

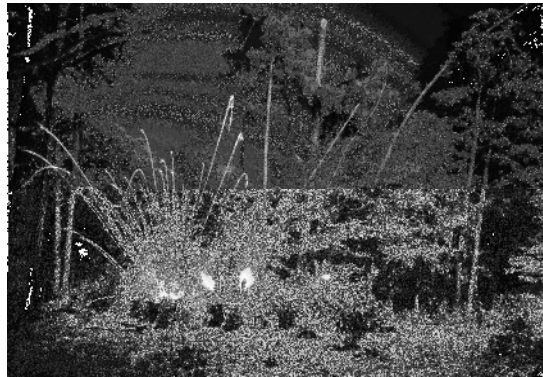
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SFMOMA PRESENTS AN-MY LÊ: SMALL WARS

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is pleased to present *An-My Lê: Small Wars*, on view from January 26 through May 4, 2008. The exhibition brings together 47 photographs from the two most recent series of works by Vietnamese-American photographer An-My Lê (born Vietnam, 1960), in which she explores the conflicts that bracket the last half century of American history: the Vietnam War and the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



An-My Lê, *Small Wars: Explosion*, 1999-2002; Courtesy Murray Guy Gallery, New York

Lê approaches these events obliquely; rather than creating reportorial images of actual battles, she photographs places where combat is psychologically anticipated and relived, addressing America's relationship to war, inflected by the experience of a Vietnamese émigré. Her series *Small Wars* (1999–2002) depicts men re-creating battles from the Vietnam War on weekends in the forests of Virginia. Her current and ongoing series, *29 Palms* (2003–present), documents the military base in the California desert, where soldiers train before being deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. These war dramatizations—one a reenactment, one a rehearsal—allow Lê to create a unique and ambiguous kind of war imagery.

Photography has been used to chronicle major wars since the nineteenth century. The era of war photography as we know it, however, with graphic images from the center of conflict delivered into our homes daily, didn't begin until the development of fast films and handheld 35 mm cameras, in the early 20th century. Prior to that, due to the long exposure times photography required, cameras were unable to capture the movement and chaos of battle. Images of war were typically static pictures of its aftermath or posed portraits of soldiers. Lê's use of a large-format camera harkens back to this era, specifically to the Crimean War photographs of Roger Fenton and the American Civil War photographs of Mathew Brady and his colleagues, practitioners who placed great emphasis on the clarity and composition of their images, and who, like Lê, worked with a mix of documentary and artistic intentions.

An-My Lê: Small Wars is presented in stunning, large-format images and beautifully printed in a middle gray scale. Not direct images of war, the photographs are reminiscent of the artist's childhood

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memories, presented in eerie metaphor: kites in the sky appear as dive-bombing planes (*Untitled, Ho Chi Minh City*, 1998); construction sites and crop fires recall mass graves and napalm (*Explosion*, 1999–2002).

Lê received a master's degree in biology from Stanford University before earning an MFA in photography at Yale University in 1993. Her work is in SFMOMA's permanent collection as well as those of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Lê is an assistant professor of photography at Bard College. She lives in New York City.

Following its SFMOMA presentation, the exhibition will travel to the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, May 23–August 4, 2008; the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, August 23–November 2, 2008; and the Boise Art Museum, Idaho, November 2008–January 2009.

The exhibition is accompanied by a monograph, published by Aperture in fall 2005.

An-My Lê: Small Wars is organized by the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College Chicago. The exhibition is generously funded by the Lannan Foundation. Additional support for the exhibition is provided by the Illinois Arts Council, the Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation, The Henrietta Lange Burk Fund, The Palmer Foundation, and the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs.

The San Francisco presentation is made possible by support from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is supported by a broad array of contributors who are committed to helping advance its mission as a dynamic center for modern and contemporary art. Major annual support is provided by Koret Foundation Funds, the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, and Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic.

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