

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA PRESENTS AN-MY LÊ'S FIRST MUSEUM SURVEY IN NEW YORK

***An-My Lê: Between Two Rivers* Is the First Exhibition to Present Lê's Practice across Photographs, Embroideries, Films, and Installations**

NEW YORK, September 13, 2023—The Museum of Modern Art presents ***An-My Lê: Between Two Rivers/Giữa hai con sông/Entre deux rivières***, the artist's first museum survey in New York. The exhibition explores how Lê's entire body of work considers cycles of global history and conflict, contemplating the impact of displacement, politics, and the sensationalizing of warfare. On view November 5, 2023, through March 9, 2024, *Between Two Rivers* encompasses three decades of Lê's work in a variety of mediums, including a selection of photographs from the artist's well-known series alongside new textiles, installations, and rediscovered films. The exhibition also features new photographs from her ongoing series *Silent General* (2015–present) and the debut of a site-specific, immersive cyclorama. *An-My Lê: Between Two Rivers* is organized by Roxana Marcoci, the David Dechman Senior Curator and Acting Chief Curator of Photography; with Caitlin Ryan, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Photography.

"The 'two rivers' in the exhibition's title refers to the Mekong and Mississippi river deltas," Roxana Marcoci explains. "They are subjects that Lê has inflected with her own experiences of war and displacement, and a metaphor that invites viewers to reflect on the circularity of time and history, the layering of disparate geographies, and the intimacies that paradoxically grow out of conflict."

Born in Vietnam in 1960, An-My Lê came to the United States in 1975, after the fall of Saigon, as a political refugee. The first gallery in the exhibition features a selection from her earliest photographic series, *Việt Nam* (1994–98), taken when she first returned to her native country. This black-and-white photographic work is shown with a newer color series from 2011, titled *New Delta*, which draws parallels between women in the Mississippi River area of the southern United States and the Mekong River in Vietnam's south. Although made almost 20 years apart, both bodies of work explore the complexities of American militarism through Lê's own Vietnamese heritage and sense of geographic displacement and cultural convergence.

Lê is known for intentionally ambiguous landscape photography, and the following galleries are dedicated to two of Lê's well-known photographic series that foreground her ability to layer two landscapes, two wars, two time periods, and two cultural histories across different mediums. *Between Two Rivers* includes a selection of photographs and a newly rediscovered film from Lê's *Small Wars* (1999–2002), featuring reenactments of the Vietnam War battleground staged on a key American Civil War site in Virginia. *Small Wars* is shown alongside a recent installation, *đô-mi-nô* (2021), which is comprised of a collection of hand-etched, jumbo versions of the Zippo lighters used by American GIs during the Vietnam War, reflecting the cultural meaning of these objects as symbols of both protection and violence. Merging real wars with staged locations, the third gallery presents a selection of photographs from *29 Palms* (2003–04) alongside the rare presentation of a two-channel video installation of the same name. In this series, Lê deliberately uses the camera's supposed ability to capture reality to create visual confusion, capturing a replica war zone in California's High Desert used for training US soldiers preparing for war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Between Two Rivers includes a selection of color photographs from *Events Ashore* (2005–14) that documented noncombat maritime and coastal missions aboard battleships, aircraft carriers, and nuclear submarines, in outposts and bases across seven continents. The survey also features the world premiere of *Fourteen Views* (2023), a site-specific, immersive cyclorama with 10-foot-tall photographs of landscapes and waterways taken over the last 30 years from different sites in the US, Vietnam, and France. Highlighting the complicated relationships between land politics, law enforcement, and the histories of migration, the installation deconstructs the totalizing vision proffered by 19th-century painted cycloramas. *Fourteen Views* attests to the artist's long-standing consideration of the cinematic dimensions of photography and war.

On view for the first time, the exhibition presents *Somebody Else's War* (Gangbang Girl #26) (2016–23), a group of handmade embroideries depicting sexually explicit scenes that are transformed into an exploration of the interwoven nature of intimacy, desire, politics, violence, and power. These embroideries are installed alongside the artist's rarely seen 2016 photographs of erotic sculptures and wall paintings excavated from the ruins of Pompeii at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. The largest gallery in *Between Two Rivers* will highlight more than 40 works from Lê's expansive, ongoing series *Silent General* (2015–present). Unfolding like a travel narrative, the photographs in this series take visitors from the Southern and Southwestern United States to California, New York, and Washington, DC, bringing together markers of contemporary political rifts and reminders of unresolved historical conflicts. A frieze-like installation of *Trap Rock* (2005–07) concludes the exhibition, bringing together scenes of extraction and industrial machinery on the Hudson River, close to the United States Military Academy and the mines that supported the Continental Army and the Union Army in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, respectively. This photographic series is a meditation on the encounter between humans and nature, and the alterations to the landscape brought about by wars on US soil.

CATALOGUE:

The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue that examines the full sweep of An-My Lê's creative practice, including the first reproduction of *Fourteen Views* in a dynamic eight-page gatefold. Edited by Roxana Marcoci, it features a lead essay by the exhibition's curator; four focused thematic essays by scholars La Frances Hui, Joan Kee, Thy Phu, and Caitlin Ryan; two creative texts by authors Monique Truong and Ocean Vuong; and an illustrated chronology by Xueli Wang.

PROGRAMMING:

The 360-Degree Image in the Age of AI

October 4, 2023, The Celeste Bartos Theater, MoMA, 5:30–7:30 p.m.

In advance of the exhibition presentation, the Forum on Contemporary Photography will feature a distinguished group of artists and scholars, including An-My Lê, prompted by the world premiere of *Fourteen Views*.

An-My Lê in Conversation with Monique Truong and Ocean Vuong

January 9, 2024, The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2, MoMA, 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Artist An-My Lê will be joined in discussion with award-winning writers Monique Truong and Ocean Vuong.

SPONSORSHIP:

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