



# SIX LINES OF FLIGHT

SHIFTING GEOGRAPHIES  
IN CONTEMPORARY ART

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IN CONTEMPORARY ART

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## Tiffany Chung

b. 1969, Da Nang, Vietnam; lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City

In her embroidered canvas maps, cartographic drawings, videos, performance works, and installations, Tiffany Chung investigates the shifting topography of urban landscapes. Her work reminds us that maps do not simply reflect geography; they encapsulate particular, and subjective, moments in time. In *one giant great flood 2050* (2010, pl. 202), for example, the artist simultaneously charts the existing and planned transportation networks of Ho Chi Minh City, overlaying them with vibrant spheres and dots of paint marker and washes of ink that signal the impact of the extreme flooding projected to transform the city by mid-century. Often based on old urban plans and gridlike official surveys, Chung's vivid, abstracted maps foreground the cultural memories and histories specific to each region. By intertwining fact and fantasy, she unveils the myth of cartography as an objective discipline, revealing its political agendas and constructed landscapes.

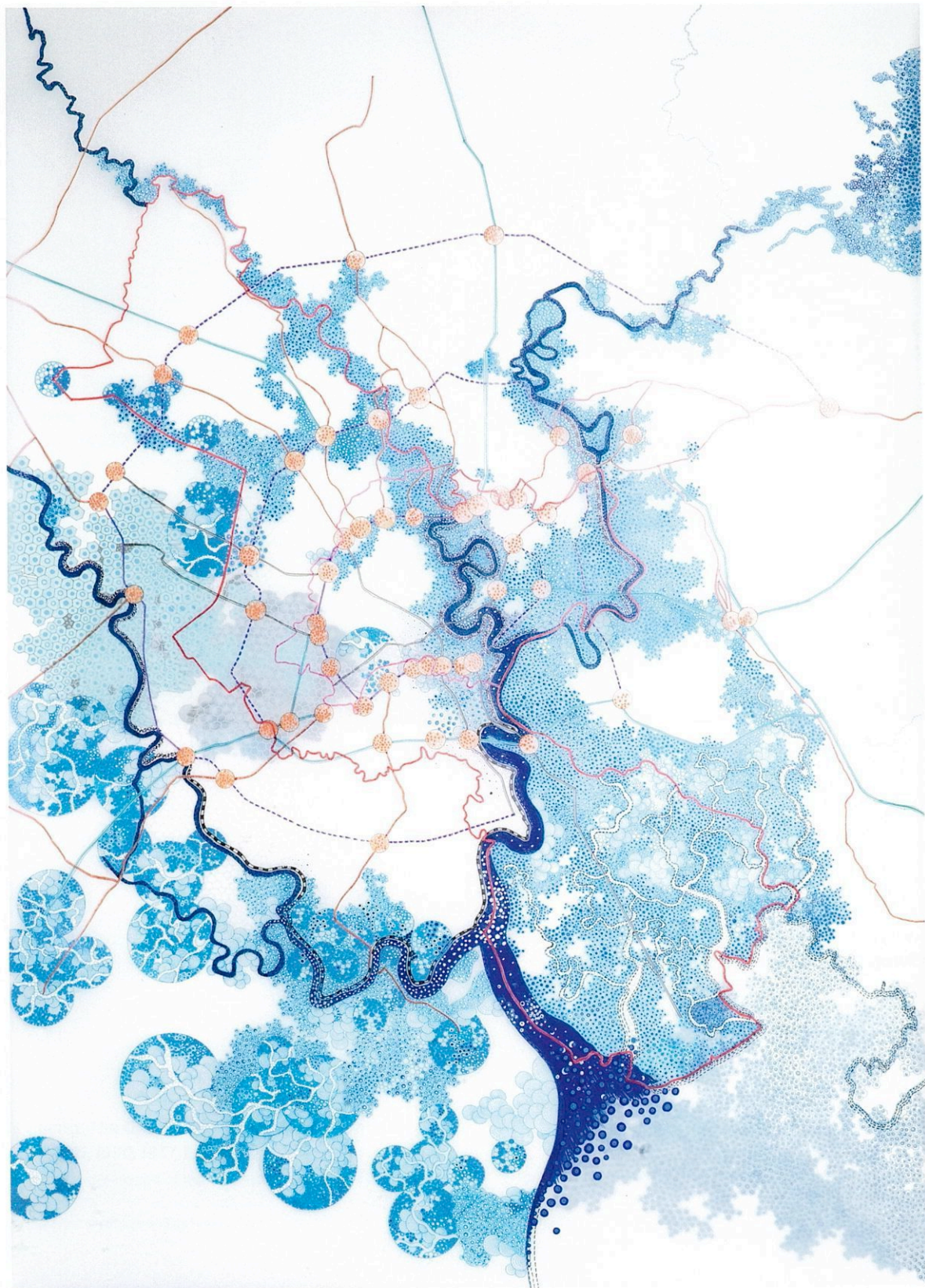
For her 2010 exhibition *scratching the walls of memory*, Chung focused on an unspoken past, creating works inspired by handwritten messages discovered beneath layers of paint on the walls of Hiroshima's Fukuromachi Elementary School, which was used as a shelter after the atomic bomb was dropped in 1945. The exhibition centered on an installation of the same name, which comprised small chalkboards and cloth satchels that had been hung on two of the gallery walls, and a wooden school desk. The chalkboards and satchels were inscribed or embroidered with the writings of the Japanese victims of the nuclear attacks, as well as those displaced or separated from their families by conflicts in Vietnam, Cambodia, Germany, and other countries. Their messages reflected their trauma and suffering, documenting a history that has not been officially recorded or acknowledged. The maps that accompanied the installation similarly depart from the realm of established historical practice, outlining the topography that resulted from many of the twentieth century's most devastating conflicts: the Berlin Wall, the demilitarized zones (DMZs) in Korea and Vietnam, the atomic blast zones in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Layered with intricate embroidery, beads, rhinestones, and metal grommets, these richly textured works on canvas and vellum possess a beauty

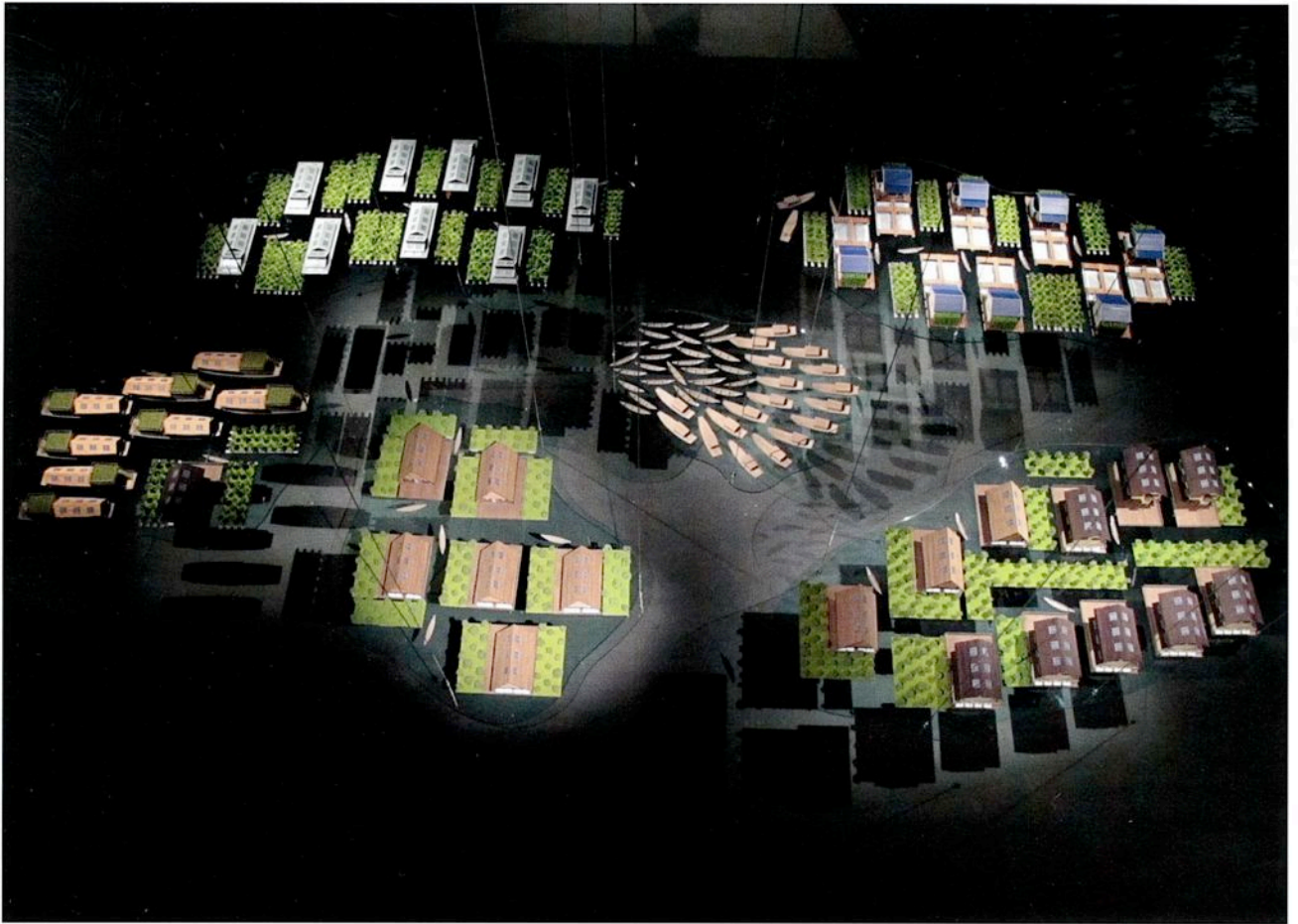
that is wholly incongruous with the fraught histories they represent.

In her earlier works, Chung explored communist imagery, twisting it through the lens of popular culture to create unexpected representations of Vietnamese life. Some of the photographs in *Play* (2008) depict Vietnamese youths in jumpsuits similar to those worn by the manual laborers who are powering the country's rapid urbanization. Although their poses are modeled on classic gestures from government propaganda, they are wielding pool cues, megaphones, and water guns. Here, too, Chung investigates boundaries and borders, using appropriation not to critique but to create a utopian space in which traditional frameworks such as social conventions, class hierarchy, and cultural categories are temporarily transgressed and suspended.

More recently, the potential of urban planning to shape spatial and cultural transformation in developing regions has served as an anchor point for the artist. In *The River Project* (2010) she explores the implications of constructing hydropower dams along the Mekong River. Her contribution to the Singapore Biennale 2011, the mixed-media installation *stored in a jar: monsoon, drowning fish, color of water, and the floating world* (2011, pl. 203), is a miniature model of a floating town that draws on vernacular architecture and ways of life in the floating communities of the Mekong Delta and Srinagar, India, as well comparative studies of farmhouses in coastal and inland prefectures of Japan. Questioning and reassessing a failed utopian vision—the Arcology design movement, which aimed to minimize human impact on natural resources while enabling extremely high population density—Chung proposes new ways of adapting vernacular structures to address environmental issues and to reshape the present and future global landscape.

—Xiaoyu Weng





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**Tiffany Chung, *one giant great flood 2050, 2010***

Micropigment ink and oil and Copic marker on vellum and paper,  
43¼ × 27½ in. (110 × 70 cm)

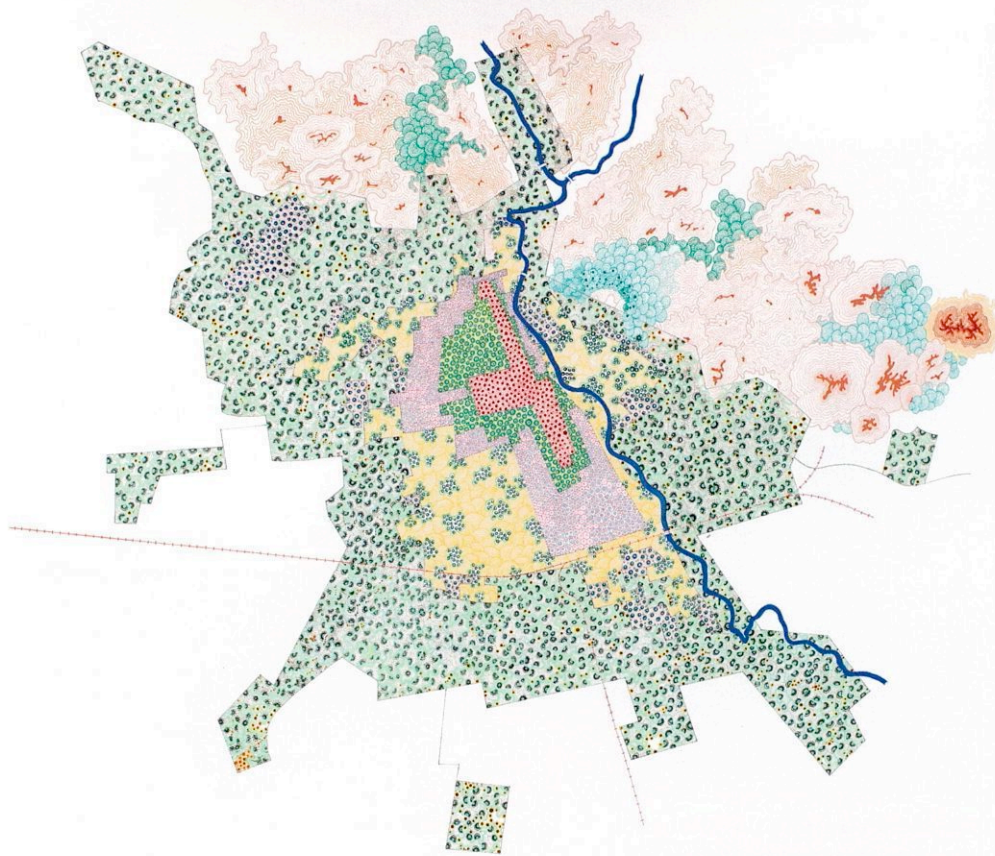
Courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York

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**Tiffany Chung, *stored in a jar: monsoon, drowning fish,  
color of water, and the floating world, 2011***

Mixed media (Plexiglas, wood veneer, plastic, aluminum, paint, steel  
cable, foam, and copper wire), 236¼ × 141¼ in. (600 × 360 cm). Installation  
view at the Singapore Biennale 2011

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City



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**Tiffany Chung, *The Growth of Cali—city boundaries:*  
1780, 1880, 1921, 1930, 1937, 1951, 2012**

Micropigment ink, gel ink, and oil marker on paper, 38½ × 53¼ in.  
(98 × 135 cm)

Courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York