange landscapes, and to be touched back.**

The research carries personal stakes. My Vietnamese heritage is inseparable from the war's aftermath. **The bomb fragments inside my father's body have never been removed.** They are evidence of the war and traces of trauma, but also testimony to the capacity of matter and bodies to resist and refuse violence. Attending to the trauma of the landscapes is, in part, attending to that inheritance.

The practice is grounded in fieldwork across contaminated sites in Vietnam, where witnessing takes shape through direct, material engagement rather than documentary distance. On-site, the work proceeds through embodied drawing, soil mapping, and the recording of environmental and bioelectrical signals that are later

(In clockwise order)

Fig. 2: Hiền Hoàng, soil mapping in Biên Hoà, Vietnam (2026). Mapping and data extraction conducted beneath the Hóa An Bridge over the Đồng Nai River.

Fig. 3: Hiền Hoàng, *Study of Living and Dying* (2025–ongoing), discarded tree log, corroded and bent scrap aluminum, donated small-leaf spiderwort (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) growing through and over. Installation view at Royal College of Art, 2026.

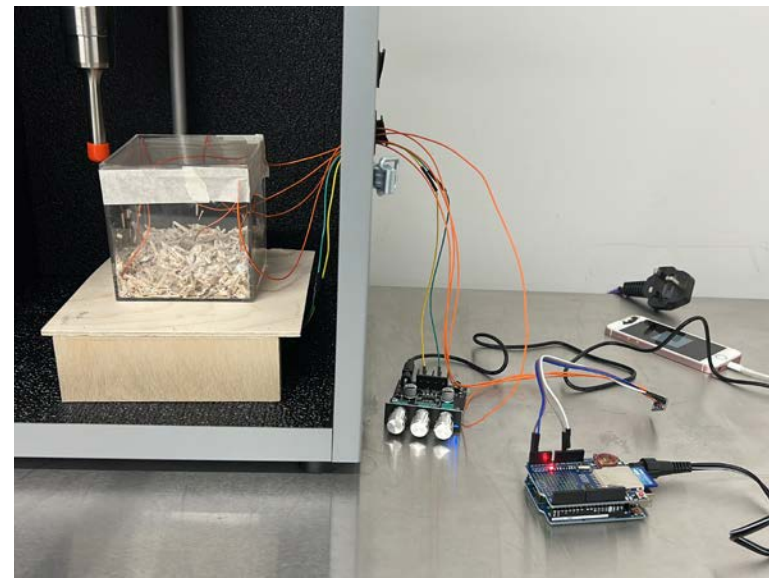
Fig. 4: Hiền Hoàng, *Mycelium Intervention No. 1* (2025), mycelium, wood, Arduino, ADS1115, amplifier, media player, copper; variable dimensions.

Fig. 5: Hiền Hoàng, *Corrosion Study No. 1* (2026), steel, copper sulfate, 17 × 9 × 1,2 cm

Fig. 6: Hiền Hoàng, *Residue Transfer Study*. Corrosion residue from aluminium reacting to copper sulfate on photograph printed on copy paper. 6 × 10 cm. 2025. Original image: *Aerial photograph showing the effects of Agent Orange defoliation*, Vietnam, circa 1961–1971, in the courtesy of the Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University.

sonified. In the studio, these encounters extend into material interventions that stage the slow temporality of contamination itself: metal corrosion, and the growth of mycelium and plants across and through collected matter. Corrosion and biological growth become collaborators, processes that continue their own transformations beyond my control, registering time, decay, and regeneration as the landscapes themselves do.

The outcomes take form as installation bringing together photographic media, sculptural and material objects, sonified data, and works on paper. Together they hold the site and the studio in tension, proposing an **expanded practice of witnessing** adequate to a violence that refuses to remain in the past.



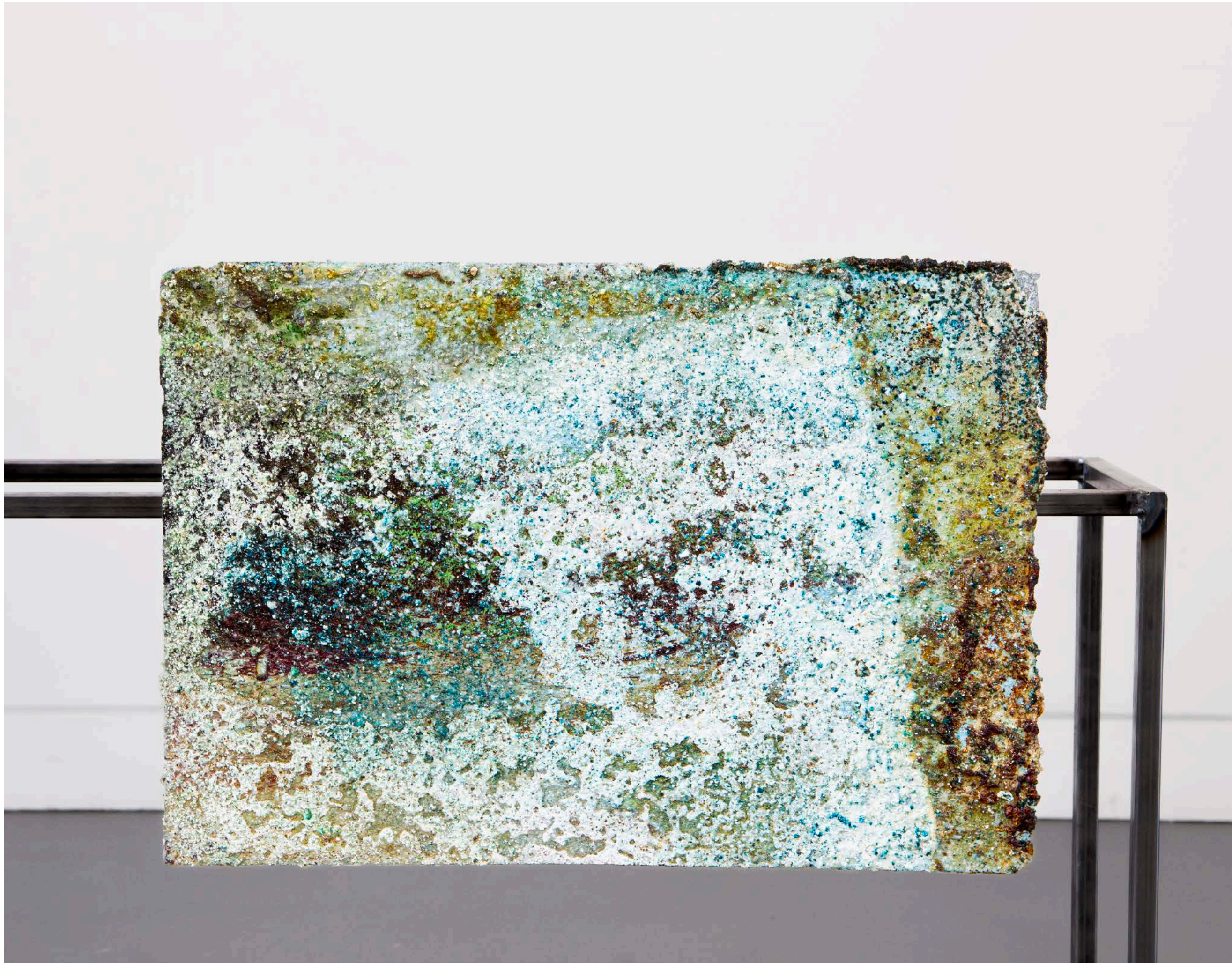


Fig.7: *Constellation II* (2026), front side and detail view, showing *Corrosion Study on UV Print No. 4*, steel frame, corroded aluminum and UV print.



Fig. 8: Hiên Hoàng, *Constellation I* (2026),
corroded aluminum and UV print, steel frame,
magnet, 120 × 60 × 40 cm.



Fig. 9: Hiên Hoàng, *The Base*, part of *Slow Sculpture* (2026–ongoing), corroded steel, side views, 90 × 90 × 45 cm.



Fig. 10: Hiên Hoàng, *How to Touch the Elephant* (2026–ongoing), 2026 version, consisting of constellations of corroded UV prints and sculpture, variable in items and dimensions.

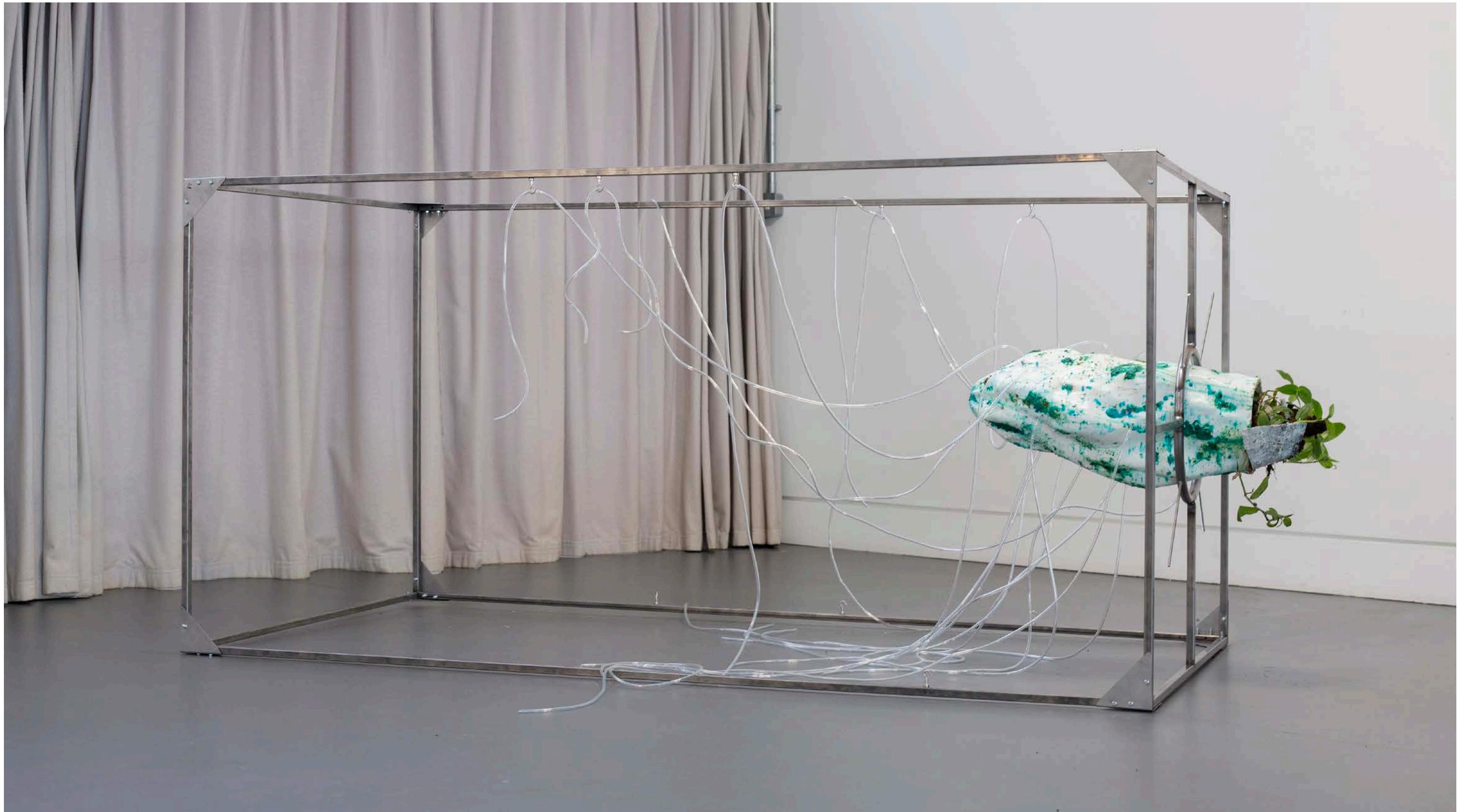


Fig. 11: Hiên Hoàng, *Slow Sculpture with the Living* (2026–ongoing),
3D-printed form, partly corroded steel frame, tube, tradescantia fluminensis,
corroded scrap aluminum, discarded tree log, soil, 180 x 95 x 95 cm

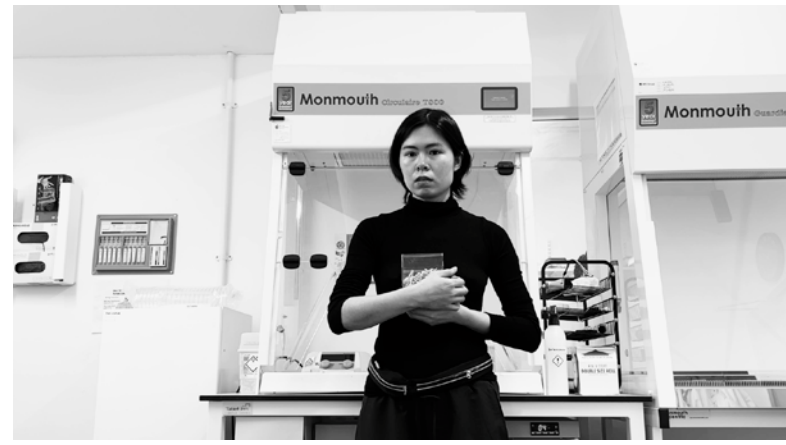
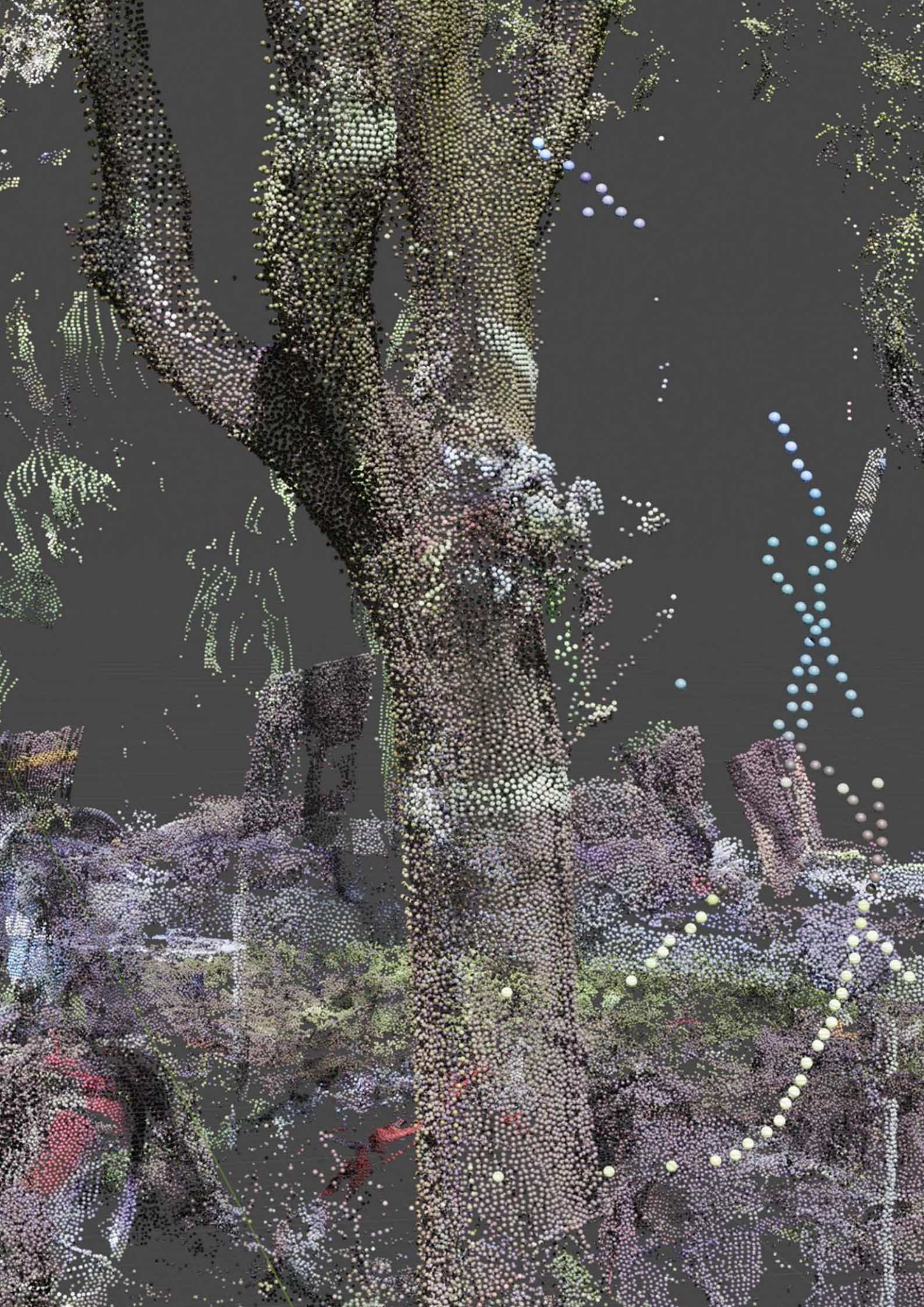


Fig. 12: Hiên Hoàng, *Lullaby* (2025), stills from performance documentation. Single-channel video with sound composed from electrical signals recorded from mycelium, interwoven with a Vietnamese lullaby melody, 5 minutes.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2mVb62E7zc>



Garden of Entanglement

(2024 - 2025)

The eponymous project *Garden of Entanglement* explores **the hidden vibrational life of trees and how they perceive and respond to their environment** through sound and motion. Developed in collaboration with academic researchers, Hoàng translates data collected from trees into sculptural forms that encourage a quiet reconsideration of how human presence shapes the natural world.

UV-printed metal plates and **mycelium sculptures** bear traces of chemical transformation. Copper sulphate and citric acid corrode the metal surfaces in a slow, controlled decay – one that reveals rather than erases. On the fungal body of the sculpture, copper sulphate was again applied, disrupting the organic material with mineral crystallisation and heat.

Through these material processes, the work examines the impact of extraction, **environmental violence, and the fragility of memory** - even matter like data can rot, absorb, and respond. In this entangled landscape, Hoàng suggests that trees stand as quiet witnesses, holding the residues of our presence: how we lived, what we altered, and what we left behind.

*Text by Katy Hundertmark,
Foam Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam, 2025*

Garden of Entanglement was made in collaboration with:

Wood structure and mycelium fabrication:
Prof. Philipp Eversmann, Guido Brinkmann, Zoe Kaufmann -
Experimental and Digital Design and Construction (EDEK),
University of Kassel

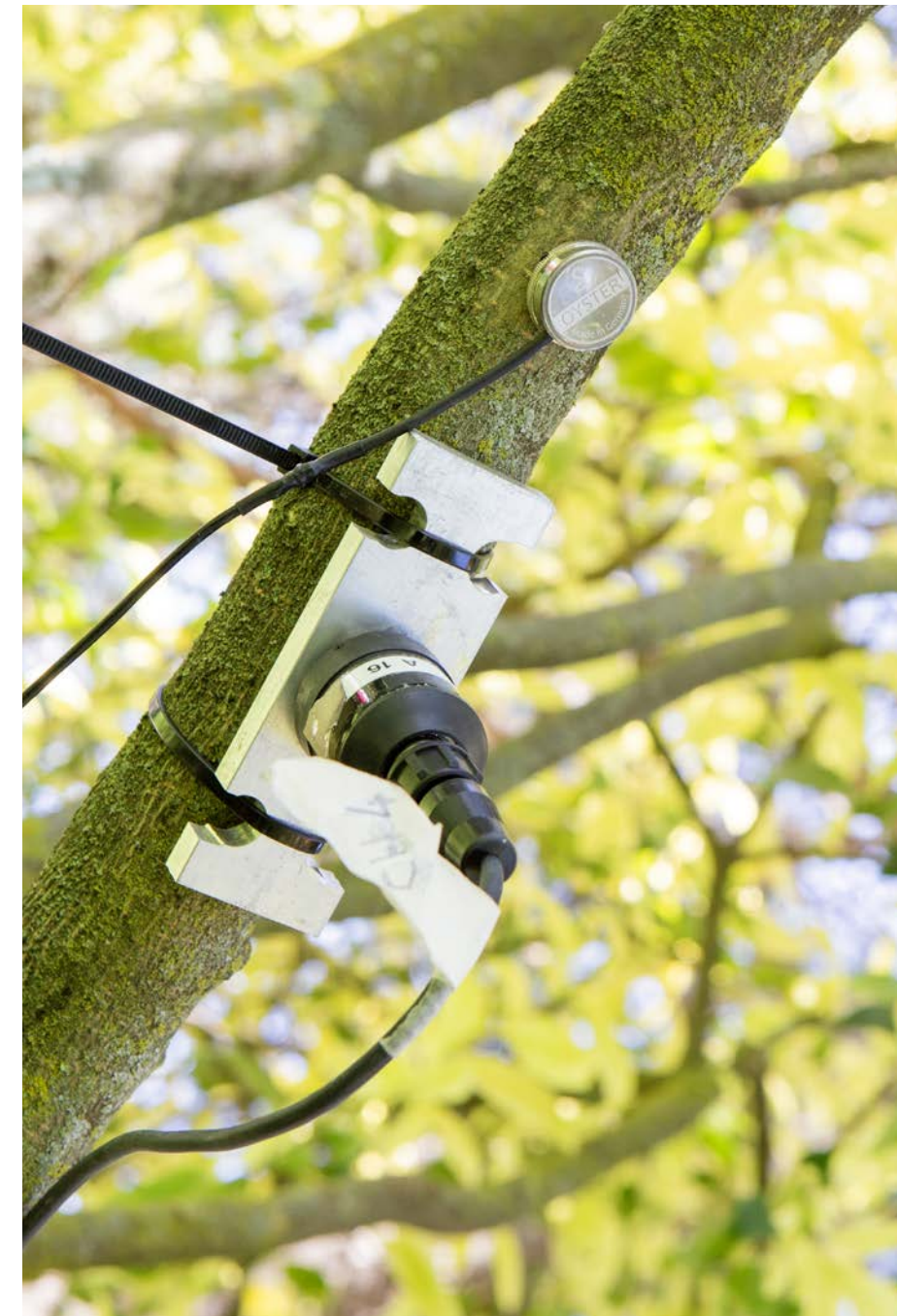
Data collection:
Andrea Giachetti - Department of civil and environmental
engineering, University of Florence

Data analysis and Visual processing:
Susanne Malheiros - HLRS, University of Stuttgart
Ulf Groote - Visual Artist, Artemiy Vrubei - Developer

Motion system design:
Daniel Pietschmann

Composing:
Tam Thi Pham

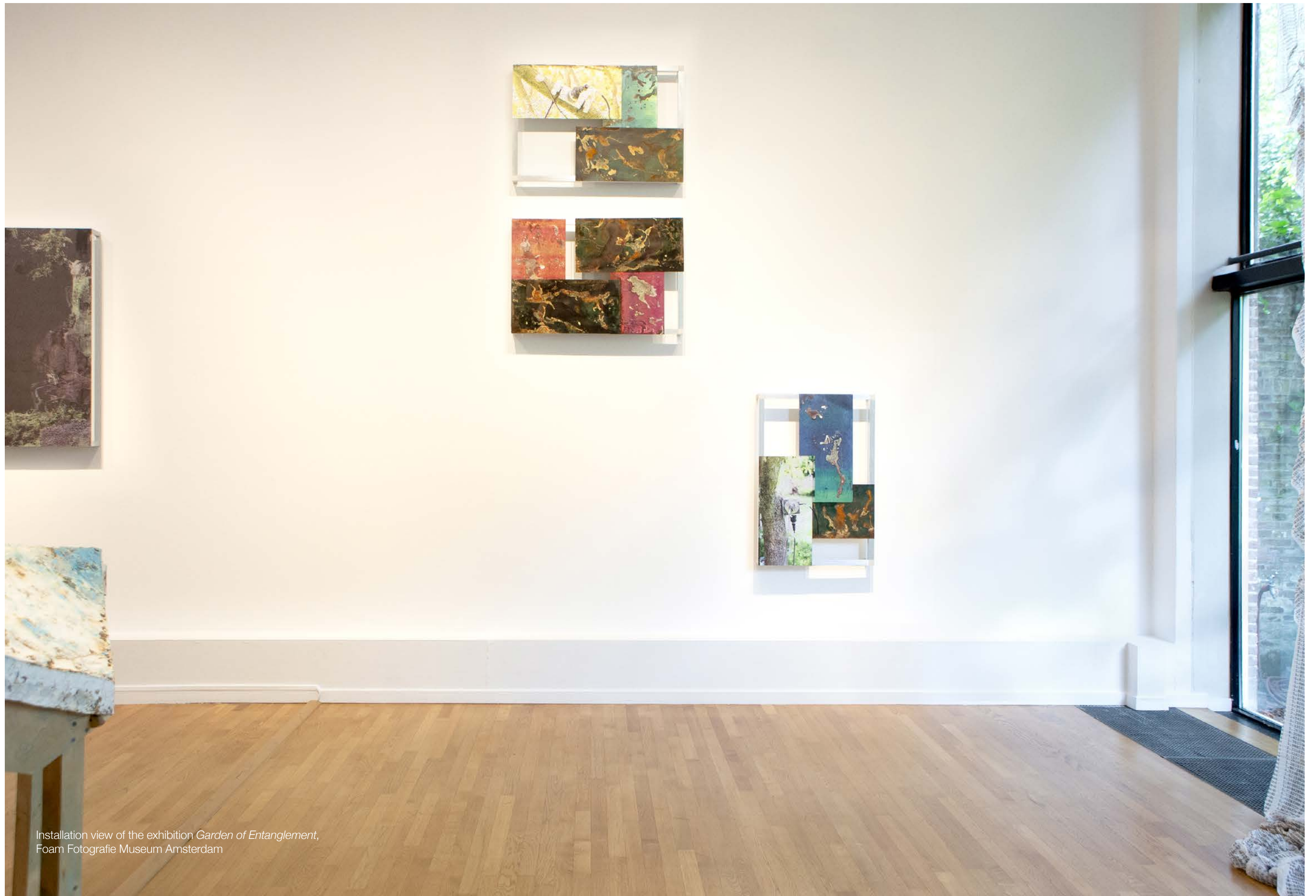
With the support of S+T+ARTS, European Commission 2024



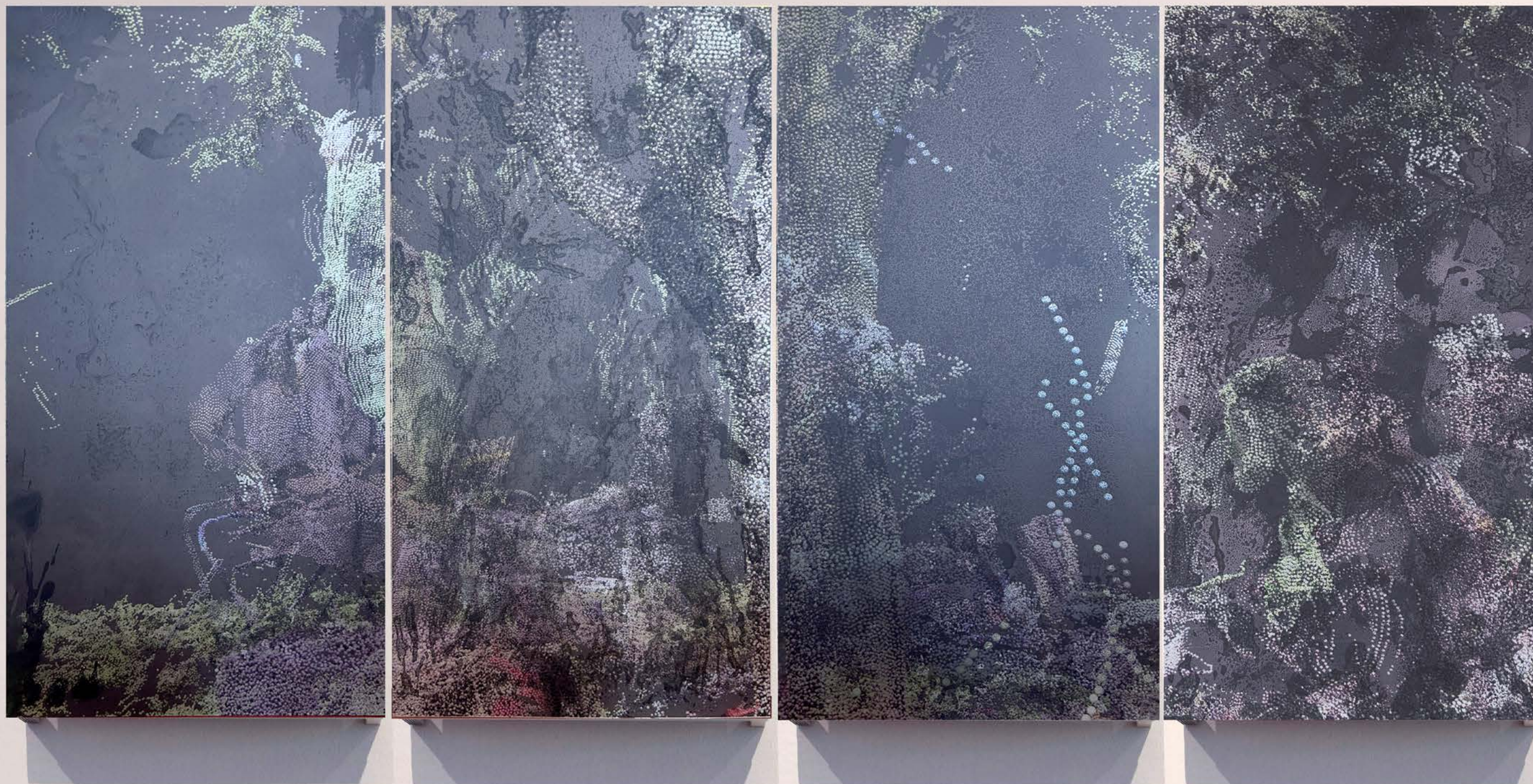
Photos from the experiment with accelerometers, with
 Andrea Giachetti - Department of civil and environmental
 engineering, University of Florence, 2024



Garden of Entanglement
Installation view at Foam Fotografie
Museum Amsterdam, 2025



Installation view of the exhibition *Garden of Entanglement*,
Foam Fotografie Museum Amsterdam



Latency of the Memory

2025

Quadriptych. Each: 100 x 50 x 7,5 cm
 UV photographic print of 3D scanned
 from the research of tree's resonance,
 on oxidized steel and aluminium,
 mixed media.



A scene from the performance *Ritual of Dreamers*,
part of the opening of the exhibition *Garden of
Entanglement*, Foam Fotografie Museum Amsterdam



Scent from Heaven

(2021 - 2023)

Scent from Heaven investigates the **paradoxical relationship between suffering and enlightenment** through the story of the agarwood tree, a fragrant and highly valued wood native to Southeast Asia. Agarwood is revered for its heavenly scent and deep symbolic ties to healing and redemption. Yet this scent only emerges when the tree is wounded—typically through infection or physical damage, often caused by human intervention. In responding to harm, the tree produces a dark, aromatic resin as a kind of immune response—transforming trauma into something treasured. As such, the work reflects on how beauty and value often arise from destruction and trauma, while revealing the tension between the **suffering of nature and humanity's longing for healing and salvation**.

Rooted in the cultural, ecological, and spiritual significance of agarwood, *Scent from Heaven* bridges **scientific inquiry with emotional engagement**. Using CT scans, Hoàng manages to visualise the internal scars within the agarwood tree —traces left behind by the wounds that produce its prized scent. At the same time, she uses EEG technology to record human brain activity while inhaling the scent of agarwood. Through these scientific methods, Hoàng transforms the elusive narrative into a sensory experience.

*Text by Katy Hundertmark,
Foam Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam, 2025*

Moe Gotoda performed for *Scent from Heaven*. Photo by Antine Yzer







Scent from Heaven

Treescape-installation view with 3 film canvases stretched between trees, 6-channels-sound-scape.

Venue: Planten un Blomen Park, Hamburg, Germany. 2023
Photo: Fabian Schwarze





Scent from Heaven

Treescape-installation view with 3 film canvases stretched between trees, 6-channels-sound-scape.

Venue: Planten un Blomen Park, Hamburg, Germany. 2023
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Across the Ocean

(2019 - 2021)

Across The Ocean was inspired by Hoàng's late aunt, who was a contract worker in the former GDR in 1986. In 2014, during a visit to her home and through subsequent research into family archives, Hoàng was able to uncover **the contrast between the hopeful image her aunt projected to her family back home and the reality she endured**. This personal discovery led the artist to use food and its symbolic power to investigate **immigrant identity** and the layers of meaning hidden beneath polished narratives.

When tracing back her family tree, Hoàng was struck by the story of her aunt's migration from Vietnam to Germany in the 1980s. Her celebratory words, captured on the back of postcards, stand in harsh contrast to the **isolation and alienation** her aunt suffered while trying to integrate as a contract worker. In *Across The Ocean* Hoàng uses food as a lens to examine identity, memory, and cultural stereotypes. By incorporating ingredients like rice and soy sauce, she comments on the way Western cultures perpetuate **stereotypical notions of 'Asianness'** and reduce complex identities to cultural clichés. Food, which is deeply tied to both heritage and everyday life, becomes the medium through which the artist questions how cultural perceptions are formed, sustained, and distorted – when in fact it is the one thing that connects us all.

*Text by Katy Hundertmark,
Foam Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam, 2025*



Portrait of the artist's late aunt, taken approx. between 1986 - 1988, GDR (East Germany).
Installation view at the exhibition *Garden of Entanglement*, Foam Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam, 2025.



Across the Ocean
(2021-2024)

14. Across the Ocean (2021-2024) is a multi-media artwork that explores the theme of migration and the search for a better life. The work is composed of several parts, including a video, a sculpture, and a text panel. The video shows a young girl's face, which is a central element of the installation. The sculpture is a small, abstract piece made of white and orange paper. The text panel provides context for the work and discusses the artist's intentions.

15. The artist's intention was to create a work that would resonate with a global audience. The work is a response to the current state of the world, where migration is a major issue. The artist hopes that the work will encourage viewers to think about the challenges faced by migrants and the need for a more compassionate world.



Rhey ran't ro rhe R!

2023

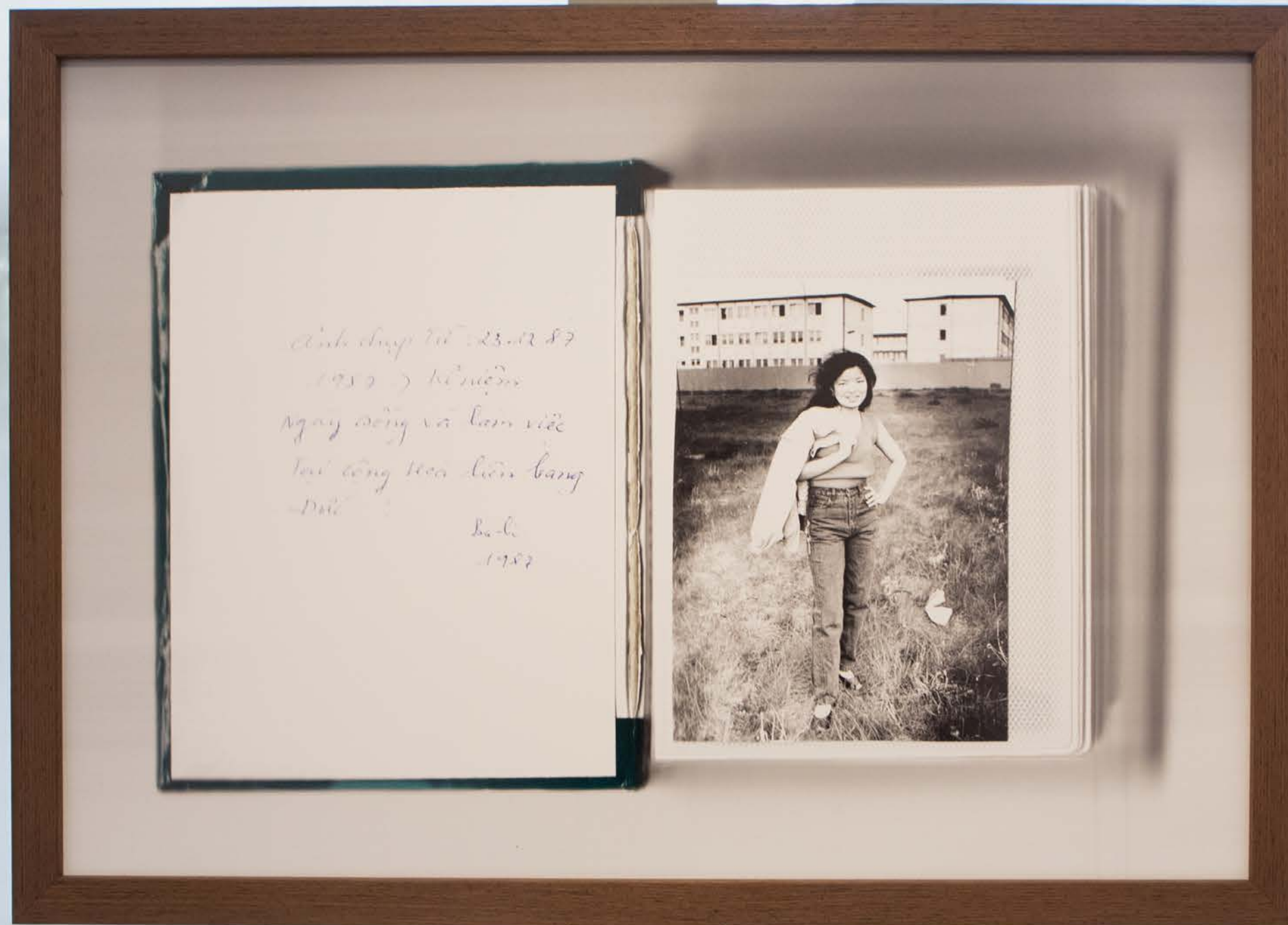
75 x 40 x 40 cm

Deconstructed wooden hocker, UV
print on bended and deformed plexig-
lass, soy bottles, broken ceramic bowl,
metall chains

Installation view of the room *Across the
Ocean*, part of the exhibition *Garden
of Entanglement*, Foam Fotografie
Museum Amsterdam, 2025



Photo and letter of the artist's late aunt, sending from Berlin
to her mother in Vietnam, 1986
Collected in 2020. 12 x 9 cm (without frame)



Portrait of the artist's late aunt, taken approx. 1987, GDR (East Germany). Installation view at the exhibition *Garden of Entanglement*, Foam Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam, 2025.

NL Een foto van de tante van de kunstenaar in een familiealbum, 1987

Genomen op 23-12-1987, haar eerste dag van wonen en werken in Duitsland.

EN The artist's aunt as captured in a family album, 1987

Taken on 23.12.1987, her first day of living and working in Germany.



Installation view at the exhibition
Garden of Entanglement, Foam Foto-
grafiemuseum Amsterdam, 2025.

Hiền Hoàng

Hiền Hoàng (b. 1991) is a Vietnamese German interdisciplinary artist working at the intersection of art, ecology, and material research. Her practice investigates how matter records violence, care, and memory. She works with corroded metals, mycelium, soil, archival photographs, and sensor-based systems to explore how trauma is stored in both living and non-living bodies. By combining scientific instruments with intimate observation, Hoàng develops methods that reveal material transformations as forms of witnessing.

Her ongoing project *How to Touch the Elephant* (2026) approaches post-Agent Orange landscapes in Vietnam through soil measurement, on-site drawing, and data sonification, taking the form of action and lecture performances, installation and participatory workshops.

Other recent works include *Garden of Entanglement* (2024), which translated vibrational data from urban trees into sound, augmented reality, and sculptural forms; *Scent from Heaven* (2023), which explored the wounding and transformation of agarwood trees through CT and EEG imaging; and *Across the Ocean* (2023), an installation reworking migrant family archives through distortion and performance.

Her projects have been exhibited internationally at Foam Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam, Les Rencontres d’Arles, CentroCentro Cibeles in Madrid, Epica Fundacion Barcelona, and other major media arts festivals. In 2024 she received the Paul Huf Award, which led to her first institutional solo exhibition at Foam.

Hoàng is graduating with an MRes from the Royal College of Art, London, in 2026, and works between London, Hanoi, and Germany.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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Photo by Gilles Kayser, 2026

EDUCATION

M.Res (Master of Research)
Royal College of Art, London, United Kingdom

M.A. Photography - Communicatiøn Design
HAW Hamburg, Germany

B.A. Communiçatiøn design
Hochschule RheinMain, Wiesbaden, Germany

B.A. Medien Sciences
Phillips University Marburg, Germany

EXHIBITION & EVENTS (selected)

- 10.07 – 15.09.2026: *No Place Like Home III*
Group show at **SLQS Gallery**,
part of the *Backyard Bienial*,
by **Whitechapel Gallery**, London, UK
- 13.05 – 06.06.2026: Research Residency
Kulturfabrik Esch-sur-Alzette
Luxembourg
- 20.05 – 28.05.2026: *Research Journey*
Group show. Master of Research.
Royal College of Art, London, UK
- 19.12.2025 – 05.05.2026: *Guangzhou Image Triennial*
Guangdong Museum of Art
Guangzhou, China
- 17.01.2026 – 28.02.2026: DECK Singaprove
Singapore Art Week 2026
Singapore
- 09.01 – 28.01.2026: **Goethe Institute Vietnam**
Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam)
Bali, Manila
- 05.06 – 10.09.2025: *Garden of Entanglement*.
Solo Show, **FOAM Museum**
Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 25.10 – 28.10.2024 *AiR Festival* - S+T+ARTS
Manifesta 15, Barcelona, Spain
- 13.09 – 01.11.2024 *Infinite Rehearsal*.
SAVY Contemporary, Berlin
- 18.10 – 21.10.2024 *New Asia* - T3 Photo Art.
Tokyo Institute for Photography, Tokyo, Japan
- 05.07. – 05.09.2023 *She sang a song while I was dreaming*.
Photography Museum Braunschweig, CHLB Đức
- 02.07. – 30.08. 2023 **Les Rencontres de la Photographie**, Arles, France

AWARD & GRANTS (selected)

- 2026 **Research Funding ifA**, Germany
- 2025 **Research Funding**, Ministry for Culture and Media, Hamburg, Germany
- 2024 **Paul Huf Award 2024**, FOAM Museum
Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2024 **S+T+ARTS**, Residency & Grant, EU Commission
- 2023 **Les Rencontres de la Photographie d’Arles**
Discovery Award -Finalist
- 2023 **Art Grant: Art in Public Space**, Ministry for Culture and Media, Hamburg, Germany
- 2022 **Research Art Grant**, Kunstfond Stiftung Bonn, Germany

LECTURES & WORKSHOPS (selected)

- 17.10.2026 (upcoming) Lecture performance
esea contemporary,
Manchester, UK
- 12.09.2026 (upcoming) Lecture performance and workshop, **Heritage Art Space**,
Hanoi, Vietnam
- 20.01.2025 Lecture and workshop at the
KABK the Hague, Netherlands
- 23.10 - 25.10.2024 *WOPHA CONGRESS*,
Perez Art Museum, Miami, USA
- 15.09.2024 Lecture at *REACH* workshop
Media Solution Center - University Stuttgart, CHLB Đức
- 07.04.2024 Presentation at *S+T+ARTS*,
RCR Architeques Foundtàiøn,
Spain
- 12.01.2024 Lecture and Workshop
Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach, Germanyn

PUBLICTÀIION ABOUT THE ARTIST (selected)

- Kim, Sunyoung**. *About „Scent from Heaven“*. Page 111-113. **Photo Art**, Issue 7. Seoul, South Korea. 2024
- Sigh, Meghna**. *On Across the Ocean*. Catalogue text for the Exhibition *Infinte Rehearsal*. **SAVY Contemporary** Berlin, 2024.
- Churchman, Fi**. *Future Great 2024: Hiền Hoàng*. **ArtReview Magazine**, Issue Feb. 2024. Seite 63 – 66. London, United Kingdom. 2024.
- Mucsi, Emese**. *Modes of Spirituality. Interview with Hiền Hoàng*. **TRIGGER Magazine**. Issue 05. FOMU Antwerpen, Belgium, 2023. 68 – 72.