

MK Gallery

News Release

An-My Lê

19 September – 23 November 2014

Preview: Thursday 18 September 6-10pm

Admission free



An-My Lê: *Rescue*, 1999-2002 from the 'Small Wars' series

This autumn MK Gallery presents the first major solo show in the UK by the Vietnamese-American photographer **An-My Lê**, including the most comprehensive showing to date of *Events Ashore*, a body of work that has been ten years in the making.

Born in Vietnam in 1960, Lê fled Saigon with her family as a teenager in 1975 and was airlifted to safety in the final days of the war. She eventually settled in the United States as a political refugee, where she graduated in biology from Stanford, then in photography from Yale University. The recipient of many awards, including the prestigious MacArthur Genius Award (2012), An-My Lê is widely recognised as one of the most significant photographers working in the world today, and has had major exhibitions throughout the United States.

An-My Lê's art has consistently explored the experience and the culture of conflict. She has achieved unprecedented access to the American military (marine corps and navy) over a number of years – including, for example, at the *29 Palms* marine base in the Californian desert, shortly after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Avoiding simple representations of war, and simple judgements about the military machine, Lê, like all great photographers, maintains a certain distance from her subject, in order to create nuanced scenes that hover between documentary, fiction, play and battle. The resulting images combine a classical beauty with a quiet and intense emotion, driven both by personal experience, and by empathy.

Her art historical reference points include the 19th century photographers Roger Fenton, Timothy O'Sullivan and Gustave Le Gray, drawn to the clarity and richness of their photographs as visual or topographic documents, as well as the drama of their epic,

exploratory subject matter. Lê works with a large format view camera, as they did, in order to examine her subject with the greatest breadth of vision possible. Lê also acknowledges the influence of the 19th century history paintings of Turner and Géricault,

In this mid-career survey Lê presents works from her major photographic series to date. **Viêt Nam** (1994-1998) features images of the Vietnamese landscape; **Small Wars** (1999-2002) depicts Vietnam War scenes re-enacted in the forests of Virginia and North Carolina. The film installation **29 Palms** (2003 – 2004) portrays American soldiers preparing for deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan. The recently completed epic work **Events Ashore** (2005-2014), which involved the artist spending many months travelling across vast oceans with the American armed forces, explores the US military's expanded global operations and the implications of war via quiet moments away from combat.

MK Gallery's An-My Lê exhibition, curated by independent curator Kate Bush, has been programmed to coincide with the centenary of the First World War. The exhibition will subsequently be presented at the Hasselblad Center, Gothenburg, Sweden (20 February – 17 May 2014). *An-My Lê: Small Wars* is currently on view at MAS, Antwerp (21 May – 31 July 2014) and this autumn her work will be included in Tate Modern's group exhibition *Conflict, Time, Photography* (26 November 2014 – 15 March 2014). A new book, *Events Ashore*, will be published by Aperture Foundation this October to coincide with the exhibition.

Notes to Editors

About the Artist

An-My Lê b.1960 in Saigon, Vietnam, left Vietnam in 1975 and eventually settled in the United States as a political refugee. She graduated from Stanford University, California with a biology degree (1981), and graduated in photography from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut in 1993. She lives and works in New York and is Professor of Photography at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. She has had solo exhibitions at Baltimore Museum of Art (2014) *DIA: Beacon* (2007-2008); the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2007); the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2006); The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago (2006); and P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2002). Her work is held extensively in public collections in the United States, including the Museum of Modern Art New York, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and Queensland Art Gallery, Australia. www.murrayguy.com

MK Gallery

900 Midsummer Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3QA. Admission is free. MK Gallery presents free, changing exhibitions of world class contemporary art, together with a wide-ranging learning, events and community programme. It is currently planning a major capital expansion by 2017. www.mkgallery.org

Exhibition Supporters

With thanks to Murray Guy, New York.

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Press Information

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