



REDCAT

Tenzin Phuntsog

- **Heeding (Land) / Roaming (Heart) / Grasping (Language)**

Film/Video

November 13, 2023
8 PM

PRESENTED BY

REDCAT

**Roy and Edna Disney
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We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandeño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

Tenzin Phuntsog

• Heeding (Land) / Roaming (Heart) / Grasping (Language)

In Tenzin Phuntsog's film and videos, he and his camera roam seemingly endless landscapes. The quietness of these landscapes are deafeningly loud. What are the hills saying? What guidance are they screaming to impart? What should we heed? But Phuntsog's work also asks other questions: What happens when we abandon the act of roaming for the act of loving, the act of caring? Sitting still and deciding to extend grace to our parents? What should we heed when we listen to the achingly desperate beating of elders' hearts? What do we do then? How do we respond? Digging deep into his personal history, Phuntsog makes films that, instead of leading with prescribed artistic or cinematic languages, lead with yearning and a journey to heeding knowledge beyond our immediate grasp.

Presented in English and Tibetan with English subtitles.

The in-person program includes a post-screening talk with Tenzin Phuntsog, moderated by Jheanelle Brown.

The Jack H. Skirball Series is organized by Jheanelle Brown and the late Bérénice Reynaud.

“ In *Pala Amala (Father Mother)* and *Dreams (2022)*, Phuntsog films his parents, producing images that are surprising, slow, and immediate in their apparent comfort. Phuntsog's affecting camera handling matches his parents' on-screen presence. ”

-Asa Mendelsohn, *Screenslate*

Pala Amala (Father Mother) (2022), 6 min.

For the two-channel video *Pala Amala*, which translates as “Father Mother,” Phuntsog asked his parents to express “love” in the ways in which it is conveyed daily in their household. The work portrays Phuntsog's parents engaged in acts of care, walks on the beach reminiscent of their strolls in the sparse landscape of their youths, and other tender moments.

Mother Tongue (2023), 7 min.

Mother Tongue stems from Phuntsog's attempt at re-learning the Tibetan language. The artist moved to the US when he was four years old. He had to learn English, which resulted in him going through a long period of silence. “During the process of reconnecting with my Mother Tongue, I found myself going back to my childhood years and learning as a child does through simple acts of visual, sonic, somatic and mental connections that required me to use different

parts of my body to make sounds that had not come from me for many years. In the work, two children are heard singing nursery rhymes, reciting Tibetan letters of the alphabet and pointing to the world around them. This is how I relearned language, like a child.”

***The Day the Sun Died* (2020), 14 min.**

Filmed during the 2017 total solar eclipse, Henry Realbird, an elder (Apsáalooke) and cowboy poet, in a stream of consciousness speaks to the importance of dreams and visions. Funded by the Montana Film Office and shot on 16mm film in Crow Country, Montana.

***Film Poem I* (2011), 9 min.**

“Working with two archival materials that are linked with a singular cut point where black-and-white footage and color footage collapse. I wrote these words to give voice to images that were filmed ethnographically in an attempt to ground them back into something that I felt was more personal and connected.” –Tenzin Phuntsog

***Pure Land* (2022), 15 min.**

Pure Land is a 15-minute single-channel video work by Phuntsog shot on 35mm film that builds a loose narrative around a long-distance conversation between a young Tibetan American man and his Tibetan-born mother. The character, played by a friend of the artist, wanders through a natural landscape resembling the exiled homeland of his mother, taking photographs in an attempt to “find a frame that evokes a sense of belonging.” The camera in these works is used as an instrument to reveal the impossibility for displaced Tibetan individuals to be seen in actual Tibetan landscapes. The sparse terrains in *Pure Land* were shot by the artist in Montana and on the land of the Black Feet Nation with their permission.

***Dreams* (2022), 2 min.**

In the single-channel video *Dreams*, we see the pair go to sleep on a single mattress on the floor — akin to the one the artist’s family used when they first arrived in the U.S. — within an empty photo studio. The bed seems to be floating midair within an erased environment as if any place could be photoshopped around them, heightening the sense of displacement and uprooting.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tenzin Phuntsog works primarily as an artist and director and lenses his own hybrid projects. The practice touches on themes of presence and belonging as well as landscape and language. The works have presented at notable cinema and fine art spaces internationally. “My work is a reflection of an exodus, a personal practice. Memories as a still life on an altar.”

UPCOMING AT REDCAT

Kearra Amaya Gopee, Simon Benjamin, Tamika Galanis, and Aliyah Blackmore: Deep in the Mud, We Are Enmeshed in All Its Forms

November 20

What is time in the face of ecological uncertainty? What is time when the land, the sea, and the sky cannot bear the burden of human contempt? The implications of the present are wrought from the past's unresolved violence. How are these questions localized in the Caribbean, a complex and ever-evolving region which transcends its positioning as a tropical paradise in the Western imagination?

This program considers the implications of continued ecological degradation and suggests that what is to come originated from that which we have not contended with, namely, colonial violence. The artists included in the show dig into the earthen cores of history and themselves to make sense of a world in which futurity is aspirational, communal, and hopefully, within reach.

King Hu: Kong shan ling yu (Raining in the Mountain)

November 27

The legendary King Hu (1932-1997) set a new gold standard for the Chinese martial arts film (*wuxia pian*). REDCAT presents a restored version of one of his most stellar achievements, *Kong shan ling yu (Raining in the Mountain)* (1979). Set during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), in a Buddhist monastery experiencing both a power struggle and a struggle for the sacred Mahayana Sutras, Hu has staged precisely choreographed fights that echo figures of Chinese opera — bodies flying in the air become pure light and light itself becomes pure thought: spirited battles of wits, as well as a metaphor for Buddhist metaphysics. At the center of this sumptuous ballet is the amazing and delightfully evil Hsu Feng, described by critics as “the screen’s gravest, most ravishing woman warrior.”



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