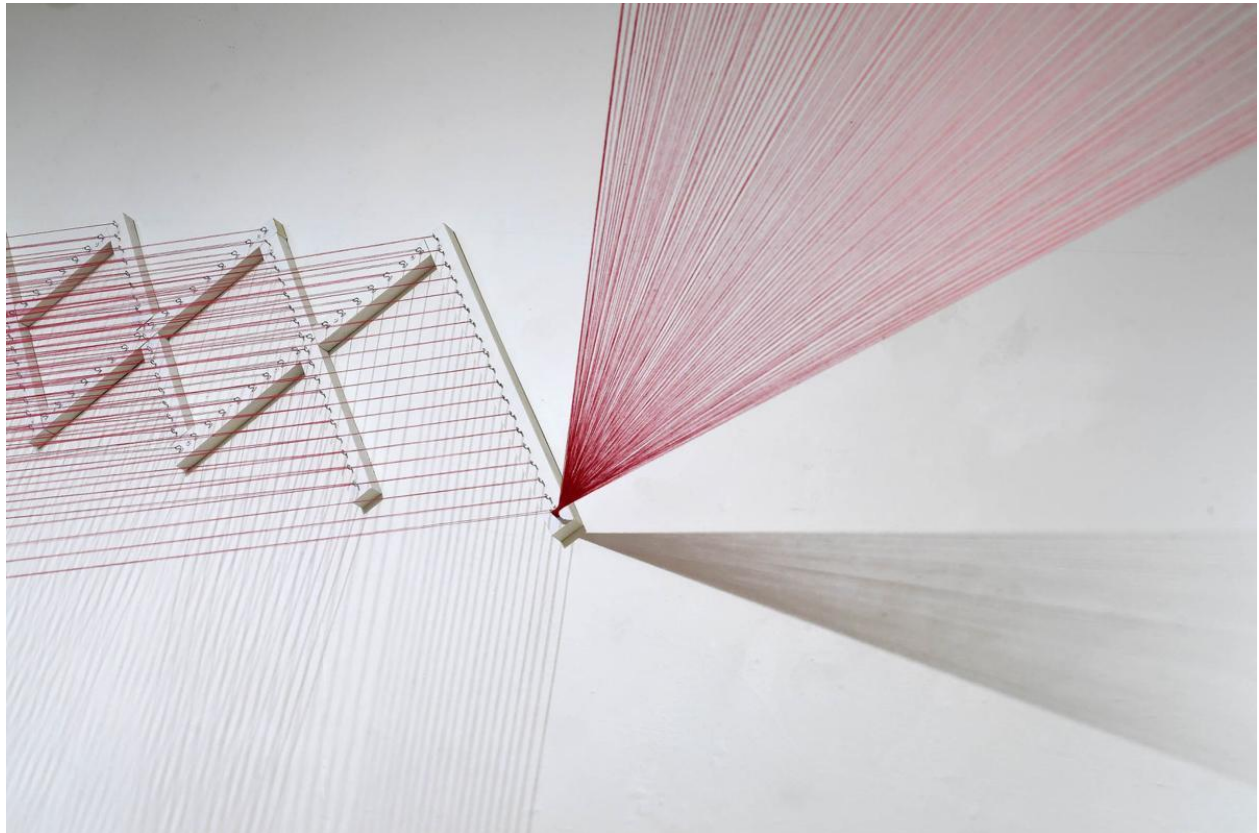


By a thread: 'Tension' envelops SPA's third floor

By Mary Gow Arts Correspondent, *The Times Argus/Rutland Herald*

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Tuyen My Nguyen: "Tension" detail, Photo cr: Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo

Walking up the stairs to the Third Floor gallery at Studio Place Arts, even before the top step, a complex installation of lines and planes unfolds. Taut lines fan out from vertices along the walls and ceiling, stretching across the room and hallway. Like strands of a web or laser beams, the lines stay the same but viewers' perception of their angles and layers change with movement through the gallery. This altered space together with datascares developed with cultural statistics, offer a rich thought provoking experience.

"Tension," a thread installation created specifically for this gallery by Tuyen My Nguyen, of Berlin, and datascares by Misook Park, of New York City, opened last week in the Third Floor Gallery at Barre's Studio Place Arts. "Finding the Quiet," a solo exhibition of artworks in rust, indigo and eucalyptus by Linda Finkelstein of South Burlington opened in the Second Floor Gallery.



Tuyen My Nguyen: "Tension" detail, Photo cr: Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo

“‘Tension’ is an environmental embodiment of the current state of the nation. Simplified down to minimal forms made of thread, the dual states of our beloved America weave oppressively in reaction to the space. Conflict may always be prevalent, but it is how we choose to respond to it that makes all the difference,” said Nguyen in her artist’s statement

“The impermanence of this site-specific installation parallels the fleeting nature of socio-political events and identities,” she noted.

Nguyen has been creating thread installations since 2009, while she was an undergraduate at Loyola University in New Orleans. For several years, she has used thread to experiment with translating conceptual ideas into spatial environments with her “Dissection” series of installations, including this one.

Each installation is designed for a specific space. Nguyen brings architectural training and computer programs to her design, which is then implemented with thousands of feet of ordinary thread, anchored with screw eyes.

For SPA’s “Tension,” Nguyen explained, “The main concept was to create a piece that is more intimate. I wanted to bring it down to the viewer. In doing that it could become

oppressive. As you enter from downstairs, the two sides cross over. There's tension within the thread."

"Red is a very passionate, full of tension color. I drew in the blue as political. The third floor is almost symmetrical, and I thought about how there's always a sense of duality, that we're after similar goals, but there's a tension and two sides."

In the center of the gallery, the colors overlap.

"Artists who share their skills through site-specific installations deserve enormous praise, and we sincerely extend this to Tuyen for her intricate thread installation," said Sue Higby, executive director of SPA, noting that SPA's building with plaster walls and narrow spaces provided many challenges.

"Tuyen's results are memorable," Higby said.

Higby said Nguyen uses high-tech design tools and also low-tech installation.

"It's really charming that she uses a toy wagon for her large thread spools during the installation process. With two people on ladders using long poles, the individual threads are run back and forth, manually looped into the hooks, with the threads being dispensed from the moving toy wagon."

Nguyen collaborated with her friend Misook Park, an architectural designer, for this project. Park brings research and data on socio-cultural and environmental issues to her datascares — digital images printed on vinyl or photo paper. Two of her larger works deal with guns. A five-foot long map shows the 2007 distribution of civilian guns per 100 people in countries around the globe. A list shows homicides by firearms per 1 million people, with the size of the numbers scaled from a bold 29.9 in the United States down to 1.4 in Australia.

In "Finding the Quiet" in the Second Floor Gallery, serenity pervades in Finkelstein's works on paper and fabric, with their organic quality, pale palette, and varied textures.

"Since I moved to Vermont in 2014, I explored working with eco-mediums using eucalyptus, indigo and rust," says Finkelstein, a longtime art educator, who works in a variety of media, including painting, printmaking and collage.

"A sense of slowness and a wonderful aroma sweetened my new home as the eucalyptus cooked. I began adding stitches to my work and found slow stitching to be quite centering. A palette of calm emerged by engaging in these processes ... soft earth tones, graceful oranges, and deep blues embraced me."