

# DINH Q. LÊ: MEMORY FOR TOMORROW

JULY 25 [SAT] – OCTOBER 12 [MON], 2015 MORI ART MUSEUM (53F, ROPPONGI HILLS MORI TOWER)

## THE FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION BY THE WORLD'S MOST OUTSTANDING VIETNAMESE ARTIST IN JAPAN

Mori Art Museum is pleased to present “Dinh Q. Lê: Memory for Tomorrow” from Saturday, July 25 through Monday, October 12, 2015, marking the first solo exhibition by Vietnamese artist, Dinh Q. Lê, to be held in Japan.

Born in Hà Tiên, a Vietnamese town near the Cambodian border, Dinh Q. Lê immigrated with his family to the U.S. at the age of ten to escape the Khmer Rouge. After studying photography and media art, Lê attracted attention with his tapestries made by weaving together strips of photographs (1989-), a process inspired by traditional Vietnamese grass mat weaving. Based on thorough research and interviews, Lê throws light on people’s memory as it is told through actual personal experiences. In *The Farmers and the Helicopters* (2006), the video installation that made Lê’s name known to people around the world, Lê ingeniously depicts the complex relationship between the Vietnamese people and war by focusing on a Vietnamese man who attempts to develop his own helicopter.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War as well as the 70th anniversary of Japan’s defeat in WWII. Examining the stories that have never been told, of individuals who have undergone events whose facts have been overshadowed by “official,” national and/or social histories, and exploring closer relations between art and society are extremely important issues. Through the unique artwork and activities of Dinh Q. Lê, this exhibition provides us with an opportunity to think about our past, present and future.



Untitled (Paramount) 2003 C-print and linen tape Collection: Ann and Mel Schaffer Family, New York

### PRESS RELEASE

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## DINH Q. LÊ

Born 1968 in Hà Tiên, Vietnam, lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City. Moved to the U.S. with his family in 1978. Received BA in Fine Arts from University of California, Santa Barbara in 1989 and MFA from School of Visual Arts, New York in 1992.

His major solo exhibitions include Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (Sydney, 2011), Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010), Tufts University Art Gallery (Massachusetts, 2009), and Asia Society (New York, 2005). He has also participated in a number of international exhibitions such as Mediacity Seoul 2014 (Seoul Museum of Art), DOCUMENTA(13) (Kassel, Germany, 2012), Singapore Biennale (2008 / 2006), and the 50th Venice Biennale, Italian Pavilion (2003).



## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

### ■ The first major solo exhibition by a Southeast Asian (Vietnamese) artist at Mori Art Museum

This is the first major solo exhibition by a Southeast Asian artist to be held at the Mori, which has previously hosted solo exhibitions by artists from East Asia in line with its aim of spotlighting Asian artists. It is part of an attempt to focus on artists from Southeast Asia, which in recent years has experienced sudden economic growth and an upturn in the art market, and in particular, on Dinh Q. Lê who has been regarded highly in the international art scene.

### ■ A wide variety of dynamic works

The exhibition includes dynamic works rich in visual variety, including the “photo weaving” series in which photos are woven together in a craft-like fashion and other works that call to mind Vietnamese handiwork as well as installations combining video with a high degree of perfection and real objects such as helicopter and boat.

### ■ New histories told based on rigorous research and interviews

Through meticulous, unique research that delves deep into people’s psyche, individual memories and stories take shape in a dramatic fashion. Previously untold stories of the Vietnamese people directly involved – completely different from the image of the Vietnam War circulated by the mass media and Hollywood movies – emerge.

### ■ A new work that captures the present Japan created for the exhibition

Through a new video work featuring a real Japanese man who enjoys reenactment of the Vietnam War, Lê takes a fresh look at the Vietnam War while pondering Japanese history, memory and the social situation today.

### ■ Providing a platform for debate and reflection of history in this milestone year, 70th anniversary of the end of WWII / 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War

In this milestone year 2015, we will be providing opportunities for lively debate on such topics as the Vietnam War as seen in news photographs, the impact of the Vietnam War on Japanese society and Japan-U.S. relations, the contemporary art scene in Vietnam today, and the appeal of Vietnam as a business market by hosting various lectures and sessions on a range of topics.



*Come Back to Saigon*  
(from the series “Vietnam Destination of the New Millennium”)  
2005  
Digital print  
Courtesy: Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland



*The Farmer and the Helicopters*  
2006  
3-channel color video with sound, handcrafted full-size helicopter  
Collaborating Artists: Hai Quoc Tran, Le Van Danh,  
Phu-Nam Thuc Ha, Tuan Andrew Nguyen  
Commissioned by Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Australia  
Installation view: “Reflection: The World Through Art” DOJIMA  
RIVER BIENNALE, 2009, Osaka  
Photo: Fukunaga Kazuo

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Organizer:** Mori Art Museum

**Curated by:** Araki Natsumi (Curator, Mori Art Museum)

**Venue:** Mori Art Museum, 53F, Roppongi Hills Mori Tower, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo

**Open Hours:** 10:00-22:00 | Tue: 10:00-17:00 | \* Tuesday of 9/22 open until 22:00

\* Admission until 30 minutes before closing. | \* Open everyday.

**Admissions:** General: ¥1,800 / University/Highschool student: ¥1,200 / Child (4 years to junior highschool student): ¥600 / Senior (ages 65 and over): ¥1,500 | \* All prices include tax. | \* Ticket also valid for Tokyo City View observation deck (excludes Sky Deck). | \* Additional entrance fee to the Sky Deck is required.

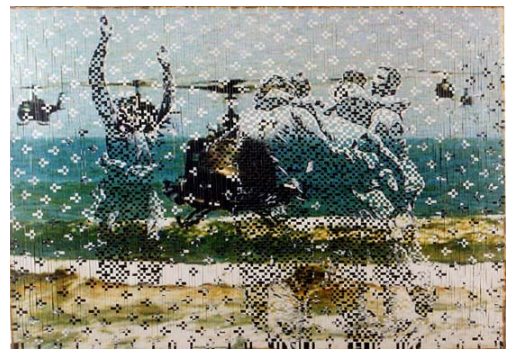
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## EXHIBITION OUTLINE

Dinh Q. Lê was born in 1968 in Hà Tiên, a Vietnamese town near the Cambodian border, and immigrated with his family to the U.S. at the age of ten to escape the Khmer Rouge. After studying photography and media art at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the School of Visual Arts in New York, Lê attracted attention with his “photo weaving” series (1989- ), in which he weaves together finely-cut strips of photographs like tapestries, some of which were shown in the Italian Pavilion at the 50th Venice Biennale. The peculiar technique used in this series was inspired by traditional Vietnamese grass mat weaving. Woven into the works are various motifs including the Vietnam War, Cambodian historic ruins, Khmer Rouge atrocities and Hollywood movies, their appearance changing depending on the angle and position from which they are viewed.

With *Damaged Gene* (1998), he deals with the subject of conjoined twins, hinting at the connection with the defoliants sprayed by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War. In the first exhibition in the series using a store in Ho Chi Minh City’s central market, clothing and toys specially produced by Lê for conjoined twins were arranged like normal merchandise, shocking visitors to the store. The aim was to break down the taboo regarding this subject, which is not discussed among the Vietnamese people, and encourage debate.

In the video installation *The Farmers and the Helicopters* (2006), Lê ingeniously depicts the complex relationship between the Vietnamese people and war over helicopter seen also as a symbol of the Vietnam War, by focusing on a Vietnamese man who attempts to develop his own helicopter. Comprising a three-channel video and a hand-built helicopter,



*Persistence of Memory #10*  
2000-01  
C-print and linen tape  
Collection: Joy of Giving Something, Inc., New York



*Persistence of Memory #14*  
2000-01  
C-print and linen tape  
Private Collection



*Damaged Gene* 1998  
Knitted baby clothing, stuffed animals, resin figurines, plastic figurines, and pacifiers  
Commissioned by The Gunk Foundation, New York

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this installation received great acclaim at the Singapore Biennale (2008) among other shows, making Lê's name known to people around the world. Furthermore, *Light and Belief: Sketches of Life from the Vietnam War* (2012), presented at an international exhibition dOCUMENTA in Kassel, Germany, comprises 100 drawings by former war artists together with a video that vividly recalls the youth these artists spent in wartime.

Lê carries out thorough research and uses a variety of media including photography, installations and video to throw light on hitherto untold stories, digging up various histories of nameless individuals that are complexly intertwined with "official" histories. As well as observing how history is recorded and institutionalized, he focuses not only on the physical destruction caused by wars, but also on the pain and sense of loss of people that often tend to be overlooked, and their memories of mental conflict as refugees, and furthermore captures the sparkles of life that cannot be robbed or taken away under any circumstances. Here, one may say it is Lê's peculiar perspective as someone who has experienced being caught in the threshold between Vietnamese and U.S. culture that makes his artwork extremely unique and original.

In today's world, where globalization is continuing with values diversifying, looking again at history and exploring closer relations between art and society are extremely important issues. This year, which marks the 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War and the 70th anniversary of Japan's defeat in WWII, it seems fitting that we should have the opportunity through the unique artwork and activities of Dinh Q. Lê, one of the most inspiring artists in Asia today, to look back on all the stories that have never been told and think about our past, present, and future.

(Araki Natsumi, "Dinh Q. Lê: Memory for Tomorrow" Curator / Curator, Mori Art Museum)



*Erasure*  
2011  
Single-channel color video with sound, found photographs, stone, wooden boat fragments, wood walkway, computer, scanner, dedicated website (erasurearchive.net)  
Commissioned by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, 2011  
Supported by Nicholas and Angela Curtis  
Installation view: Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, 2011  
Photo: Aaron de Souza

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