

Dawn Chan, 'What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now: Diane Severin Nguyen,' *The New York Times*, November 17 2021

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QUEENS

Diane Severin Nguyen

Through Dec. 13. SculptureCenter, 44-19 Purves Street, Long Island City, Queens. 718-361-1750; sculpture-center.org.



Installation view of Diane Severin Nguyen's "If Revolution Is a Sickness," at SculptureCenter. Charles Benton

These days, K-pop's ties to global capitalism are hard to miss. (Take McDonald's menu, which offers a Chicken McNugget meal endorsed by the Korean boy band BTS.) But the American artist Diane Severin Nguyen uses K-pop to look at something different: the impact of immigration and cultural exchange among countries with a Communist past.

The exhibition's main work, a video titled "If Revolution Is a Sickness," stars a Vietnamese-Polish protagonist named Weronika, who lives in Warsaw and eventually joins a local dance crew inspired by Korean idol groups. As they move and lip-sync to a song about revolution, Nguyen builds a case that K-pop has much in common with Soviet socialism. Which maybe isn't far-fetched: The genre's stars often live communally and perform choreographed acts. Casting her lead actress by searching for a Polish performer who shared her surname, Nguyen sought a doppelgänger from an alternate post-Cold War world. If your immigrant parents came inches away from moving elsewhere entirely, this game of "what-if" feels familiar.

In a back room at SculptureCenter, photos by Nguyen — flames, braided hair and unrecognizable gooey substances shot close-up — echo older feminist artists who explored abjection and bodily shame. Throughout, Nguyen merges cinematic melodrama with the homegrown feel of social media: the inexplicable listlessness of vloggers; reaction videos shot in bedrooms and public squares. If you like the unfiltered emotions and rough edges of the current media landscape, then Nguyen's latest work will appeal to you. **DAWN CHAN**