

The Amon Carter Museum Presents the First Comprehensive Survey of Contemporary Photographer An-My Lê

From War Reenactors to the Removal of Confederate Monuments, An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain Spotlights Politically Charged Work that Resonates Today



Fort Worth, TX, November 17, 2020—The Amon Carter Museum of American Art (the Carter) will present the first comprehensive survey of the work of Vietnamese-American photographer An-My Lê (b. 1960), on view April 18 through August 8, 2021. Featuring photographs from a selection of the artist's five major bodies of work, the nationally touring *An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain* draws connections across Lê's career and provides unprecedented insight into her subtle, evocative images that draw on the classical landscape tradition to explore the complexity of American history and conflict.

Celebrated photographer Lê has spent nearly 25 years exploring the edges of war and recording these landscapes of conflict in beautiful, classically composed photographs. Born in Saigon in the midst of the Vietnam War, Lê vividly remembers the sights, sounds, and smells of growing up in a warzone. She and her family were eventually evacuated by the US military in 1975. It would take another 20 years for Lê to return to her homeland, this time with a large-format camera in tow.

"We are proud to bring *An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain* to our North Texas community," said Andrew J. Walker, Executive Director. "Lê's photographs bring history into conversation with the present, confronting head-on, complicated questions that remain relevant today. It feels especially important that we are spotlighting her work during our anniversary year, as it draws on the traditions reflected in our historical photography collection and underlines our 60-year commitment to exhibiting the best American photographers at the Carter."

Lê follows in the tradition of nineteenth-century photographers like Timothy O'Sullivan and Mathew Brady, whose images of the Civil War brought the realities of combat to everyday Americans. Crafting sweeping views that emphasize the size and breadth of the theater of war, Lê captures the complexity of conflict and the full scope of military life, avoiding the sensationalism often seen in newspapers and movies. *On Contested Terrain* highlights the artist's technical strengths, used to

compose beautiful images that draw the viewer into deeper consideration of complex themes of history and power.

The exhibition presents selections from five of Lê's major series:

- **Việt Nam (1994–98)**
Almost 20 years after her family was evacuated, Lê returned to Vietnam with her large-format camera. The resulting series is a meditation on her homeland, addressing both her memories of it and the country's reality decades later. It depicts the landscape as a backdrop for human history, a theme Lê would return to again and again.
- **Small Wars (1999–2002)**
Back in the United States, Lê photographed Vietnam War reenactors in North Carolina and Virginia, often participating as a North Vietnamese soldier or Viet Cong rebel. Working with the reenactors, many of whom had not fought in the war, to achieve "authenticity" whenever possible, Lê made images that explore the legacy and mythology of the Vietnam War for contemporary Americans.
- **29 Palms (2003–04)**
Unable to secure credentials to embed on the front lines of the Iraq War, Lê traveled to a California military base to photograph troops training in a landscape similar to the environment in which they would soon be deployed. In addition to the desert training exercises, Lê photographed the debriefings and downtime that filled the soldiers' days.
- **Events Ashore (2005–14)**
This series, the artist's first foray into color photography, was created over nine years that Lê spent photographing the crews of U.S. naval vessels around the world. An extensive exploration of the global reach of the American military, Events Ashore includes scenes of everyday life on an aircraft carrier alongside diplomatic, humanitarian, military, and political activities.
- **Silent General (2015–ongoing)**
In her current series, Lê grapples with the legacy of America's Civil War and responds to the complexities of the current socio-political moment. Her poetic photographs of polarized landscapes confront issues of our time that are rooted in our history, from the fate of Confederate monuments to immigration debates around agricultural laborers.

"An-My Lê has spent decades investigating conflicted terrains, both physical and metaphorical" stated Kristen Gaylord, Assistant Curator of Photographs. "Her photographs consider questions that we are all thinking about now: What does it mean to be an American citizen? How does our country's history shape our contemporary lives? What should be the role of the U.S. in the world? These questions are especially salient for the City of Fort Worth, which includes a major defense contractor, the first Joint Reserve Base in the country, and residents and refugees from around the world, including Vietnam, Somalia, Guatemala, and Afghanistan. The generosity and incisiveness of Lê's vision are a model for how we can navigate these complexities together."

An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain is organized by Carnegie Museum of Art. Major support for this exhibition is provided by Lannan Foundation and the William Talbott Hillman Foundation. Additional support is generously provided by the Virginia Kaufman Fund, the Henry John Simonds Foundation, the Phillip and Edith Leonian Foundation, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Jennifer and Karl Salatka, and the Virginia S. Warner Foundation. Generous support for the exhibition catalogue has been provided by Marian Goodman Gallery. The exhibition debuted at Carnegie Museum of Art in March 2020 and is on view there through January 18, 2021. Following the presentation at the Carter, the exhibition will travel to the Milwaukee Art Museum in fall 2021. *An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain* is included in the museum's free admission. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring many images never –before published .

About An-My Lê

An-My Lê was born in Saigon in 1960. She and her family fled Vietnam in 1975, living for a short period of time in Paris, France before settling in the United States as a political refugee. Lê received her BAS (1981) and MS (1985) degrees in biology from Stanford University and an MFA from Yale University in 1993. While Lê is represented in many major museum collections including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Dallas Museum of Art — *An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain* is the first survey of her work in an American museum. Currently a professor of photography at Bard, Lê has received many awards, including the MacArthur Foundation Fellow (2012), the Tiffany Comfort Foundation Fellowship (2010), the National Science Foundation Antarctic Artists and Writers Program Award (2007), and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (1997). Her work has been exhibited at museums and galleries across the world, including the Baltimore Museum of Art; Dia Beacon, Beacon, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; MoMA PS1, New York; and more, and her photography was featured in the 2017 Whitney Biennial.

About the Amon Carter Museum of American Art

Located in the heart of Fort Worth's Cultural District, the Amon Carter Museum of American Art (the Carter) is a dynamic cultural resource that provides unique access and insight into the history and future of American creativity through its expansive exhibitions and programming. Housed in a building designed by American architect Philip Johnson, the Carter's preeminent collection includes masterworks by legendary American artists such as Ruth Asawa, Alexander Calder, Frederic Church, Stuart Davis, Robert Duncanson, Thomas Eakins, Georgia O'Keeffe, Jacob Lawrence, and John Singer Sargent, as well as one of the country's foremost repositories of American photography. In addition to its innovative exhibition program and engagement with artists working today, the museum's premier primary research collection and leading conservation program make it a must-see destination for art lovers and scholars of all ages nationwide. Admission is always free. To learn more about the Carter, visit cartermuseum.org.

Images (left to right): An-My Lê (b. 1960), *Untitled, Hanoi*, 1995, gelatin silver print, © An-My Lê. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris, and London; An-My Lê (b. 1960), *Fragment VI: General Robert E. Lee and P. G. T. Beauregard Monuments, Homeland Security Storage, New Orleans*, 2017, inkjet print, © An-My Lê. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris, and London; An-My Lê (b. 1960), *Colonel Greenwood*, 2003–2004, gelatin silver print, Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College, Chicago, Gift of Lannan Foundation, Santa Fe, NM; 2011:88, © An-My Lê. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris, and London

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