Press
+ 49 89 21127 150
presse@hausderkunst.de

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Diane Severin Nguyen
Powerless
20.11.26 – 16.5.27

Haus der Kunst presents Diane Severin Nguyen's first institutional solo exhibition in Germany, premiering major new works



Credit: Diane Severin Nguyen, Powerless, film still, 2026. Press release and images available at: hausderkunst.de/press

Haus der Kunst presents "**Powerless**", the most ambitious project to date by Vietnamese-American artist **Diane Severin Nguyen** (b. 1990, California, USA). The exhibition invites visitors into a world of seductive beauty and strange, unsettling contradictions. Centred on Nguyen's new film installation *Powerless*, the exhibition unfolds across the Mittelhalle and the Südgalerie through a kinetic installation and a photographic environment, exploring the uneasy entanglement of intimacy, vulnerability, and power.

The new film installation forms the core of the exhibition. It is an international co-production and co-commissioned by Haus der Kunst München, The Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, New York; The Vega Foundation, Toronto, Munich; LUMA Foundation; Chisenhale Gallery, London, and the Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung. The film is produced by Munich-based if...Productions Film GmbH, whose productions was awarded Golden Bear in 2026 and an Academy Award-nomination in 2023.

Set in the Bavarian Alps and seen primarily through surveillance, drone and body-worn cameras, *Powerless* follows a child who leaves home against her mother's wishes. As she moves

Stiftung Haus der Kunst München, gemeinnützige Betriebsgesellschaft mbH
Prinzregentenstraße 1, 80538 Munich
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AG München, HRB 100018
USt-ID: DE811612530
SWIFT: HYVEDEMM
IBAN: DE88 7002 0270 0038 0294 44

through an idyllic landscape, a helicopter circles above. Carrying an American folk band whose wistful songs romanticise rescue, it offers both escape and recruitment. Nguyen's "double bind of the sentimental gaze" describes how vulnerable subjects are both encouraged and punished for expressing their pain. Familial longing and military vision converge, entangling care with control.

The film's tensions take physical form throughout the exhibition. In the Mittelhalle, the very centre of Haus der Kunst, music and synchronised lighting create the atmosphere of a dance hall. An automated structure launches soft, doll-like figures through the air towards a landing platform, where they accumulate throughout the day. Resembling the film's child protagonist, each figure briefly hangs between departure and arrival, turning an image of vulnerability into a projectile. In the Südgalerie, new black-and-white photographs made with a body-worn surveillance camera bring the child's silhouette onto handmade paper, her blurred forms resisting the camera's gaze.

With a background in visual art and political science, Nguyen examines how individual memory and collective histories are understood through contemporary visual culture. She asks how images of war become part of everyday perception and contemporary selfhood. For Nguyen, the question is not how to escape images or history, but how to live through them. With her work, she challenges the machinery of image-making and creates new artistic languages, not as evasions of truth but as ways of reconstructing it.

This exhibition continues our programmes exploration of liveness in contemporary artistic practice, particularly through expanded forms of moving image, connecting previous projects by Cyprien Gaillard, Pan Daijing and Wang Shui. "Powerless" also introduces our 2027 programme focus: artists' photography and image-making amid technological change.

Curated by Xue Tan with Lydia Antoniou.

Diane Severin Nguyen. Powerless
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Haus der Kunst | Südgalerie, Mittelhalle
Prinzregentenstraße 1, 80538 Munich
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About the artist:
Diane Severin Nguyen (b. 1990, Carson, California, USA) lives and works in New York. Her films, photographs, performances, and installations create images where the intimate and the ideological converge. Nguyen's work often examines how representation produces identity and power, and the fantasies of nationhood and victimhood that sustain war and propaganda. Her work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), MoMA PS1 (New York), the Renaissance Society (Chicago), Jeu de Paume (Paris), and screened at Berlinale and the New York Film Festival. A 2023 Guggenheim Fellow, she continues to expand the possibilities of image-making and perception.

"Powerless" international presentations in 2027:
Chisenhale Gallery, London, 9.4. – 13.6.27
The Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, New York, summer 2027
LUMA Foundation Arles, summer 2027
The Vega Foundation, Toronto, autumn 2027

The Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung is the major supporter of Diane Severin Nguyen's exhibition.

The film installation *Powerless* by Diane Severin Nguyen is co-commissioned by Haus der Kunst München; The Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, New York; The Vega Foundation, Toronto; LUMA Foundation; Chisenhale Gallery, London; and the Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung, Munich.

The film is produced by if...Productions Film GmbH.

Production Design: Renate Schmaderer
Production Design Team: Luzi Speth, Lukas Katholik, Yuki Tobiyama

Cinematography: Nikolai Huber
Music & Sound Design: Laszlo Horvath
Wardrobe: Katrin Bobek
Producers: Ingo Fliess & Jonas Egert
Line Producer: Luzie Lohmeyer

Starring Emilie Khanuengnit Phalamat, Laszlo Horvath, Janine Gierszewsky, Leona Grundig, Peter Thoma & Yuki Tobiyama
Voices: Corinna Harfouch, Pei Barthes Wu, Emily Schubert

Post-production: ARTCORE
Visual Effects: Nikolai Huber
Conform, Colour Grading, Mastering & DCP Creation: Julian Nouveau
Sound Editing, Design, Mixing & On-site Sound Mixing: Yohann Henry
Original Music & Sound Design: Laszlo Horvath

Press Enquiries:
Leonie Elena Friedmann
+49 (0)89 21127 150
presse@hausderkunst.de

Press Preview: Wed, 18.11.26, 11 am
Press Images: hausderkunst.de/press

For their annual support of the programme, we would like to thank our shareholders, the Free State of Bavaria, and the Gesellschaft der Freunde der Stiftung Haus der Kunst München e. V. Our special thanks go to our major supporter, the Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung, for its generous support of our work. We also thank the Ulli and Uwe Kai-Stiftung for its long-standing commitment. In addition, we thank the Beisheim Foundation for funding the “Third Place.”