



**DÜSSELDORF**

**HORIZONTAL VERTIGO: FILMS BY TRINH T. MINH-HA**

28 NOVEMBER 2019 – 2 FEBRUARY 2020

JSC DÜSSELDORF



Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, 1989, 108', color, sound. Film still. Courtesy of the artist.

The JULIA STOSCHEK COLLECTION is pleased to present the film *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (108', 1989) by internationally renowned artist, theorist, and filmmaker **Trinh T. Minh-ha**. Produced during the “writing culture” debate of the 1980s, questioning modes of writing and representation in ethnography, *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* is a multilayered, transnational and postcolonial feminist work, in which Trinh reflects on acts of cultural representation and female identity, storytelling, the impossibility of translation, and the politics of documentary filmmaking.



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*Surname Viet Given Name Nam* consists of reenacted interviews with women from various parts of Vietnam and the United States, talking about their everyday experiences and role as women in a patriarchal society. The stories they tell also address their experiences in the Vietnam War, subsequent displacement, and life in the diaspora. These reenactments are interspersed with found footage and photographs of Vietnamese life and culture, as well as historical references of influential Vietnamese poets—among them a revisionist reading of nineteenth century poet Hồ Xuân Hương, known for her non-conforming attitude toward societal norms.

The interviews in the film were excerpted from Mai Thu Van's 1983 book "Vietnam, un peuple, des voix", translated into English by Trinh herself, and reenacted by Vietnamese women living in the US. In the film, Trinh acknowledges the betrayal inherent to every act of translation because, as she explains, it fails to accurately capture either the "letter of the text, its spirit, or its aesthetics."<sup>1</sup> In a similar way, documentary film lacks accuracy in generating a supposedly objective image of its subject, and for Trinh, documentary is therefore located closer to fiction.

Trinh, who was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the US in the 1970s where she studied and has lived since, chose to focus on the marginalized voices of women in her country of birth to critique the nationalistic and misogynist representations of Vietnamese female identity and Western representations of the "the Other" common in ethnography, anthropology, and Western feminism. In its critique, the film pays homage to the multiplicity of stories and subjectivities of women of color.

Trinh's writing and films on identity and representation, particularly her idea of "speaking nearby" inspired the structure of the year-long program HORIZONTAL VERTIGO at the JULIA STOSCHEK COLLECTION. The title HORIZONTAL VERTIGO is quoted from "Cotton and Iron" (1991), an essay in which Trinh foregrounds plurality and "non-totalness," challenging systems of binary opposition and definitive categorizations. In "speaking nearby" Trinh acknowledges the gap that remains in representation. Instead of "speaking about" someone or something and therefore defining them, "speaking nearby" recognizes both positions: the framer and the framed. Echoing this commitment, HORIZONTAL VERTIGO does not propose one overarching theme but thrives on the multiplicity of narratives and narrators at hand, exploring the inherent plurality of the entire program without prescribing a "right" way of reading it.

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<sup>1</sup> Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Framer Framed: Film Scripts and Interviews* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 80.



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**FILMS BY TRINH T. MINH-HA** is part of HORIZONTAL VERTIGO, a year-long program of solo exhibitions, performances, screenings, and events at the Julia Stoschek Collection Düsseldorf and Berlin, curated by Lisa Long.

Supported by the Cultural Office of the City of Düsseldorf.

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Originally trained as a musical composer, who received her two masters and Ph.D. from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, **TRINH T. MINH-HA** (b. 1952 in Hanoi, Vietnam), is a world-renowned independent filmmaker and theorist. She teaches courses that focus on women's work as related to cultural politics, post-coloniality, contemporary critical theory and the arts. She has also taught at Harvard University, Cambridge; Smith College, North Hampton, Cornell University, Cornell, San Francisco State University, San Francisco; the University of Illinois, Chicago; Ochanomizu University, Tokyo; and the National Conservatory of Music in Senegal. Aside from the eight books she has published, among them *Woman, Native, Other* (1989) and *When the Moon Waxes Red* (1991), her work also includes large-scale multimedia installations and feature-length films shown around the world, including *Reassemblage* (1982), *Naked Spaces* (1985), *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989), *Shoot for the Contents* (1991), *A Tale of Love* (1996), *The Fourth Dimension* (2001), and *Night Passage* (2004). In 2001 Trinh's work was the subject retrospective at Secession, Vienna, and she participated in Documenta 11 in Kassel in 2002. Trinh is currently a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, in the departments of Gender & Women Studies and Rhetoric.

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### HORIZONTAL VERTIGO

31 March 2019 – 19 July 2020

HORIZONTAL VERTIGO is an ensemble of solo exhibitions, performances, screenings, and talks at the JULIA STOSCHEK COLLECTION in Düsseldorf and Berlin, striving to amplify the multiplicity of narratives and narrators at hand while acknowledging their difference.

Over the course of one year, horizontal vertigo brings together a diverse group of international and interdisciplinary artists who use film, video, installation, performance, poetry, virtual reality, and sound in inquiries and ruminations that embrace various modes storytelling and presentation to address marginalized histories and cultural hybrids, fractured identities, and the entanglement of the self in a world of systems and networks.



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## **THE CONCEPT OF THE JULIA STOSCHEK COLLECTION**

The principle behind the private collection of contemporary art is the aspect of contemporaneity, connected to the aspiration of reflecting social and cultural trends of the respectively current generation. The constantly growing collection is consequently focused in its conception on the moving image from the 1960s onwards and spans a range of disciplines: video, single and multiple image projections of analogous and digital film material, multimedia environments as well as computer and internet based installations, not to mention ephemeral art forms such as performances. The collection currently comprises over 850 works by approximately 250 mostly European and American artists.

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## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **OPENING**

28 November 2019, 7:30 p.m., JSC Düsseldorf  
With an introduction by curator Lisa Long

### **EXHIBITION DURATION**

17 October 2019 – 2 February 2020

### **OPENING HOURS**

Sunday, 11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

### **ADMISSION**

free



## DÜSSELDORF

**FACEBOOK** /juliastoschekcollection

**TWITTER** @juliastoschek

**INSTAGRAM** @juliastoschekcollection

#juliastoschekcollection #jsc #horizontalvertigo #trinhminhha

### **PRESSE- AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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