

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Sat Sept 24 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

Trinh T. Minh-ha ***Forgetting Vietnam***

Los Angeles premiere

Forty years after the Vietnam War, what remains, for those living in exile, and for those who stayed, of the country once called *đất nước vạn xuân*—the land of 10,000 springs? Mythologically born of a fragile equilibrium between land and water, Vietnam now faces a balancing act no less precarious. Is she doomed to become a Benjaminian *image*, in touristic snapshots, in diasporic nostalgia? Or is she reborn in a to-and-fro between traditions linked to the solid earth, and the liquid changes of rapid globalization? Through exquisitely composed images and a shimmering soundtrack, Trinh T. Minh-ha (re)constructs the country of her birth as lost in multiple layers of remembrance and oblivion, while the specter of America's most divisive war remains both present and all too easy to forget.

South Korea/Vietnam/USA, 2015, digital, 90 min.

Directed, Written and Edited: Trinh T. Minh-ha.

Production and Photography: Trinh T. Minh-ha & Jean-Paul Bourdier.

Music: The Six Tones and ĐOI Music.

Commissioned: ACC Gwangju, Korea & HKW Berlin, Germany

In person: Trinh T. Minh-ha

"Trinh challenges her audiences with each work, constantly shifting how she critically engages with the form and spirit of cinema."

—San Francisco Cinematheque

"Words, superimposed, come and go like a graphic ballet that adds a layer to the archaeology visible in the landscape."

— Cinéma du Réel, Paris

From the Filmmaker

Vietnam in ancient times was named *đất nước vạn xuân* – the land of ten thousand springs. One of the myths surrounding the creation of Vietnam involves a fight between two dragons whose intertwined bodies fell into the South China Sea and formed Vietnam's curving 'S' shaped coastline. Legend also has it that Vietnam's ancestors were born from the union of a Dragon King, Lạc Long Quân and a fairy, Âu Cơ. Âu Cơ was a mythical bird that swallowed a handful of earthly soil and consequently lost the power to return to the 36th Heaven. Her tears formed Vietnam's myriad rivers and the country's recurring floods are the land's way of remembering her.

In her geo-political situation, Vietnam thrives on a fragile equilibrium between land and water management. A life-sustaining power, water is evoked in every aspect of the culture. Shot in Hi-8 video in 1995 and in HD and SD in 2012, the images unfold spatially as a dialogue between the two elements—land and water—that underlie the formation of the term "country" (đất nước). Carrying the histories of both visual technology and Vietnam's political reality, these images are also meant to feature the encounter between the ancient as related to the solid earth, and the new as related to the liquid changes in a time of rapid globalization. In conversation with these two parts is a third space, that of historical and cultural re-memory – or what local inhabitants, immigrants and veterans remember of yesterday's stories to comment on today's events. Through the insights of these witnesses to one of America's most divisive wars, Vietnam's specter and her contributions to world history remain both present and all too easy to forget.

Nowadays, people go to Vietnam to forget much of what they knew and recalled of her. However, it may be more adequate to say that Vietnam today is forgetting them. In visiting, returning, and photographing, we are already involved in the process of preserving and effacing.

The moment one gathers to show and tell is also the moment one starts the journey of forgetting (and not the contrary, as commonly believed). Documenting is both an act of memory against forgetfulness and a deliberate gesture of forgetfulness against memory.

Through the issues of re-memory in relation to war and homeland, the film touches on a trauma of international scale, and more particularly, the U.S. and Vietnam; a trauma revived among war survivors on both sides with the current war-with-no-end against terrorism. Made in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the end of the war, *Forgetting Vietnam* also offers the viewer a reflexive

dimension on D-cinema, and a door to different creative potentials within today's means of communication. It invites the viewers to expand their mind and to apprehend reality in its multidimension.

About the Filmmaker

Born in Vietnam, **Trinh T. Minh-ha** is a filmmaker, writer, and composer. Her work includes: 8 feature-length films that have been honored in numerous retrospectives around the world; several collaborative visual and multimedia installations (including, *Old Land New Waters*, 2007-2008, (Okinawa Prefectural Museum 2007; 2008; 3rd Guangzhou Triennale 2008) *L'Autre marche* (Musée du Quai Branly, 2006-2009), *The Desert is Watching* (Kyoto Biennial, 2003); and *Nothing But Ways* (1999); 14 books including *Lovecidal. Walking with the Disappeared* (2016), *D-Passage. The Digital Way* (2013); *Elsewhere Within Here* (2011); *The Digital Film Event* (2005), *Cinema Interval* (1999) and, in collaboration with Jean-Paul Bourdier, *Habiter un monde* (2006) and *Drawn from African Dwellings* (1996).

She is the recipient of numerous awards and grants (including the 2014 Wild Dreamer Lifetime Achievement Award from the Subversive Festival in Zagreb, Croatia; the 2012 Women's Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award; the "Trailblazers" Award at MIPDOC, Cannes; AFI National Independent Filmmaker Maya Deren Award, fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment of the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, the American Film Institute, The Japan Foundation, and the California Arts Council). Her films have been given over forty eight retrospectives in Argentina, Croatia, Columbia, Mexico, Finland, Brazil, Canada, Italy, Korea, Spain, the Netherlands, Slovenia, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Japan, India, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, the UK, the US, and were exhibited at the international contemporary art exhibition Documenta 11 (2002) in Germany. They have shown widely in the United States, in Canada, Senegal, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as in Europe and Asia (including in Italy, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Japan, India, Taiwan and Jerusalem.)

Trinh Minh-ha has traveled and lectured extensively—in the United States, as well as in Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand—on film, art, feminism, and cultural politics. She taught at the National Conservatory of Music in Dakar, Senegal (1977-80); at universities such as Cornell, San Francisco State, Smith, and Harvard, Ochanomizu (Tokyo), Ritsumeikan (Kyoto), Dongguk (Seoul). She is Professor of Rhetoric and of Gender & Women's Studies and of Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley.

Visit www.trinhminh-ha.com for more information

Filmography

Reassemblage, Senegal, 1982, 40 mins.

Naked Spaces - Living is Round, West Africa, 1985, 135 mins.

Surname Viet Given Name Nam, 1989, 108 mins.

Shoot for The Contents, China-USA, 1991, 102 mins.

A Tale of Love, 1995, 108 mins. (co-directed with J.P. Bourdier)

The Fourth Dimension, 2001, 87 mins.

Night Passage, 2004. 98 mins. (co-directed with J.P. Bourdier)

Forgetting Vietnam, 2015. 90 mins. (co-produced with J.P. Bourdier)

The Jack H. Skirball Series is curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud and supported, in part, by the Ostrovsky Family Foundation.