

The Blindness Series

Eight Videos by Tran T. Kim-Trang

Third World Newsreel

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Epilogue: The Palpable Invisibility of Life is the final installment in Tran T. Kim-Trang's Blindness Series, a body of eight videos on blindness and its metaphors that was begun in 1992. Tran's videos reflect on the language of seeing, and the consequences of visibility or invisibility. Philosophical theories are woven with found footage, personal interviews and documentary methods to explore literal and figurative blindness. The series connects blindness with the broader political and cultural implications of identity, expression, society, technology, sexuality, and violence while upholding a positive affirmation of cultural difference.

In *Epilogue*, Tran wonders how can we make visible the invisible? How can we “see” our lost loved ones? Finding no ready-made answers, Tran invites us to reflect about life and death in this moving video about motherhood and mourning. Derrida's philosophical theory is juxtaposed with meditations on alternative medicine and the fragility of physicality. *Epilogue* is an exciting and thought-provoking culmination of the Blindness Series.

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THE BLINDNESS SERIES

Aletheia 1992, 16 min

Aletheia is an introduction to Tran T. Kim-Trang's blindness series, which explores blindness as metaphor and how seeing relates to identity, language, sexuality and technology.

Operculum 1993, 14 min

Operculum reveals how race and racism are part of Western medicine's discourse and ideology.

Kore 1994, 17 min

Kore is an experimental short about AIDS and blindness. This video reminds us that AIDS patients face both the possibility of vision loss and society's blindness towards ethnic, gender and sexual difference.

Ocularis: Eye Surrogates 1997, 21 min

To make *Ocularis*, Tran publicized a 1-800 number for callers to express their private fears and fantasies about being watched. The video explores the broader political implications of public surveillance.

Ekleipsis 1998, 23 min

In *Ekleipsis*, Kim-Trang brings together the history of hysteria and the history of the Cambodian civil war through the real life story of a group of hysterically blind Cambodian women living in California.

Alexia 2000, 10 min

Alexia is an experimental video about word blindness. This video presents theories on the origin of language, aspect blindness and how they relate to metaphor, image, confusion, and the creation of meaning.

Amaurosis 2002, 28 min

Amaurosis is an experimental documentary about Nguyen Duc Dat, a blind, orphaned, American Asian guitarist living in Little Saigon, California. This film explores the links between image and imagination, communication and perception, and presents an inspiring portrait of one member of this Vietnamese American community and his rich contributions.

Epilogue: The Palpable Invisibility of Life 2006, 14 min

In *Epilogue*, Tran invites us to reflect about life and death in this moving video about motherhood and mourning.



BIO

Tran T. Kim-Trang was born in Viet Nam and emigrated to the United States in 1975. She received her MFA from the California Institute of the Arts and has been producing experimental videos since the 1990's. In 1999, Tran presented her Blindness Series in a solo screening at the Museum of Modern Art. A year later, two of her videos were included in the Biennial exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Blindness Series was featured at the 46th Robert Flaherty Film Seminar. Tran has been nominated for a CalArts/Alpert Award in the Arts and was named a 2001 Rockefeller Film/Video/Multimedia Fellow.

Tran also collaborates with Karl Mihail on a project known as Gene Genies Worldwide[®] (genegenies.com). Their conceptual and public artworks on genetic engineering have exhibited at the Ars Electronica Festival in Austria, Exit Art, the Tang Museum at Skidmore College and elsewhere in the United States. She is currently an Associate Professor of Art at Scripps College.



QUOTES

Tran's technique is at once a dense and practiced exercise in visualizing theory, and a fillip to the idea that theory can adequately address lived experience. ...Tran's videos demonstrate the body—particularly the female, coloured, 'deviant' body—as specimen, spectacle, threat, border. But ultimately it is the surviving body, in essence the resistive body, that is the crux of Tran's series thus far. The videos interrogate three platforms: technology, the epistemology of the body, and experience. Technology is shown throughout as a text, a mechanism for knowledge, and a tool with the potential for violence. The female, coloured body, meanwhile, is its resistive artifact, refusing to be catalogued or managed. The surviving body is therefore critical by its very existence. Yet the 'Blindness Series' also presents technology as a radical possibility for resistance.

—Irene Small, *Art Asia Pacific*

[Tran's work] brings the language of psychoanalytic theory into the traditional realms of documentary and video activism—and a rare video artist who is equally comfortable talking about Freud and the Khmer Rouge.

—Steve Anderson, *The Independent*

In the artist's hands, video is revealed to be a flexible and sensually appealing medium. The videos continue the tradition of essayist video and are also highly poetic visual statements that explore blindness by means other than sight. ...[T]heir masterful use of metaphor and ironic investigation of an alternative and "tactile visuality", as Laura Marks call it, that stirs.

--Draza Fratto O'Brien, *Artweek*

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SELECTED SCREENINGS

Migros Museum, Zurich * **Platform Garanti, Istanbul** * Moderna Museet, Stockholm
* **Red Cat Gallery, L.A.** * The Whitney Museum of American Art, NY * **The Museum
of Modern Art, NY** * ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany * **The
Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, NY** * San Jose Museum of Art, CA * **Shoshona
Wayne Gallery, L.A.** * L.A. Asian Pacific F/V Festival * **New York Video Festival** *
Montreal International Festival * **World Wide Video Festival, Amsterdam** * Mill
Valley Video Festival, CA * **Filmforum, L.A.** * Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester,
NY * **Society for Cinema Studies Conference '95, NY** * Pacific Film Archives, UC
Berkeley * **Images Festival of Independent F/V, Ontario, Canada** * Asian
Cinevision Video Festival, NY * **Downey Museum of Art, CA** * Long Beach Museum
of Art, CA * **L.A. Gay & Lesbian F/V Festival** * Seattle Asian American F/V Festival
* **Gallery 101, Ottawa** * New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental F/V Festival *
Cinema Spoutnik, Geneva * Paris Gay & Lesbian F/V Festival * **NAATA F/V
Festival, San Francisco** * ATA, San Francisco * **Barnsdall Art Park, L.A.** * Duke
University, N.C. * **Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago** * Public Access, Toronto *
Siggraph, Chicago * European Media Arts Festival, Osnabruck, Germany * **Wexner
Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH** * L.A. Festival * **Women in the Director's
Chair, Chicago** * L.A. Freewaves Festival * **Kassel Documentary F/V Festival,
Germany** * Charlotte F/V Festival

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