

## Artist Bio

Kenny Nguyen (b. 1990, Ben Tre Province, Vietnam) creates expansive, dimensional, mixed-media paintings that center on ideas of cultural identity, displacement and integration.

Nguyen grew up on a coconut farm in a rural area near the Mekong Delta in southern Vietnam. Despite having an established career in fashion design, he decided to join his family when they moved to the United States in 2010.

Acclimating to an American way of life proved uneasy at first, especially with a language barrier that intensified feelings of alienation and isolation. Nguyen turned to art-making as a coping mechanism and as a means to express himself in a more universal language. The transition from design to art was a natural one and in 2015 Nguyen earned a BFA in painting from the University of North Carolina Charlotte, and subsequently established a studio in Charlotte.

Drawing from his experience working with textiles, in particular, silk, a culturally significant material in Vietnam, Nguyen developed a distinctive technique to produce sensual, three-dimensional works that he describes as “deconstructed paintings.”

He begins by tearing swaths of silk fabric into hundreds of strips that he dips in acrylic paint and adheres to raw canvas. Methodically, almost meditatively, he repeats the process—tearing, painting, sanding, sewing, weaving, attaching, layering—until he has a structured but malleable medium, which he shapes into undulating, sculpted forms.

Nguyen’s paintings are often affixed to the wall with pushpins, allowing him the flexibility to rehang or adjust the composition as desired. The works can be stretched flat like a traditional canvas or gently draped, folded and creased into animated structures that unfurl along the wall and pool at the floor. Each installation is unique.

In some ways, Nguyen’s approach of deconstruction and reconstruction is akin to the experience of growing into his identity as Vietnamese American and as an artist. His use of silk, which remains the primary material in his practice, has evolved alongside him. Where he once chose it for its splendor and sense of familiarity, through a rigorous process of transformation, it now holds greater meaning for the artist: “For me, silk has become the connector tying both cultures together.”

Nguyen has participated in exhibitions across the globe, including at the Sejong Museum of Art, Seoul; CICA Museum (Czong Institute for Contemporary Art), Gimpo, Gyeonggi Province,

Korea; Kunstwerk Carlshütte, Büdelsdorf, Germany; LaGrange Art Museum, Georgia; Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, Florida; Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Ana, California; and The Rayburn House Office Building, United States Capitol Complex, Washington, DC.

In 2016, Nguyen received the Excellence Asia Contemporary Young Artist Award from Sejong Museum of Art and in 2023, a nomination for the Joan Mitchell Fellowship. He has been awarded numerous grants, fellowships, and residencies.