
DREAMING/ REMEMBERING

PRACTICES AROUND VIETNAM'S FILM HERITAGE



DREAMING/ REMEMBERING

PRACTICES AROUND VIETNAM'S FILM HERITAGE

Introduction	02
1. Notes from Vietnam Frank Gray	04
2. The Power of the Void Do Van Hoang	11
3. Film Restoration: A Personal Story Gerald Herman	17
4. The Creative Re-Use of Archived Film Frank Gray và Shona Thomson	22
5. <i>Fifth Cinema</i> and Found Footage Nguyen Trinh Thi	29
6. <i>The Miners' Hymns</i> : Heritage and Communities Nikki Locke	35
7. A Survey of Film Archives of Hanoi Le Tuan Anh and Vietnam Film Institute Research Group	40
8. Archival Films Come to Life, Beckoning for More Engagement Do Thuy Linh	58
9. Afterword Shona Thomson	63
Image Credits	66

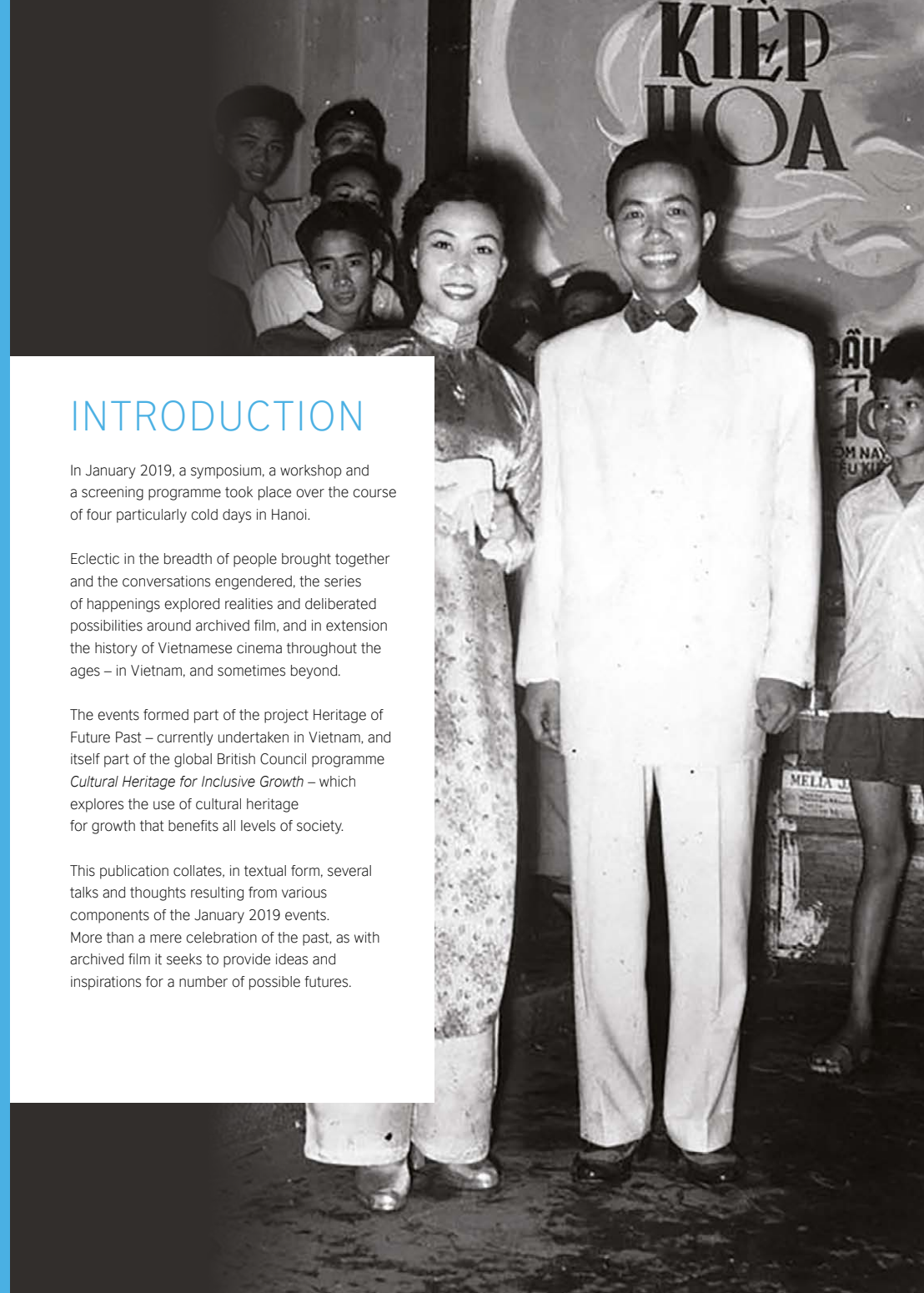
INTRODUCTION

In January 2019, a symposium, a workshop and a screening programme took place over the course of four particularly cold days in Hanoi.

Eclectic in the breadth of people brought together and the conversations engendered, the series of happenings explored realities and deliberated possibilities around archived film, and in extension the history of Vietnamese cinema throughout the ages – in Vietnam, and sometimes beyond.

The events formed part of the project *Heritage of Future Past* – currently undertaken in Vietnam, and itself part of the global British Council programme *Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth* – which explores the use of cultural heritage for growth that benefits all levels of society.

This publication collates, in textual form, several talks and thoughts resulting from various components of the January 2019 events. More than a mere celebration of the past, as with archived film it seeks to provide ideas and inspirations for a number of possible futures.



Notes from Vietnam

Frank Gray



I was very pleased to be invited by the British Council to contribute to Film as a Cultural Heritage and Dreaming/Remembering: Workshops on Archival Film Materials (symposium, workshop and public events) in Hanoi, Vietnam (15–18 January 2019). As the Director of an English regional film archive (Screen Archive South East at the University of Brighton), Co-Director of a film festival (Cinecity) and an early film historian, I am steeped in British screen culture as shaped by government policy, the work of the British Film Institute and the many synergies that connect film heritage with film production, exhibition and education.

This is a dynamic that has come into being over the last 25 years (especially through the rise of the national lottery) and revolves around films, tapes, files – their preservation and use in a range of public, educational and commercial contexts. It (this dynamic) has of course been energised this century by the relative ease with which we can now digitise films to a high standard and share them with practitioners (film-makers, artists and broadcasters), film and museum curators, the education sector (teachers, students and researchers), the tourism industry and the public. This cultural heritage, through its use online and within public spaces, not only represents the past but can also serve as a catalyst for the production of memories, stories and histories. This is a very inclusive process, generating a genuine sense of being part of a shared community with common identities.

For me, and for those of us within British screen culture, it is this understanding of film's cultural role and its public value that shapes how we build our heritage collections, cultivate our partnerships and develop our users and audiences. The film archives respect the work of the film and television industries, as well as the mutually beneficial relationships we have and will co-develop, but our work is clearly very different from this commercial sector.

From this perspective, it was fascinating to be a contributor to this British Council series of events as it provided me with my very first introduction to film in Vietnam. From comments made at the Symposium (Hanoi's National Cinema Centre, 15 January), conversations had with the Workshop's participants (a mixture of film-makers, artists, teachers and students) and my own perspective, I have identified a number of issues in relation to this project and the current nature of film culture in Vietnam.





The Vietnam Film Institute (VFI) is a highly professional FIAF-recognised film archive dedicated to the preservation of the national collection film. However, its ability to advance the social and cultural value of film is limited because of its very constrained approach to providing cultural and creative access to its collection. As one contributor to the Symposium said, “The archive is gold but buried too deep.” The concern expressed was that if this heritage was kept out of reach, there was a real danger that it would ‘die’ (i.e. not have a cultural life). The perception was that it was used primarily for official state purposes (such as national ceremonies) and not made easily available for cultural and creative activities.

The barriers to access were twofold. The first was the difficulty of getting permission for non-official uses from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. The second barrier was cost. This was made clear at the visit to the VFI (during the Workshop) where we were told that the archive access charge to film-makers was 12 million *dong* (£400) per minute plus technical charges. This is not an exorbitant figure in terms of UK archive costs for commercial access, however it is very high for Vietnamese film-makers and artists given the relative lower standard of living. Given these circumstances, it is very difficult to see how a collection such as the VFI’s could ever be used for non-profit cultural and educational activities.

If access to state archive collections was prohibitive, alternative content sources were discussed: film-makers sharing their films with each other, organisations such as TPD (The Centre for the Assistance and Development of Movie Talents) in Hanoi sharing its collection of Hanoi films made by ex-students, the downloading of content. Collaboration / co-operation is an interesting low-cost model but it would limit the range of material available for the creation of new work. The download option is always available but potentially problematic as it can lead to the use of unlicensed low-resolution content.

[TPD is a private film training and exhibition centre, the venue for the British Council workshop. Revised copyright legislation in Vietnam: Vietnamese government Decree No. 22/2018/ND-CP dated 10 April 2018 requires the users of copyrighted content to either acquire permission from the rights holders or issue an announcement of such use within public media.]

The Absence of State Funding for Cultural Film

There appears to be either very little or no state funding in Vietnam for independent film production, film exhibition and film archiving. If true, this will seriously constrain the cultivation of productions and activities that can engage with history, identity and memory and demonstrate the creative and educational value of film for education and heritage organisations. It also emphasises the value and need for funding schemes like that of the British Council’s FAMLAB initiative.

Film culture in the UK has a particular momentum because of the fact that it is rooted within a range of sectors: film exhibition, education (teaching, learning and research), heritage (museums and archives) and the wider creative industries sector. It would appear that in Vietnam there is very little history of approaching film culture and heritage from a cross-sectoral perspective. This is vital if film culture is going to be supported and sustained and not just shaped by the needs of the film industry (‘the market’).

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to be a cultural producer in a country with very limited (if not non-existent) state support for the production and exhibition of her/his work. The film-makers/artists at the Workshop spoke of the lack of the means and the opportunities to build relationships with archives and heritage organisations that would lead to the creation and exhibition of new work.

Only by taking lateral steps was this possible, such as through the self-financing of new work and its exhibition either in non-official spaces within Vietnam (e.g. non-advertised events within pop-up spaces) or outside of the country and online (YouTube or Vimeo). Clearly a seismic shift is required in order to create a cultural and creative space for this activity to become part of the country’s cultural life.

Nguyen Trinh Thi

One of the guest speakers at the Workshop was Nguyen Trinh Thi. She is a renowned Hanoi-based independent film-maker who has made a number of montage films (or essay films) in relation to the histories of Vietnam cinema and the representation of the country by non-Vietnamese film-makers. Her work *Vietnam the Movie* exemplifies her practice. It features a careful synthesis of films from Europe, Asia and the US, and is both personal and political. As an act of ‘guerrilla film-making’ (using unlicensed material), it embodies an experimental and independent film culture which she has been instrumental in cultivating in Hanoi. With colleagues, she created the city’s DocLab, a space dedicated to supporting film-makers and providing free access to independent work within a censure-free space. Nguyen, in the context of the workshop, served as an inspirational model for the creative use of archive film.

[In the UK, her working practice would fall under the fair dealing exemption within current Copyright legislation. It applies to the use of copyrighted material within works related to criticism or review. Copyright right law within the US makes a similar provision for the ‘fair use’ of copyrighted material.]

Vietnam's Film Heritage - Its Potential

A carefully and sensitively curated programme of films was screened at the National Cinema Centre as part of this British Council series of events. On the last evening, it was a special privilege to be able to view *Mua oi* (The Season of Guvas, 2000) in the presence of its director, Dang Nhat Minh, and its lead actor, Bui Bai Binh. As a film devoted to the themes of memory and change which had had only a very limited release since the early 2000s, both the film and its exhibition in 2019 very well embodied the conceptual thinking that had inspired the British Council programme (e.g. archive, memory and history as the inspiration for the creation of new work).

Mua oi and more broadly the work of Dang Nhat Minh represents a film history that appears to be little known and rarely exhibited in Vietnam. Within the film culture I am familiar with, a director's work of this stature would be screened regularly, made available online for educational use, curated and toured throughout the country, books, articles and documentaries would be commissioned, his oral history would be recorded and all of his films and associated papers would be preserved. Such a project in Vietnam would embed Dang Nhat Minh into the nation's heritage fabric and ensure that his history and his work was made easily accessible to all.

Vietnam's 'film market' will never take on such a project as it is entirely dominated by the need to make new productions for the commercial exhibition sector. It is not designed to lead the cultural development of the nation's film heritage.



Current Government Policy

From my cursory reading, it is clear that the country *does not yet* possess a film culture dedicated to the uses of film for the advancement of creativity, the economy, education and heritage. This is also a film culture that is not yet free to express a plurality of histories, identities and modes of expression. Family orientated foreign films still dominate the cinema market (only 19 per cent of films screened are Vietnamese, 49 per cent are American) and the majority of cinemas are also foreign owned (e.g. the CGV and Lotte chains).

The Vietnamese government's current policy however is dedicated to investing and nurturing the indigenous film industry. It seeks, "to advance the Vietnamese film industry into an influential one in the regions of Southeast Asia and Asia through innovative film creation, production, distribution and exhibition, human resource development, technology transfer, financial investment, international cooperation, and socialized film activities nationwide."² I hope the ambition of this policy is beginning to be realised and will be extended and fortified so that a new understanding of film and its cultural value can begin to take root.

(2) See 'www.b-company.jp/en/2018/07/30/cinema-industry-in-vietnam'; *National Strategy of the Development of Cultural Industries in Viet Nam toward 2020, vision 2030 and Strategy to develop Vietnamese film industry to 2020, vision 2030* (Prime Minister's Decision 2156/QĐ-TTg dated November 11, 2013) - <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/strategy-develop-vietnamese-film>

The UK Model

In the UK, lottery funding supports film culture by providing revenue and project funding for film production, film archive, film exhibition, support of cultural film venues, film heritage tours and dedicated education activities. It is this investment (which is in addition to Grant-in-Aid from the Treasury) that enables the UK to support and nurture a diverse and independent film culture. My life and work within the UK film culture as an archive director and as a film historian has been entirely dependent on the organisations, collections and resources that have been brought into being and maintained through this investment.

Vietnam's own film culture can only be advanced if such a model of state support is adopted. The UK history of film culture (as opposed to its history of the film industry) makes clear that the 'market' will never create such a rich, varied, lively and valuable film culture.

Dr. Frank Gray is an historian, curator, archive director and lecturer on all aspects of screen studies from the 19th Century to the present. Having uncovered the beginnings of cinema in Brighton & Hove, Dr. Gray curates exhibitions for Brighton Museum & Art Gallery and, with the Royal Pavilion & Museums, has built a major collection relating to the city's film pioneers. He is involved in the national development of screen heritage policy and strategy, was formerly Chair of Film Archives UK, and has been associated with the University of Brighton for over thirty years.

Screen Archive South East is a public sector screen archive serving the South East of England. Established in 1992 at the University of Brighton, this regional archive locates, collects, preserves, digitises and provides access to screen material related to the South East. The collection consists of magic lantern slides, film, videotape and digital formats. There are now over 14,000 films and some 10,000 19th Century lantern slides, as well as a significant collection of film apparatus including cameras and projectors.

Cinecity is an annual film festival dedicated to world cinema. It features previews, programmes of screen heritage, curated gallery installations and special live cinema events with musicians and performers.

www.screenarchive.brighton.ac.uk
www.cine-city.co.uk

Further reading:

1. Film as a Cultural Heritage – a Series of Events:
www.britishcouncil.vn/en/programmes/arts/heritage-future-past/strand-2-famlab/symposiums/film-cultural-heritage
2. Vietnam Film Institute: www.vienphim-vfi.org.vn/en
3. TPD Centre for Assistance and Development of Movie Talents: www.tpdmovie.com.vn
4. Hanoi DocLab: www.hanoidoclab.org
5. British Council's FAMLAB Fund: www.britishcouncil.vn/en/programmes/arts/famlab-fund

The Power of the Void

Do Van Hoang



Transcribed from a talk by Do Van Hoang, which took place on 19 August 2018 (at Six Space, Hanoi) as part of the British Council Vietnam project Heritage of Future Past.

I.

Film restoration, in a technical sense of the term, refers to the transferring of 35mm or 16mm film prints to digital files, and the alterations made on those files. This can involve restoring spots that have become molded or damaged, discoloured or have lost certain details. This can be achieved through processes such as colour correction, lighting correction or audio-remastering.

In Vietnam, a significant milestone in introducing cinematographic works to a new and broader public was the release of a DVD collection of classic Vietnamese films, a project undertaken by the production/distribution company Phuong Nam Film in the 2000s. However, having viewed various entries of the collection, I found that no changes had been made to the digital files. In our current digital age, quite often digital-based restoration can generate major impacts on films.

There are many instances where a film has been 'saved' after being transferred to digital: Edward Yang's *A Brighter Summer Day* – one of Taiwan's classic films from the 1990s – is one such example. With the 4K-resolution version of the film restored and released by World Cinema Foundation in 2009, the colour correction task was carried out by none other than the renowned auteur Wong Kar-wai; and yet according to Wong, his job was only to replicate the sunlight seen in the original version – a case of paying respect to film-makers of previous generations and their cinematic styles.

In recent years, there have been increasingly more restoration projects based around archived, digital files – such as those by the Criterion Collection or by national film institutions in many countries (the British Film Institute being one prominent example). Having said that, in certain cases the restored version inadvertently diluted the spirit or the technical decisions of the original film and its makers.

A good example is the restoration of works by Senegalese film-maker Djibril Diop Mambéty, Brazilian film-maker Glauber Rocha or various film-makers from Argentina or Cuba – key figures of a wave of Third World cinema in the 1960s-1970s. Inspired by the French *Nouvelle Vague* (New Wave) movement, these directors made works with low budget and simple technical equipment, thereby making heard the voices of poverty-stricken developing countries and portraying a cinema style most true to those countries. Having watched the restored versions, in my opinion they became far too beautiful and removed from reality, losing the ideology and spirit of indigenous film-makers back then, filling up the gaps and voids of the original film.

I do not think that film restoration is analogous with this, but is rather about treating the voids as an artistic technique.

Film restoration can, thus, be described as giving a name to what is not there, making known what is silent, and re-discovering the social context and styles of times past. Cinema is the art of image and sound, constituting the manifestation of many elements, including those that are lacking. These lacking elements could well be a deliberate, stylistic decision, an emotional expression through image amplified by sound, of what is unseen but all around. Robert Bresson's film-making style is a prime example of this.

As we have seen, the fact that certain types of lackings exist could also be due to the context of the period in question. Let us re-consider the case of Vietnamese cinema through the example of Tran Vu's film *Chuyen xe bao tap* (An Unquiet Ride). The film was made in 1977 in a very special situation

when most Vietnamese films were still dominated by a propaganda tone championing the efforts in liberating the South and reunifying the country. In its own early day approach, the film speaks of the downside of Vietnamese society at the time. The story revolves around a journey to Hanoi and features archetypal characters: an old couple from the countryside taking their granddaughter to visit her parents, or soldiers returning from the frontline – all faced with struggles throughout the journey due to the irresponsibility of a bus driver secretly colluding with smugglers.



In one scene, a soldier tries to buy a bus ticket to return home. Beside humorous dialogues that speak of bureaucracy and inadequacies, we notice what was audible in the ticket hall: there are only a limited number of audio channels and we could only hear rustling sounds and faint voices. In those times, the sound in most Vietnamese films was not recorded live, rather made in-studio with the most basic and inexpensive techniques. As such, what one would often hear in the final film was often not vivid, cinematic nor have its own narrative, rather more of an after-addition to help illustrate the images. Nevertheless, sometimes a shortage in technology highlights shortages in many other aspects of the society then: watching the films we could almost feel that shortage, and hear the sound of conscience.

Similarly, in another scene of *Chuyen xe bao tap*, the bus passes through a particularly bumpy area. Instead of the sounds of the surrounding environment, we seem to hear only people's destitute belongings falling off the racks and seats: cassioles, pots, pans, items most closely associated with the country's subsidy period. As the film reaches its climax, the little girl who has become even more ill because of the ride has to be transferred to an ambulance. Here, Tran Vu juxtaposes the scene with a parallel situation of another car ride wherein the director of the bus company is talking about how to improve the livelihood of the company's drivers. The siren of the ambulance gets

louder than everything else, which does not quite make sense: for a scene taking place inside the bus company director's car we do not hear the car's engine nor other internal sounds – all we can hear is the glaring ambulance. Clearly, many complementary sound lines are missing, and the only decision left for the film-maker here is in terms of the sound used to express the nature of the scene: the sound of morality not normally put into words, and the subtle portrayal of social conflicts.

II.

In the second half of this talk, I would like to discuss a project idea of Le Kim Hung, a fellow Vietnamese film-maker. For this potential project, Le sees 'film restoration' as a form of cinematic language.

After having the opportunity to watch *Kiep hoa* (Life of a Flower) – a film from the earliest years of Vietnamese cinema and the first Northern-made film to feature recorded dialogues – Le Kim Hung came up with the idea of re-shooting the film, but keeping the original audio tracks. Without discussing this project with Le directly, I have thought about the artistic choices he might make if this remake project is to be realised.

The first Vietnamese film to have its sound recorded live, *Kiep hoa* was made in 1953 and released in 1954. In Vietnam, the film was 'rediscovered' in recent years and screened eight years ago. The film centres around the social migrations and disturbances at the time it was set in, when the youth was faced with the choice between a fleeting yet untroubled existence, and a revolutionary path. The city of Hanoi from those years eventually became a legend that did not survive. For the film's images, external scenes were shot in Vietnam, mainly in Hanoi and other Northern provinces, while interior scenes were shot in Hong Kong. The script was written by Tran Lang (or Tran Viet Long), owner of the *cai luong* company Kim Chung, who was also the film's producer; while the director and cameraman were Cantonese.



Watching the film, one immediately comes to notice an aspect that has been prominent throughout decades of Vietnamese acting: the way actors speak, clearly accentuating the words, not unlike techniques associated with Vietnam's traditional performing arts. Aesthetically speaking, this decision made sense as the actors and actresses involved had been formally trained in *cai luong* or *cheo* singing – they were all renowned performers who acted in films during the day and got on stage in the evening. In terms of the sound, one notices the film only recorded live voices, internal scenes and stage performances. The sounds in external scenes, together with the soundtrack, are not synchronised; while background sounds are not rich and mostly belong within the film's narrative boundaries.

With such choices, the film-maker did not turn *Kiep hoa* into a musical film, nor did he aim at that to begin with. The film's developments are expressed through those of internal emotions, through movements and the way a scene is structured. The lack of real sounds in the film partly depicts the reality of Hanoi in those years where silence spoke more than anything, and every noise – no matter how quiet – caused one to shake up, fearing it could be a gun in the dark.

Kiep hoa chose to fill that frightening space with music. The romantic Vietnamese songs from that period reflect almost perfectly the exuberance of Hanoi in 1954, the vocals filled with emotions as if saying one last goodbye to a world of dreams, in an attempt to forget everything. The nature of the music used is thus overwhelmingly dramatic.

In essence, *Kiep hoa* does not have a rich cinematic language, the *mise-en-scène* is skeletal, and the editing does not result in any visual rhythm. The film exudes naivety in the way it was shot, showing a desire to capture as much beauty as possible in a foreseeing of the city's destruction. As such, it can be said that the film's value lies in its documentary-like (rather than artistic) aesthetic.

If he is to go ahead with the idea of remaking *Kiep hoa*, Le Kim Hung will invariably be faced with a problem present in many Vietnamese period films: that of setting – or more precisely, the lack of it. Many of the film's external scenes are set in Hanoi locations like Hoan Kiem Lake, Truc Bach Lake, the areas of Ngu Xa or Chau Long, amongst others. Naturally, there is no way to film these settings in the way they used to exist back then, and to try and realistically stage the atmosphere of the 1950s would also be quite difficult. With foreign film productions, CGI might be a readily available technology for bringing back – inside a studio – settings that no longer exist. Such is, however, not a viable option given Vietnam's current standards.

As such, once again we see how shortages urge filmmakers to find a way to transcend reality, as cinema should not and cannot be merely an illustration of reality, buckling under the weight of reality. From my point of view, I hope Le will remake the film with an approach inspired by visual art, perhaps in the form of a play where the settings of 1953 would be re-drawn in a contemporary, minimalist style. Transforming real-life into painted theatre-like settings within which environment actors and actresses would find their way of acting, rather than be influenced by previous works. They would be led by sound.

I think that a film-maker who chooses this style would be able to find the right colours, shapes and structures that are true to real-life settings and spirit of old times. The harmony of sound and image functions as a “search for lost time” enabled by imagination, where the past is echoed through sounds (*Du am* (Echoes) a song by composer Nguyen Van Ti, is also the theme song of the original *Kiep hoa*). This approach also lends distance to the cinematic language: viewers would always be aware that they are watching a reconstructed film; there would be a distance between them and the emotions on the screen, an allusion to Hanoi as a city constantly being destroyed and reborn. Only the noises, sounds, voices of the past – in a rare, lucky instance of the digital age – are preserved wholly, in all their innocence.

What has just been discussed is a personal interpretation for a potential remaking of the film *Kiep hoa*. I hope that, no matter the approach, film restoration and archiving will always revoke a possibility for cinematic language. Any restoration project should start with studying the cinematic language of the times when the original film was made, so as not to lose the voids deliberately planted therein. In an era where we are provided with too many possibilities for change, it is likely that these voids would be completely filled, whereas it is precisely them that represent cinema.

Do Van Hoang (1987) graduated from the Academy of Theatre and Cinema in Hanoi. Some of his works include: *Underneath It All* (documentary, 17m), *At Water's Edge* (documentary, 17m), *A Film on Sofa* (short film, 17m), *A Silent Shout* (short film, 20m), *False Brillante* (short film, 22m), *Drowning Dew* (collaboration work with Art Labor Collective and Truong Que Chi). Hoang's films have been shown at Hanoi Docfest, Yamagata Film Festival, EXPERIMENTA at BFI London Film Festival, Centre Pompidou (Paris), Times Museum (Guangzhou), and Playtime Festival (Ho Chi Minh City).

Further reading:

1. The Criterion Collection: www.criterion.com/
2. *A Brighter Summer Day* (4K Restoration Edition): www.criterion.com/films/28596-a-brighter-summer-day
3. Phuonng Nam Film: www.pnfilm.com.vn/film.php?cid=14

Film Restoration: A Personal Story

Gerald Herman



Transcribed from a Skype talk by Gerald Herman at the British Council Vietnam workshop *Dreaming/Remembering* (16–18 January 2019)

Looking for some meaningful and long-term Asian adventure, I settled in Vietnam – in Ho Chi Minh City – in 1993. Being both a film lover and film-maker – I was curious to see Vietnamese feature films, both classic and modern. There seemed to be very few of either available for viewing in the city in those days, but I was extremely impressed with a TV series running on HTV (Ho Chi Minh City Television) called *Dat Phuoc Nam* (Southern Lands). Although shot on BetaCam video, the series was beautifully written, acted and directed. In fact, I was so impressed that I acquired the rights to produce and distribute a DVD version (11 one-hour episodes in a boxed set) with English subtitles.

I was told that since the war, most actual cinema was produced in Hanoi, so that was where I moved in 1998. There I began asking all my friends if they could tell me what their favourite Vietnamese feature films and directors were.

The name of Dang Nhat Minh came up most often, especially in relation to a movie so many people were talking about as the best Vietnamese movie they knew: *Bao gio cho den thang Muoi* (When the Tenth Month Comes). Having looked for and found Minh, I enquired if he had a copy of said movie, but he did not: “I do not have a copy, you have to look around, but I have a BetaCam copy of another movie – *Thuong nho dong que* (Nostalgia for the Countryside) – which a Korean television channel helped produce.” I thought this was a wonderful movie, and asked Minh if I could make an English translation and then a DVD edition. He was happy to give me his permission.

The job was easy and not a restoration, because Minh only had a tape, which I transferred and added subtitles. It became the first edition that I had produced – a DVD version of *Thuong nho dong que* with subtitles in English, French and German. Nevertheless, I was still after *Bao gio...*, arguably Dang Nhat Minh's most revered masterpiece.

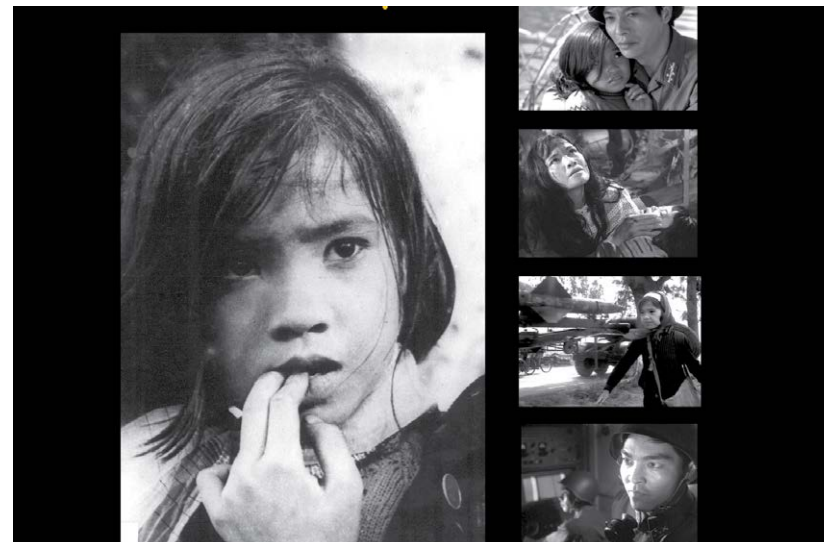
I went around and visited different archives in Hanoi, but the problem at the time – I do not know if the situation has changed since – was that there were so many archives, and they did not really talk to each other or knew what others had in their holdings, they did not seem to know either things they themselves had. The Vietnam Film Institute (VFI) had an archive, the Documentary Film Studio had one, so did the Vietnam Television, and the Army has its own extensive archive. But it seemed nobody had *Bao gio...*

The breakthrough arrived when I visited the Feature Film Studio, which had produced the film. I was told here that they had given the negatives to the VFI, although the latter had already stated they did not have it. Mr. Vuong Duc, Director of the Studio, talked to the VFI and reminded them that his Studio had submitted the negative of the movie 10 years ago.

So the VFI looked for it again, and this time they found 10 reels of 35 mm negative, and another 10 reels with the optical sound negative. In those days, picture and sound were recorded separately and a negative soundtrack was created in the studio to be put together with the picture for final printing. It was a very expensive process, unlike with digital technologies which make everything you do now so much easier.

There was no telecine facility in Vietnam at the time, so we had to go to Bangkok to work with a very expensive studio there for the movie's digital transfer. Director Dang Nhat Minh came with me (to supervise the color-grading), along with the Director of the VFI (to guard the materials). I was thrilled: this was to become my first adventure in restoring movies.

(1) The series was directed by Nguyen Vinh Son.



I remember something that happened at the airport in Hanoi: once we arrived there, a customs officer informed us that the 20 film reels could not be taken out of the country. The VFI Director showed her ID but the officer was adamant: we would need ‘special’ paperwork if we were to bring the reels to Thailand. Our Director then ran out, hopped on a motorbike and within an hour came back with the paperwork – all signed and stamped!

In Bangkok, it cost 600 USD per hour just to access the telecine studio. When the very first reel of the film was put in and assessed, the technician said: “I am sorry, this negative is too dirty, with too much mold. And the splices are brittle – we cannot run it through the scanner.” (At the time the movie was made, the original negative was cut and spliced, and then prints were made.)

The negative reels were sent to another lab. Cleaning them and reinforcing the splices took two days and increased the cost significantly. The lab report stated, “You are very lucky, the negative was in such a bad state that had you waited another year or so, it would have been impossible to save it.” This note made me feel heroic, and Dang Nhat Minh was also thrilled since during the transfer from film to digital he was able to make corrections to the original movie, by adjusting the light and contrast. Although the optical sound negatives could not be much improved, the result was still the best copy of the film ever produced. From this new digital master I produced 500 DVDs, with subtitles in English, French and German. Until now we have sold approximately 200 copies, mostly to libraries and collectors. It is difficult to sell DVDs these days, what with piracy and the ease of making unauthorised copies (when I visited bookshops in Southern California's ‘Little Saigon’ I found pirate copies of all the DVDs I produced.) At any rate, I was still excited with the possibilities associated with film restoration, and the opportunity for making classic Vietnamese cinema easier to export to the world and, as such, more widely appreciated.

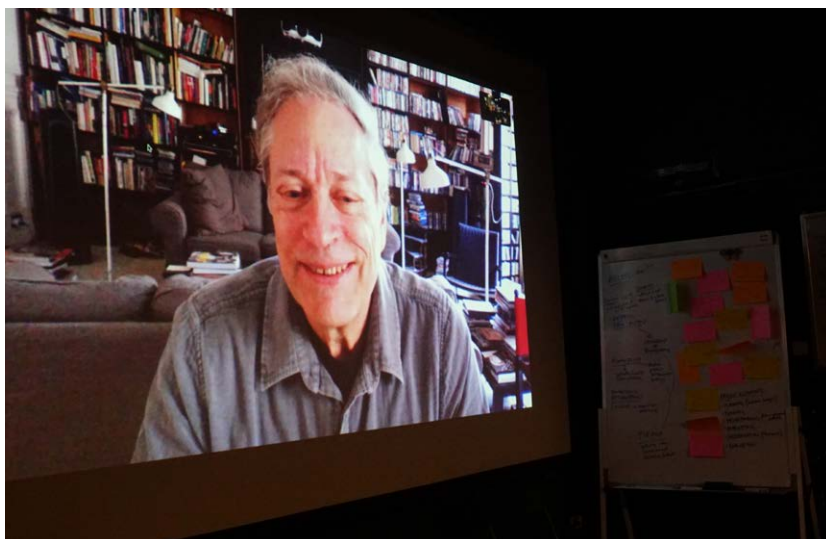
During the next few years I continued to undertake restoration of two more classic Vietnamese movies: *Em be Ha Noi* (The Little Girl of Hanoi) by Hai Ninh and *Ganh xiec rong* (The Travelling Circus) by Viet Linh. Head of the Cinema Department at that time, Nguyen Thi Hong Ngat, then asked me to

make a new edition of *Canh bac* (The Gamble) for which she had written the screenplay. That movie was made in 1993, so it was easy for Hong Ngat to find the negative. We travelled to Bangkok together to the same studio that had helped with the previous restorations. When they put the first reel in the machine and watched the monitor, my heart sunk, because the picture was all green, while it should have been in colour. This is what happens when the film stock is not good quality: it will fade over time and lose its colours. The technician started fiddling with his DaVinci colour-grading system, and amazingly he was able to bring out the colours that were hidden in the negative.

In hindsight, these turned out to be really good experiences. The restorations were all undertaken with my own money – as we say, it was a labour of love. I have never made any profit at all because, of course, with DVDs it is easy to make copies and the films are also probably all on the Internet now. It was just a great deal of satisfaction, of money well-spent. Just last week I received an email from a New York cinema that will be organising a season in May about Vietnam war movies or movies made during the war, and they asked me if they could screen *Em be Ha Noi* (*The Little Girl of Hanoi*).

One of the highlights of my years running Hanoi Cinematheque was the screening of my restored version of *Em be Ha Noi* attended by the 'little girl' herself, Lan Huong (who was then in her 50s), along with her co-star The Anh, and director Hai Ninh. The audience was thrilled – by the extraordinary movie, and by meeting the filmmakers, who had many fascinating stories to tell about the filming during the American War. One such story was about how, when the film was made in those war years, they only had enough film stock to shoot one take of every scene. Knowing that makes the acting and camerawork even more remarkable! I think we are spoiled these days with digital filmmaking because you can shoot every scene a dozen times without paying extra for film and processing.

If I could give a message today, it pertains to the importance of recognising your heritage. Cinema is an art as much as painting or music or literature, and it is important to view and respect the work of master filmmakers – both international and local. It has given me great satisfaction to be able to help export the works of some of the best Vietnamese writers and directors.



Other countries in Asia have made efforts and investments to restore classic movies. The Korean Film Institute has a whole set of 20 DVDs of movies from the 1950s that they have identified, restored and subtitled. Indonesia has a similar project for classic movies from the 1950s through to the 1970s (many of which have been restored by Monash University in Melbourne, Australia). Singapore's Asian Film Archive has restored dozens of classic Singaporean and Malay movies, and they have an extensive library of other Asian films. They are now planning to open their own cinema just to show classic Asian movies. They asked me for my Vietnamese set, which they will probably show. Incidentally, their restorations cost between 100,000–200,000 USD for each, which includes much finer processing (such as dust and scratch removal) than I was able to afford.

I sincerely hope that you will continue to identify and restore and distribute more Vietnamese movies – even if such distribution might only be through the Internet. It is necessary not to lose this heritage: a rich history of storytelling through the art of cinema.

I am sorry that we had to close Hanoi Cinematheque, since that was a place where we could view movies as they were meant to be seen – on a big screen in a dark room. I miss it so much, I miss all of you and our wonderful audience, but there was nothing I could do. The property will eventually be demolished and replaced by a modern shopping centre. And maybe another small cinema, where film lovers can meet again?

Gerald Herman has had a 40-year career in theatre, film and television in the USA, Europe, Australia and Asia. He has been a member of the Director's Unit of Actors Studio in New York City, assistant to Directors Arthur Penn and Milos Forman, Screenwriter and Associate Producer of a Hollywood feature film (*Jory*, 1972), Second Unit Director at Warner Bros. Television (*The Jimmy Stewart Show*), and Writer/Director of a number of childrens' films for CBS Television and Swedish Broadcasting Corporation.

Herman's films have won awards at 12 international film festivals, and his first short, made in high school in 1965, was shown continuously in the American Pavilion at Montreal's 1967 World's Fair. Herman's first professional film as writer/director, *Winter of the Witch*, with Hermione Gingold and Burgess Meredith, won the Audience Award at the 1969 Chicago International Childrens' Film Festival.

Since 1992, Herman has been based in Hanoi and Paris, producing features, shorts and documentaries. In Hanoi, he established Southeast Asia's first full-time 'art house' cinema: the Hanoi Cinémathèque.

Herman's Vietnamese short, *A Dream in Hanoi* (2009) has been shown at 22 film festivals, while the feature documentary *Finding Phong* (2014) which he produced has been shown at 38 international film festivals to widespread critical acclaim.

Further reading:

1. *Bao gio cho den thang Muoi*: <https://mubi.com/films/when-the-tenth-month-comes/>
2. *Thuong nho dong que*: <https://mubi.com/films/nostalgia-for-the-countryside/>
3. *Em be Ha Noi*: <https://mubi.com/films/the-little-girl-of-hanoi/>
4. *Ganh xiec rong*: <https://mubi.com/films/the-traveling-circus/>
5. *Canh bac*: <https://mubi.com/films/the-gamble/>
6. Asian Film Archive: www.asianfilmarchive.org/

The Creative Re-Use of Archived Film

Frank Gray / Shona Thomson



Transcribed from a session co-delivered by Frank Gray and Shona Thomson at the British Council Vietnam workshop *Dreaming/Remembering* (16–18 January 2019)

[Frank Gray]

Good morning everyone,

The first session for today will be led by Shona and myself. Together, we will talk about the different uses of archived film in terms of how such films can be remixed, re-purposed and re-positioned. How a film from the past, with its own history and integrity, can be changed in the future. Digital technologies and an expanded understanding of archive film's potential has brought us to this very protean position.

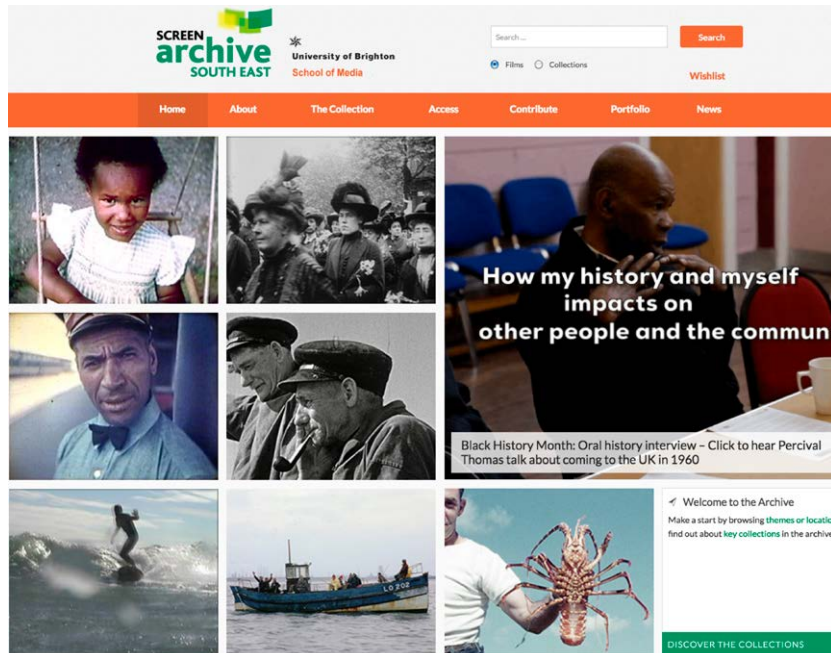
This 'creative re-use' of archive film obviously needs to be driven by a strong sense of concept and context. So many factors inform this understanding: the nature of the original material in terms of its purpose, content, form and exhibition, the nature of the new work and its use of archive content (edited or unedited), permission from the archive for its new use, understanding of its copyright status and permission from the rights holders for its new use, its new exhibition context e.g. 'live cinema' (the 'live' performance of music to a screened work), platforms such as cinema, television, museums, galleries, theatres, out-of-doors, and virtual platforms (online sites). Another key area for the consideration in the development of this creative process is the expected audience for the new work (general or specialist, all ages or adult, free or ticketed access).

Having a concept, a context, a budget, legal permissions in place and the agreement of all project's partners, we become very aware that this 'creative re-use' of archive film is a very measured and carefully determined process.

We are very conscious of the many different ways of changing an archived film. We have experiences particularly with 'live cinema'. A dominant tradition within this genre is to take a silent film and accompany it with live music. In this case, you do not change the film showing on the screen, but you change the experience of it through the addition of new music, either improvised or scored. This new soundtrack can be performed live or be pre-recorded. Yesterday, we viewed *The Miners' Hymns*. It is a good example of a 'remix' as it presents the application of 'new' music, as performed by a brass band, to a compilation of films dedicated to the history of coal mining and mining communities.

Our work with archive films is with public funding for public projects, so we are always very conscious of who this new work is for and recognise that there are many different kinds of audiences, as defined by age, gender and experience. And of course in producing public projects for public spaces, we need to be very sensitive to community values. What is appropriate to make and screen for that particular space and audience?

In London, over the past couple of months there have been two prominent examples of the creative use of film heritage. One is *The Clock* by Christian Marclay, originally made in 2010. What is astonishing is that the film is 1440 minutes long – 24 hours! It has been screened in galleries around the world, and there are only six prints of it. The film recently screened at Tate Modern in London every 24 hours over a period of four months. It is a remarkable piece which can perhaps be referred to as a supercut montage. *The Clock* took a number of years to produce, drawing footage from hundreds of existing films. It is also synchronised to real time: from all these films, the footage extracted are those moments when a time is registered in a sequence either through the sight of a clock or when a character looks at either their watch or a clock. It is about time and our experience of it in real time. [In terms of genre, *The Clock* could obviously be associated with Nguyen Trinh Thi's *Vietnam the Movie*.]



The other example is *They Shall Not Grow Old* directed by Peter Jackson, who is obviously well known for the *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* trilogies. *They Shall Not Grow Old* is a 99-minute film which tells the story of the First World War from the perspective of official, government-made news reels. But of course, it is much more than that, because it is not only a chronological portrait made through assembling and editing extracts from 35mm black and white films, but also a very self-conscious manipulation of the selected films. They have been changed in many ways: through digitisation they have been graded, the speed has been changed so that the footage runs at normal speed, and the image has been stabilised. But that was not all: sections of the film were colourised to give an approximate appearance of the colours of the time. The film's soundtrack is particularly interesting because it is not music and voice-over (the non-fiction tradition) but a sound collage of the voices of soldiers who were recorded on audiotape in the 1960s and 1970s. *They Shall Not Grow Old* is a remarkable fusion of film, audio recordings and historical research, drawn from hundreds of hours of archive film and audiotape. There is even use of lipsyncing to connect the voices we see on screen with the actual recorded voices from the past. *They Shall Not Grow Old* has appeared in cinemas, on television, and is also available for purchase as DVD, so it is everywhere now.

Our own work as an archive [Screen Archive South East] and our creative re-use of archived films is more modest in scale. Every year we try to do two or three events which combine a film with either new music or existing score. For example, in 2018 with our colleagues at Cinecity [the Brighton film festival], we presented *Blue* by Derek Jarman, a very distinguished avant-garde film because it consists only of a blue screen with an elaborate soundscape which combines natural sounds, music and voice. For the live version, the film's composer Simon Fisher Turner re-created the soundtrack on stage together with a solitary voice artist, Black Sifichi. He narrated the text from the original film. In this way, this 25-year-old film was literally re-born in a Brighton cinema.

Elsewhere, we have always been interested in cinema history, not only in terms of films but also cinema buildings. For instance, when Brighton's Duke of York's Cinema turned 100 years of age in 2010, we undertook a programme across the year exploring different aspects of the cinema's history, including the history of the building, the films screened, the audiences and its staff. Oral history was integral to this project: interviewing audience members and other people associated with this history. This work is very associated with the histories of people and places and, as such, touches on an important underlying theme for our public use of archive film which is the experience of 'change'.

For the next section, we will be discussing a national, UK-wide project that happened in 2017. The project is called *Britain on Film: Coast and Sea*, and it is estimated that over hundreds of thousands of people experienced a *Coast and Sea* show during a period of about three months. This series of activities across the country made use of archived films in a wide range of places and contexts, whether in cinemas, museum, community centres or even in a ferry as it moved from port to port. *Coast and Sea* required lottery funding to become possible and it successfully demonstrated the creative potential of archive film. One such project was devised and led by Shona, and now she is going to talk about it.

THE BRIGHTON FILM FESTIVAL
ADVENTURES IN WORLD CINEMA
 BRIGHTON / EASTBOURNE / LEWES / WORTHING

For two weeks every November CINECITY takes you on adventures in world cinema, presenting exclusive previews, live events and exhibitions.

DUKE OF YORK'S
 SUN 25 NOV / 7PM
 DIR: DEREK JARMAN
 UK 1993. 79 MINS.

MORE IN
 CLASSICS AND RESTORATIONS >

THE OTHER OCEAN • LIVE SCORE >
 BLUE - LIVE >
 THE WHITE REINDEER >
 THE GREEN FOG • ACCIDENT >
 BLUE BLACK PERMANENT >

MORE IN
 LIVE SOUNDTRACKS >

BLUE - LIVE

A one-off live event to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Derek Jarman's landmark film with soundtrack performed live by Simon Fisher Turner and narration by poet and musician Black Sifichi.

With a single static shot of the colour blue, the live sound and spoken word evoke powerful images and provide *Blue*'s narrative and emotional core. The voiceover written by Derek Jarman features his free associations around the artistic, philosophical and metaphysical meanings of blue – sky, water, flowers, a boy named Blue, sadness, the infinite – connecting them to his life and body of work. As the blue screen glows, the richly layered and evocative sound collage from Jarman's longtime musical collaborator Simon Fisher Turner combines with the live voice to create a unique

[Shona Thomson]

Just to follow on from Frank – my project was partly funded by the British Film Institute for their *Britain on Film* programme, and the funding also came from Arts Council England as well as Creative Scotland, so it was a very publicly-funded project. What we wanted to show was the endless possibilities that one can explore with an amazing selection that Frank has already talked about – there were many more initiatives that happened too, so please feel free to ask more. I am going to say a few words and show a couple of videos, including one with footage from one of the events.

It is really interesting that this afternoon we will have two sessions on film restoration, also given the session with filmmaker Nguyen Trinh Thi yesterday. My project was all surrounding a film called *Drifters* that was made in the UK in 1929, a black and white, silent film about the UK fishing industry in the 1920s. The film was approved and funded by the government to talk about how great the fishing industry was at the time, and it was made by a filmmaker called John Grierson, who was known in the UK as the ‘father’ of documentary film. The film was one of the earliest labeled as a documentary, in the sense that it was meant to show real life, and to bring this real life to audiences in large cinemas across the country. Of course, maybe it was not necessarily the case that all was natural filmmaking, as there was a bit of staging going on: for instance, Grierson wanted to get the most dramatic shots on a fishing boat out on the sea, which could be pretty intense. After a few days of being in the harbour with his cameraman, an awful storm was forecast, all the boats were coming back in and there were only one or two that were going out, and Grierson asked his cameraman to get on one of the latter. The footage that resulted was indeed incredible – the cameraman being almost strapped to the mast and the resulting images moving with the boat’s movements.



Drifters was also included in the DVD/Blu-ray release of *Battleship Potemkin*, and for that release the British Film Institute commissioned a new soundtrack from Jason Singh, a Manchester-based beatboxer and composer. Jason created a beautifully atmospheric score with no acoustic instruments, which was entirely vocals, generated through voice manipulation, looping and other techniques. I met Jason when I was running a silent film festival, and we got on really well. We both felt we needed to do something more with this film and wanted to get more from it, and so decided to put together a tour which would be connected to the story of the original film. *Drifters* portrayed the herring industry: herring is a type of fish that normally breeds in the far North Sea before swimming down to warmer waters nearer mainland Europe. This was also the route of the fleets of fishing boats that Grierson was following to make the film, down the east coast of the country. So Jason and I decided to design a tour that would follow the same route of the herring and the boats in the 1920s. We called it ‘DRIFTERS: Following the Fleet’. During the tour, we brought the film to fishing villages and towns around the coastline, places where the fishing industry is no longer the main industry.

We were of course aware that we were going to towns where films that are not mainstream are not necessarily known – there is sometimes a perception that people might not necessarily want to come out to see a film that has not had the Hollywood-style global promotional campaign: *Drifters* is from the 1920s, silent, and in black and white. Therefore for this tour I wanted to make connections with the place that we were going to, so at each of these places I worked with a local or regional archive: the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive, the Yorkshire Film Archive, the North East Film Archive, and the East Anglian Film Archive. I curated about 10 minutes of archival footage featuring the fishing industry in that area, and commissioned a local musician to create a live musical score for that footage. Each of the events thus consisted of a local archival film, local performers, and then Jason performing his vocal score to *Drifters* – between these, there was space and scope to organise a strong event with both national and local interest. I will show you a film now of the event in Leith, for which we had a locally-based, Eastern European female singing collective: Davno. Leith is a very proud and multi-cultural community, the port area of Edinburgh with an identity quite separate from that of the main city as embodied in my event delivery partner LeithLate. For the new music that would go with the archival footage, I wanted to commission a work that could reflect the ‘now’ of the area, and not necessarily the past. Before the day of the event,

Jason and Davno had never met. Watching the footage, you can hear how different they are – stylistically and where they come from – but when they came together, it was quite a moment, which I hoped but dared not expect would happen.

In some respects, it is useful to note that this whole tour had its challenges, but from audience and partner feedback we received it was definitely worth it. It seemed such a massive undertaking, but was made possible through working in partnerships with other people – a positive approach to delivery of this type of project, for sure.

Based in Edinburgh (Scotland), Shona Thomson is an experienced independent creative producer and curator presenting live cinema events across the UK and internationally under the banner of A Kind of Seeing. Driven by a passion for connecting people and places with heritage, she collaborates with audiences, organisations, artists and communities through high profile touring and artist-led projects in all sorts of spaces across archive film exhibition, live music, and performance.

Shona has been producing and curating film events, festivals and tours for over 20 years, including a long association with the Edinburgh International Film Festival, new commissions for the Glasgow Film Festival, and producing the first five years of the Hippodrome Silent Film Festival, Scotland's only event dedicated to silent film with live performance.

www.akindofseeing.co.uk/

Further reading:

1. *The Clock* – Tate Modern exhibition: www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/christian-marclay-clock/
2. *They Shall Not Grow Old* – review in Sight & Sound magazine: www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/they-shall-not-grow-old-peter-jackson-imperial-war-museum-world-war-one-archive-footage-revived/
3. *Britain on Film: Coast and Sea* – British Film Institute press release: www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-press-release-britain-on-film-coast-seas-collection-launch-2017-06-12.pdf/
4. *DRIFTERS: Following the Fleet*: www.followingthefleet.com/

Fifth Cinema and Found Footage

Nguyen Trinh Thi





Transcribed from a talk by Nguyen Trinh Thi following a screening of her film *Fifth Cinema* on 18 April 2019 (at Hanoi DocLab, Hanoi), also incorporating discussions from her session at the British Council Vietnam workshop *Dreaming/Remembering* (16–18 January 2019)

Fifth Cinema is a continuation of a number of my found-footage works that used very different kinds of footage, media, and materials. I think these projects were a lot less 'messy' at the beginning than in recent years. When I first started working with found footage, I would tend to use one source of material each time: the very first film that I made from found footage was roughly 10 years ago when I used materials from *Bai ca ra tran* (Song to the Front), a classic Vietnamese film made in 1972. In another project – *Landscape Series #1* – I used press photographs that I came across online. And in the piece *Eleven Men*, it was footage from eight different Vietnamese features but all featuring the same actress – Nhu Quynh – spanning three decades of her acting career, from when she was 18 to when she was in her 50s. The narration in the film was adapted from Kafka's short story *Eleven Sons* – the change from 'sons' to 'men' signifies that this film focused on the characters of men, or partners, that appeared alongside Nhu Quynh in the source works.

I have continued working with found footage, but the materials no longer only originate from one source – something that might have stemmed from my significant interest in analysing popular media across all forms. I made a piece called *Vietnam the Movie*, which consists of footage from many different American or European (and Asian, to a lesser extent) source materials that originated during the years of the Vietnam War or that mentioned Vietnam. Although I later trimmed it down to include only fictional works, the sources initially ranged from big-budget feature films, Hollywood and art-house productions, documentaries and newsreels, education films and those made by the army. In each of the clips extracted, the word 'Vietnam' is mentioned by someone. I wanted to undertake a survey into how people spoke about Vietnam, and all the different contexts in which that happened – all in search of an answer to the question: 'What is Vietnam?'

Then, in one of my latest projects I mixed materials found elsewhere with footage that I had shot. The film is called *Everyday's the Seventies* and it is about a Chinese-Vietnamese man who grew up in Saigon's Chinatown during wartime but escaped to Hong Kong just before the war ended in 1975. He is an avid collector of music records and especially loves music from the 1960s-1970s; now he has one of the best record stores in Hong Kong. This is a three-channel work: one made up of audio-visual archival materials about Saigon in the 1960s-1970s, as well as Hong Kong in the 1980s-1990s (the big story in Hong Kong in those years was that of Vietnamese refugees). For the second channel, I used footage from Hong Kong movies that discussed or mentioned Vietnam. As was the case with *Eleven Men* and actress Nhu Quynh, here again, these movies all feature one actor: the renowned Tony Leung Kafaï. The third channel is footage that I shot of the Chinese-Vietnamese record collector in Hong Kong in current times. As you can see, in *Everyday's the Seventies* these stories are about the same history, but they were happening in parallel with each other.

For *Fifth Cinema*, I also used footage that I have collected for several years in various ways: from newspapers to popular movies. I think I am obsessed with collecting images: I would always put things in different folders on the computer, and what ended up being used for this film was not collected specifically for it. For instance, a type of material that I was thinking a lot about, which was used in *Fifth Cinema*, was images of Vietnamese women as normally portrayed in both the North and the South of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. In the North, Vietnamese women have always been seen as very heroic, while in the South they were looked at in a very different way, fulfilling roles within certain specific scenarios (such as in bars). While both being Vietnamese women, these two groups were obviously portrayed in opposite ways that are actually not so dissimilar in nature: the images were instrumentalised towards war and socialism efforts, and entertainment. To this day, I think these associations still exist.

In contrast, I decided to make *Eleven Men* using footage of the actress Nhu Quynh in various Vietnamese films precisely because she is somebody who has a rather ambiguous expression upon which one could project one's own feelings. Across the films Nhu Quynh has appeared in, the roles she portrayed did not always conform to conventions. Additionally, another reason I made this work was because there were relatively many films with Nhu Quynh that were readily available.



So, I collected a lot of these images – from eBay, or in the US where veterans and collectors sell slide photos or Super8 reels they shot or obtained from the war – wanting to undertake a project to show these two sides of viewpoints. Somehow, all this material portraying Vietnamese women found their way into *Fifth Cinema*, woven with other types of layers, histories and geographies, making it quite a dense piece of moving image.

The text appearing in *Fifth Cinema* was adapted from a 2002 text by Maori filmmaker Barry Barclay, on what he termed 'Fourth Cinema'. Barclay was the first Maori to direct a feature narrative film (in 1987). He wrote a lot of texts and books about indigenous cinema and the need to have such a concept and movement. An influential figure, Barclay inspired many indigenous film-makers in New Zealand – some have become very successful and gone on to be part of the country's mainstream.

I was in New Zealand a couple of years ago for a few weeks when I came across his name, and later some of his writings on Fourth Cinema, which spoke to me in many ways. Barclay explained that:

"The phrase Fourth Cinema comes as a late addition to the First-Second-Third Cinema framework with which you will be familiar, First Cinema being American cinema; Second Cinema Art House cinema; and Third Cinema the cinema of the so-called Third World"⁽¹⁾

Fourth Cinema, according to Barclay, then refers to the cinema of indigenous people. At the time, I had been quite affected by the ongoing situation in Vietnam: the Vietnamese government had just decided to build the country's first two nuclear power plants in the land of the Cham ethnic minority group. This prompted me to start learning about the history of the Cham people and in turn, made me more aware of the life of indigenous people in Vietnam. The research resulted in the film *Letters from Panduranga*, shot in the South-Central coast region where Cham communities live. Concurrently, I was also following stories of ecological disasters in Vietnam – the first time I was 'awakened' to this situation was when the Formosa scandal happened three years ago. I was interested in making a piece of work that could link these threads together. However, I did not know which form it would take, until I decided to try using the aforementioned text on Fourth Cinema that Barry Barclay delivered to film and media students in Auckland. When watching the film, you may see that the images on the screen tell a story that runs in parallel with the text.

However, it was not always the case that image and text are put on top of each other – rather, the process was similar to *Eleven Men* in some ways. In the text, Barclay touched on different issues but did not go about it in a straightforward manner e.g. one topic after another. Instead, things were woven together: he talked about cinema here, then went to another thing, before coming back to cinema again. His text was loose enough for me to 'interact' with it. When I started working on the film, I would recall what Barclay had discussed, then temporarily put them aside in my mind. I started by looking at different types of materials, going through the folders that I had, while thinking about the aforementioned threads (ecological issues, indigenous people, women and those who are looked at, amongst others). I picked out what spoke to me and put them in a separate folder. In terms of the personal material, I had a lot of footage of my daughter filmed at different points in time from when she was 7 to 14 (last year), and you could certainly tell that she was growing up. I also revised screen tests that I had done for my other projects; but of course there was so much material that I simply could not view it all.

In a way, I was jumping back and forth between text and image, and I really needed to trim down the text too because I found it to be 'heavy'. *Fifth Cinema* also marked the first time, in one of my projects, that textual content had appeared as words shown on screen. Prior, I might have used voice-over, but this time I wanted viewers to also listen to other types of audio sources and not just be led by my voice. With this in mind, I knew that using such a heavy text would have been too

difficult for people to follow. So in the end, what I used accounted for only about 30 per cent of the original essay. I also tried spreading it out, so the words appearing at any given time did not form full sentences. At many points, a sentence would be spread over an extensive period of time and while reading it, you would forget how it begins. I liked this approach when editing the film, and wanted people to have a different experience of Barclay's text: more like reading a poem here, you could only focus on several words at a time, which interact with the image appearing with them. As such, I was not trying to have the audience understand everything that was 'said', but rather experience the combination of images and words.

I tend to find it difficult to teach film-making, since I work intuitively, or even teaching people how to edit even though I edit all my films. I think the way I edit films is more like improvising with materials and I never have or follow a script, never know what I am doing. With *Fifth Cinema* I had a general idea and a direction – but quite a vague direction – and then the way I previously worked with various types of materials directly informed the way they were incorporated into the main piece.



This film, and a few others that I have made, can perhaps be called 'essay films' – they are like essays, and I really like them because of the way they move: unlike a documentary film, or a feature that follows a narrative. Essay films do not tell a story the way a narrative-based film does, but rather follow one's thoughts more closely. I think essay films are very free and the projects I did before did not have any text and already had the characteristics of essay films, just without words. I also like essay films because there are many things happening between images and words. When watching them you have to connect the two elements together, and so the key relationship here is between the eyes and ears, not between shots as with narrative films: in other words, vertical, rather than horizontal. I think we can think about and digest different things simultaneously and make connections between the senses.

I also specifically wanted the text in *Fifth Cinema* to appear on screen as subtitles, because the experience of reading something is very different from that of hearing the same words read to you.

(1) Barry Barclay, *Celebrating Fourth Cinema*, printed in Illusions Magazine (New Zealand, July 2003 issue)

In its non-linearity and fragmentation, *Fifth Cinema* is rather complex because you have to work out for yourself the relationship between all the different elements. But I think that in general, it is very difficult to please everyone, so as a film-maker I think one has to decide for oneself who their audience is and where they want to show the film. For me, I think I am my first 'audience' – I have to please myself first and if I like the work, it is probably not too bad. With the consideration that this film is more difficult to watch than my past work, I kept working on the text to the extent that it was as light as possible. Each viewer's background and interests will determine how deeply they can go into it.

Overall, I feel satisfied with this film because it combines elements from quite a few of my past projects. I am no longer interested in talking about isolated issues, because I think these days everything is so connected. Ecological issues, cinema, history, or indigenous people – I think they are all connected, with similar logic. So, that is my interest in bringing them all together. The key here is also probably to see it a second time – the first viewing you are just taking everything in, while not focussing on the text, or the image. But of course, if I want to have a mass audience for my work, I would not make essay films.

Nguyen Trinh Thi is a Hanoi-based film/media artist. Her moving-image work – including experimental documentary films, single-channels and video installations – consistently engage with memory and history, and reflect on the roles and positions of artists in society.

Her materials are diverse – from video and photographs shot by herself to those appropriated from various sources including press photos, corporate videos and classic films. Her practice traverses boundaries between film and video art, installation and performance.

Nguyen's works have been shown at international festivals and exhibitions including the 9th Asia Pacific Triennale; Sydney Biennale; Jeu de Paume, Paris; CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux; the Lyon Biennale 2015; Asian Art Biennial 2015, Taiwan; Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial 2014; Singapore Biennale 2013; and Rotterdam International Film Festival.

www.nguyentrinthi.wordpress.com/

Further reading:

1. *Bai ca ra tran* (Nguyen Trinh Thi re-cut version): www.nguyentrinthi.wordpress.com/2012/09/29/journey-to-the-heart-2/
2. *Eleven Men*: www.nguyentrinthi.wordpress.com/2016/05/17/eleven-men-2016/
3. *Everyday's the Seventies*: www.nguyentrinthi.wordpress.com/2017/12/18/644/
4. *Barry Barclay*: www.thearts.co.nz/artists/barry-barclay/
5. *Fifth Cinema*: www.nguyentrinthi.wordpress.com/2018/09/10/fourth-cinema-2018/
6. An essay on *Fifth Cinema* by Ben Valentine: www.hyperallergic.com/478597/fifth-cinema-nguyen-trinh-thi/

The Miners' Hymns: Heitage and Communities

Nikki Locke





*Transcribed from a Skype Q&A session with Nikki Locke following a screening of the film *The Miners' Hymns*, itself part of the British Council Vietnam workshop *Dreaming/Remembering* (16–18 January 2019)*

The Miners' Hymns is produced by Forma and was an original commission for BRASS: Durham International Festival 2010 which I was working for at the time. The festival is a celebration of a unique culture in County Durham and offers a wide range of programming strands: from street bands from across the world, to new commissions which consider the history and the heritage of brass music – past, present and future. My first experience of the film was watching the premiere in the Durham Cathedral.

As you may or may not know, or as you might have seen from the film, the coal-mining industry in the UK used to be very dominant, but this area has since gone through a shift: with the devastation of coal mines closing [from the 1980s onwards], a huge amount of infrastructure and life were taken away from the very heart of the local community. Where there was a coal-mining community, there would be a local brass band where everybody would get together after work and play music, in the local miners' welfare hall. In the area, there remains to this day an incredible spirit: I think there are still over 20 brass bands remaining now in County Durham; and BRASS is thus a means to help keep the spirit of the brass music heritage of County Durham alive, and as such *The Miners' Hymns* was commissioned as part of this festival.

The film had such a dramatic impact, because it was an emotive reminder – quite a painful one for some – and a call-back to a specific time in history and a reinforcement of that very proud spirit in Durham and the North East of England. We were so proud of working with Forma Arts to bring together such a talented and high-quality team including film-maker Bill Morrison, composer Jóhann Jóhannsson and the musicians from the locally-based NASUWT Riverside Band, all working with the local community and the wealth of archival footage from the BFI National Archive, Amber Film and Photography Collective, the BBC and the North East Film Archive, to create such a great piece of work for BRASS.

With *The Miners' Hymns*, I feel that the decision to employ a non-fictional approach – with no speaking or voices, and using archived materials – brought something very special to the piece. During my experience of watching the film in the North East, there was nobody in the audience who could not recognise something from this film that was not, back then, part of their life, or their grandparents' lives – people that they knew, or even themselves, where they used to live. It was just an incredibly moving experience, and the younger members of the audience were really affected, because they had a chance to see what the area they were living in used to be like. Durham Cathedral is a location that appears in the film, during the Miners' Gala when miners were carrying their banners – this is a tradition that has been going for nearly 130 years and still happens now – and when we were stood watching the premiere of the film in the cathedral, inside the same space appearing on the screen, the atmosphere was absolutely electric, and there seemingly was not a dry eye in the venue. The spirit that it conveyed, and the music – performed live by a brass band – made for such a powerful experience. And again, I saw the film at Sage Gateshead with another North East audience, then a third time at the Easington Welfare Hall which is a community centre in County Durham. Going from a beautiful cathedral that was actually in the film, to a large modern concert hall, to a local community centre (where the film received a standing ovation) showed me the impact of that real connection, which is something that just cannot be put into words if I am being honest.

*Question: In the room right now [at the workshop in Hanoi] we have got a lot of filmmakers and people who look to create or curate projects. In this project, and in others that you have worked in that brought communities together with artists to work through the use of heritage and culture, what are the challenges that you think there might be for artists or with certain artistic practices? With *The Miners' Hymns* in particular, there could be certain sensitivities around an artist who is not from the area, coming in and making a film about a place where they are not from, especially when you also see some harrowing footage of this place in the film.*

When you are an artist, a musician, filmmaker or producer and you are very interested in telling a story of something that has happened to a community or a place, and creating a piece of work out of it because it is something that speaks to you, the questions I think people should always ask are: why do I want to be involved in this story or this piece of history? Where am I open to be flexible within the process, how much would I want my work to be informed by stories of people on the ground? Who am I making this for?



I have been working for a long time with different groups of artists and producers that have shared their reflections of a story, and having an understanding of your starting point within all this is a good challenge to give yourself, because then you will know how open you are in the creative process. When you are telling stories by using archival footage of things that are very much part of a community's heritage which they are very proud of but which could also be sensitive, then it is important to honour that and not be seen as an outsider parachuting in and using this heritage to just take out and show to the world. The best thing you can do is to get the local people on board and listen to their stories, let them shape the work that you create. I know this can often be a challenge because artists and communities have different experiences and expectations, therefore it does take time to build trust and mutual understanding, but it is so worth it. It is also always a great thing to have a producer – like the incredible Caroline Smith who was working with Forma Arts at the time as part of the huge production of *The Miners' Hymns* – someone who understands all the different perspectives, being able to challenge, to question, and to bring things together.

In another instance whilst at East Durham Creates, I worked with a group called So Percussion from New York, and we also worked with Amber Film and Photography Collective, as well as a cross-age range of people from the former mining communities in East Durham, heritage associations and other groups, to make a piece of work about the area. We were really keen that it was not about bringing people in to create something but leave nothing behind. For the programme we were doing, it was about really, really engaging with and working with communities in a different way. When So Percussion first came to the area, we split the group and asked each of them to go to a different place: one of them went to a local college, another went to a museum, another met with a women's group, and one went to a local factory. They went in and just spent time at first as themselves, not talking about the work, their ideas, or what they might do with this project. From that experience, they ended up making a lot of personal connections, and were also able to tell the stories that were happening now, by meeting with and listening to those groups, connecting with young people, community members and other artists and musicians. As such, by the end of the project – which would be called *From out a Darker Sea* – lots of people had become involved. Through the process of going in as themselves and listening to stories of the local people, So Percussion created something that they never imagined at the start: a multi-dimensional piece that involved archived film, spoken word, music, and stories from local people – it was truly a collaboration between many different ways of working. All artists I know who have approached creating new work in this way have had such an incredible experience, something they will never forget.



If I could just maybe end on two things. One is, *The Miners Hymns* – which as you can imagine was such a huge production – really helped build trust in the community and introduce a new way of working, which then opened the door for other projects to work in a similar way with artists from outside of the area. The film also had a legacy for communities within a wonderful pilot project in the UK called Cinegi Arts & Film, which provides arts and cultural content for small community centres, and has *The Miners' Hymns* in its catalogue. It is amazing to see how far it has gone since 2010. You just never know. My second point, is that to create, produce or commission similarly wonderful things you can also do something small as there are lots of ways you can bring very deep local impact – the secret lies in how you work with people. I think it is just great to explore different ways of doing things and trust in the process because you never know where it will lead.

Nikki Locke joined the British Council in 2017 as part of the Creative Economy team, advising on the development of projects across the Middle East, North Africa and Wider Europe. In June 2018 she took on a new role to lead Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth. This two-year, pilot programme seeks to pioneer new ways of utilising local cultural heritage to create inclusive growth and is being explored through action research projects taking place in Colombia, Kenya and Vietnam.

Previously, Nikki spent ten years working in the UK cultural sector across various creative disciplines including developing co-creation initiatives across arts, heritage and communities, designing and managing festivals and supporting the growth of local cultural ecologies in the North East of England. More recently, she led East Durham Creates, one of 21 independent projects funded by Arts Council England as part of Creative People and Places, an action research programme enabling more people to choose, create and take part in brilliant art experiences in the places where they live.

Further reading:

1. *The Miners' Hymns*: www.forma.org.uk/projects/miners-hymns/
2. BRASS: Durham International Festival: www.brassfestival.co.uk/
3. *From out a Darker Sea*: www.forma.org.uk/projects/from-out-a-darker-sea/
4. East Durham Creates: www.eastdurhamcreates.co.uk/about/about-the-project/
5. Forma Arts: www.forma.org.uk/
6. Cinegi: www.cinegi.com/

A Survey of Film Archives of Hanoi

Le Tuan Anh and Vietnam Film Institute Research Group



I. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSES

In accordance with the partnership agreement between the Vietnam Film Institute (VFI) and the British Council around the symposium Film as a Cultural Heritage (January 2019) within the framework of the British Council project Heritage of Future Past (2018-2020), in November-December 2018 a group of researchers at the VFI carried out this survey on the status of various governmentally-run film archives in Hanoi.

The purpose of the survey is to collect actual information on the archiving, digitisation and digital-based restoration of analogue film prints. This text also forms the basis for potential future partnerships in the following film-related areas:

- Furthering capacity of staff members in archiving and preserving film prints through specialist training;
- Increasing public awareness, particularly amongst the youth, of the value of Vietnam's film heritage and the importance of its preservation and restoration;
- Opening up lines of dialogues with policy-makers and relevant parties from both the private and governmental sectors, with a view to developing sustainable community-based heritage protection plans.

The overall common goal is to contribute to the inclusive and sustainable development of cultural heritage in Vietnam, in a manner that will benefit as many groups in the society as possible.

II. SURVEYED PARTIES

The surveyed parties are made up of units and agencies with access to – and responsibility for – analogue film prints, such as archive centres, research institutes, film-production companies, amongst others. The selection of surveyed parties has been made with these considerations in mind:

- These organisations carry out the archiving and preservation of film prints themselves and on a large scale, and are capable of directly utilising the films that they archive;
- These organisations are capable of digitising analogue prints and undertaking restoration projects.

The survey was conducted only in Hanoi since this is the city with the highest concentration of film archives and as such the largest amounts of archived prints in the country. Specifically, the organisations selected for the survey include:

- National Documentary and Scientific Film Studio;
- The Archive Centre of Vietnam Television;
- Vietnam Feature Film Studio;
- The Technical Department of the People's Police Television;
- Vietnam Animation Film Studio;
- National Archive Centre III;
- The VFI and its Ho Chi Minh City subsidiary (Centre for Film Research and Archiving in Ho Chi Minh City).

III. SURVEY RESULTS

The total amount of films archived at the aforementioned organisations reaches around 130,000 reels (colour and black-and-white), including negatives, positives and duplicates, on bases of both Polyester and Acetate Cellulose. Most of these reels are in 35mm or 16mm format, with very few in 8mm or others. Beside film, archives also hold various types of tapes, with the most common being Betacam SP, Digital Betacam, DV Cam and VHS U-matic.

During Vietnam's revolutionary years these materials were of great significance in their usage as channels of propaganda and communication, effectively safeguarding the formation and development of the nation, constituting a visual chronicle of Vietnamese history, culture and society. They are a frequent subject of study for researchers from Vietnam and abroad, and will remain valuable resources for future generations.

1. National Documentary and Scientific Film Studio

a. Establishment and Development

The News and Documentary Film Studio, now the National Documentary and Scientific Film Studio (DSF), was founded in June 1956. Filmmakers from the DSF have been present since the early days of the revolution, laying the foundation for the country's Revolution Cinema. Throughout the past 60 years, the Studio's filmmakers have documented authentic images of the people in heroic deeds against foreign occupiers, portrayed the country's ever-changing daily life, in so doing reflecting the hopes and dreams of Vietnamese people from all backgrounds.

b. Quantity of Archived Films

Currently, the DSF has an archive of 11,856 film reels in 35mm and 16mm formats, including 1,332 in colour and 10,924 in black and white. In total, there are 2,710 negative reels, 6,742 positives and 1,090 duplicates.

c. Condition of the Archive

Overall, the archive does not meet the required standard across all fronts. The storage facility has an area of 165 square metres, maintained at a temperature of 18-22°C and a humidity level of 50-65 per cent. The films are stored in plastic containers and placed on iron shelves. Reels are labelled and numbered according to thematic and year of production. The storage facility has an automatic fire alarm system in place which was designed and installed in 2007. The Studio uses Microsoft Word and Excel programme to manage its film database.

d. Oldest Films in the Archive

All the films kept at the DSF archive have been produced by the Studio itself, and as such it has the copyrights to them. The oldest films – all produced in 1955 – are *Giu lang giu nuoc* (Protect the Village, Protect the Country), *Chien dich Cao Bac Lang* (The Cao Bac Lang Campaign), *Chien thang Tay Bac* (Tay Bac Victory), *Viet Nam khang chien* (Revolutionary Vietnam), *Viet Nam tren duong thang loi* (Vietnam on the Path to Victory).

e. Digitisation and Restoration

Due to a lack of funding and equipment, the Studio's digitisation of its archived films has been carried out in rudimentary fashion: by projecting the prints in a studio setting and recording the projected image using F55 and F65 digital cameras. Analogue prints have been digitised to HD, Full HD, and 4K resolutions. Previously, films were transferred using Telecine into Betacam SP and Digital Betacam tape formats, but since 2015 the Studio has been using Lacie hard drives and Linear Tape-Open (LTO) tapes to store digitised files. So far, around 20 per cent of films in the archive have been digitised. No specifically allocated annual budget currently exists for the archiving, digitisation and restoration of films, as the Studio's budget only extends to technical inspection, manual restoration, and machinery cleaning. More than 4,070 of the reels (just over a third) were technically inspected in 2014 and 2015.

2. The Archive Centre of Vietnam Television

a. Establishment and Development

The Archive Centre of Vietnam Television, previously the Archive Room under the Programme Department, was established in July 1971 for collecting and archiving 16mm and 35mm film footage broadcasted on Vietnamese Television channels. In its early years, despite the lack of resources and facilities the Archive Department was able to preserve a large quantity of footage shot by news reporters during the 1970s-1980s, as well as many film prints given by allies of North Vietnam such as the Soviet Union, East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Images of post-war reconstruction and of people's lives during the subsidy era are materials of great historical value and significance, which also contributed to the production of new television programmes. As Vietnamese Television experienced strong growth in the late 1980s (corresponding to the country's Doi Moi [Renovation] macro policies), the Archive Room was separated from the Programme Department in November 1989, becoming the Archive Centre and Library of Television Materials (the Archive Centre for short).

b. Quantity of Archived Films

The film stock kept at the Archive Centre of Vietnam Television includes 136,434 metres of negative film and 7,650 metres of positive film, not to mention 2,740 containers of positives and negatives deposited in recent years. These materials are used in-house towards the production of modern-day television broadcasts.

c. Condition of the Archive

The Archive Centre has a dedicated storage facility with an area of approximately 90 square metres, which meets the requirements for film preservation. The Centre also makes use of a database management system.



d. Digitisation and Restoration

Despite the lack of digitisation technology, around half of the films archived at the Centre have been transferred to digital formats. The Centre operates a NAS Scaleout storage system running on Windows and Linux systems. Total storage capacity is 600TB and is configured to RAID 6, and data management software system is MAM Etere. Digital formats used include MXF (50 and 30 mbps) and AVI.

e. Annual Budget for Preservation and Digitisation

As of now, the Centre's annual budget for preservation and digitisation is between 400-500 million VND. No budget has been allocated to film restoration, and as such this is a process the Centre has yet to attempt.

3. Vietnam Feature Film Studio

a. Establishment and Development

Founded in 1953, the Vietnam Feature Film Studio (VFS) is the largest state-owned film studio in the country. The predecessors of the VFS were the Hanoi Film Studio and the Vietnam Feature Film Company. In June 2010, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism approved the plan for the privatisation of the VFS, which consequently became a single-member limited-liability company; later on, the Studio was equitised and became the Vietnam Feature Film Investment and Development Joint Stock Company.

b. Quantity of Archived Films

The total number of films currently archived at the Studio is 1,498, all of them being positives, including 600 colour reels and 898 black-and-white reels. All the films are in 35mm format and were produced by the Studio itself.

c. Condition of the Archive

The company does not have a dedicated storage facility, with the films being kept in a regular 20 square metre office at room temperature (25°C) and 70 per cent humidity. The films are stored in iron or plastic boxes and placed on iron shelves. There are fire extinguishers for fire protection.

d. Digitisation and Restoration

In total, 214 films have been converted to digital SD format and these files are stored on hard drives. The films' copyrights currently belong to the Vietnam Feature Film Investment and Development Joint Stock Company. In the early 2000s, the Studio entered a partnership with Phuong Nam Films to make and distribute commercially-available copies of a selection of classic Vietnamese films that the former had produced, using existing digitised copies (although these had not been restored).



4. The Technical Department of the People's Police Television

a. Establishment and Development

Before 2009, People's Police Film Studio – part of the Ministry of Public Security – specialised in producing feature films, documentaries and other materials on analogue film, U-matic tapes, VHS, Betacam, DVcam, amongst other non-digital formats; at the same time, the television wing of the Studio was responsible for news broadcast. In 2010, the People's Police Radio-Television-Cinema Centre was established, and the storage units of the two aforementioned units were merged into one. Currently, the Television Department utilises both online and offline storage for archiving.

b. Quantity of Archived Films

- 535 positive reels are currently stored at the People's Police Communications Department. These films were all produced by the former People's Police Film Studio.

- 526 negative reels are currently held in the VFI archive, having been deposited by People's Police Film Studio in 1995. The films were also made by the Studio on 35mm format, with Triacetate Cellulose base. The oldest of these was produced in 1956.

- Tapes – documentaries, feature films and other content – in Betacam (30, 60 and 90) and DVcam formats, held in the Studio's archive. Various materials (both fiction and otherwise) have been transferred to digital starting in 2011, however around 400 tapes have yet to be digitised still.

- An online storage system, which since 2011 has archived all programmes broadcast on the People's Police Television channel.

- An IBM storage system.

c. Condition of the Archive

The storage facility has a total area of 82 square metres, consisting of a 41 square metre section for analogue prints and 26 square metres for tapes. Climatic conditions are 18-22°C temperature and 60 per cent humidity. Storage shelves are made of metal, while containers are made of plastic and iron. The movies are numbered for identification, and the storage has an automatic fire alarm system in place.

d. Digitisation and Restoration

Due to recent technological developments, the Centre has now switched to producing and storing new materials in digital formats. No restoration project has been undertaken

5. Vietnam Animation Studio

a. Establishment and Development

The Vietnam Animation Studio (VAS) was founded on 9 November 1959, initially known as the Cartoon-Figurine Studio. In 2011 the Studio was transformed into a single-member limited liability company, and since 2016 has been officially known as the Vietnam Animation Studio Joint-Stock Company. In its early years, the Studio produced analogue-based animated films, and the switch

to computer animation (2D, 3D and digitally-based cut out animation) occurred in 2004. The VAS has won numerous awards at national and international film festivals, as well from the Vietnam Film Association.

b. Quantity of Archived Films

All 350 film reels of the VAS (in 35mm format, both positives and negatives) are currently held at the VFI archive. 320 of these reels are in colour and 30 are in black and white. All 350 reels have now been digitised by the VFI.

c. Oldest Films in the Archive

The Studio's oldest film – also the first Vietnamese animated film – is the 10-minute short *Dang doi thang cao* (The Fox Deserved It), released in 1960.

d. Digitisation and Restoration

As mentioned above, the digitisation of VAS films has been carried out by the VFI since the former does not possess the necessary equipment. The VAS currently holds 450 digital files (both archived films digitised by the VFI, plus newly-produced films) in SD, HD and 2K resolutions and which are stored in daily-use hard drives. These digitised animated films have not been restored.

6. National Archive Centre III

a. Establishment and Development

National Archive Centre III was founded in 1995 as a public service institute under the National Archives of Vietnam, with the purpose of managing archived materials of governmentally-run agencies and organisations of North Vietnam (before 1975) and Vietnam (after 1975). The Centre specifically holds archived materials of organisations that are based in provinces northwards of Quang Binh province.

b. Quantity of Archived Films

The Centre currently holds 362 black-and-white film reels produced by a variety of organisations, such as the Hanoi Documentary Film Studio (now the National Documentary Studio), the People's Army Film Studio, the Central Documentary Film Studio, or the H&S Film Studio of the former German Democratic Republic, amongst others. These films have Polyester and Acetate bases and are in both 35mm and 16mm formats.

c. Condition of the Archive

The Centre's archive facility measures 40 square metres and is kept at a temperature of 11°C and a humidity level of 50 per cent. The storage uses metal drawer shelving units imported from the Netherlands. The films are kept in specialised, numbered plastic container. A film database exists, though not electronically. The archive has an automatic fire suppression system.

d. Oldest Films in the Archive

The oldest film material the Centre currently holds was produced in 1964 and is a documentary feature about the US' chemical warfare in Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

e. Digitisation and Restoration

The Centre has yet to digitise or restore any of the materials that it holds, however, all of the films have been converted to Betacam tapes (and from there transferred to DVD, in some cases). Annual budget for archiving is not specified but reportedly very limited.

7. Vietnam Film Institute

a. Establishment and Development

The VFI is a revenue-generating public service institute under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, which has the aims of archiving and preserving, promoting and disseminating cinematographic materials, as well as undertaking research in cinema theories and storage technologies.

The current archive of the Institute is the result of a lengthy collection and preservation process that has undergone various developments. During the years of the Vietnam War the predecessor body of the VFI was the National Film Archive department which operated under the then newly established Cinema Department. Due to the war situation at the time, the actual archive was located in a tropical forest in the province of Tuyen Quang (200km north of Hanoi). In those years, films were made in very difficult conditions, and even though most of the films were archived the prints would usually be mouldy and scratched. In February 1979, a Northern-border war with China broke out and as such, the film archive was moved nearly 2,000km southwards from Tuyen Quang to the Highlands town of Da Lat (Lam Dong province).

Nevertheless, due to the extremely high humidity level in Da Lat, the film collection was at risk and subsequently moved to Thu Duc (on the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City). As the border war died down, they were transported to Hanoi again and stored in classrooms at the Hanoi College of Theatre and Cinema. In September 1979, the VFI was officially established, but there was yet no dedicated film storage, and the entire facility consisted of three rooms on the third floor of the Cinema Department premises. Only ten years later would the VFI's own premises open.

b. Quantity of Archived Films

The VFI archive in Hanoi holds 44,570 film reels of various types, including 9,176 colour reels and 9,325 black-and-white reels. The films have Acetate Cellulose and Polyester bases, and are in 35mm, 16mm, 9.5mm and 8mm formats. In total there are 8,531 negative films, 18,510 positives, 4,933 duplicates, in addition to a number of VHS, U-matic, Hi8, Betacam SP tapes, etcetera. In years past, any governmentally-funded film production would be subject to depositing a copy of the film with the VFI, however this is no longer the case. Nowadays, the VFI also regularly collects, exchanges, as well as produces works of its own.

c. Condition of the Archive

The storage facility consists of two floors with a total area of 300 square metres and since 2009, has used an upgraded air conditioning unit to maintain a temperature of 10-11°C, and a humidity level of around of 30 per cent. Storage containers are made of plastic and iron, and specialised mobile shelves are used throughout. No automatic fire-extinguishing system has been installed and there is only an alarm system.

The prints archived are identified through a combination of letters and numbers: N (for negative), NT (for sound negative), NM (for colour negative), DP (for duplicate positive), DN (for duplicate negative), P (for positive), PM (for colour positive) – combined with a numerical series.

Since 2011, the VFI has conducted regular assessment of the condition of its holdings. This assessment was first conducted for the evaluation, classification, restoration and preservation of analogue prints in Hanoi. Films are checked and graded for technical errors such as acidity, shrinkage, mold, discolouration, and mechanical flaws like scratches and dust damage, and are evaluated on a scale between 1-4, with 1 being the best state (i.e. in no need of repair or restoration). Level 4 indicates that the films are in danger and it will be difficult to handle and restore them. All the films in the VFI archive have been profiled and categorised by content and are searchable onsite using the WinSis software.

d. Oldest Films in the Archive

The oldest films that the VFI currently holds include *Duoi mat phat Thich Camoni* (Under the eyes of Gautama Buddha, 1923), *Tai Dong Duong* (In Indochina, 1925), and *Trong vựa lúa của Viễn Đông* (In the rice fields of the Far East, 1939).

e. Digitisation and Restoration

In 2005, the VFI imported a digital conversion and transfer system, including a Spirit Datacine SDC 2002 Telecine system, a Da Vinci colour-grading system for analogue prints, a Tezro film restoration system, plus the Authoring programme for making DVDs (incorporating subtitles). The combination of these upgrades has enabled films to be transferred to various digital formats such as DPX (at 2k resolution and a speed of 6 frames per second) or digital Betacam tape (which allows colour adjustment to be made).

With the introduction of this new system the VFI has achieved better capacity in its digitisation of analogue prints, with the standard digital format being Betacam. In five years, the VFI managed to transfer nearly 1,000 films into Betacam: these have been mainly Vietnamese feature films, documentaries, animated films, plus a selection of foreign classics, news reports, documentaries, amongst other types.

To date the VFI has undertaken various in-house restoration projects. The process usually starts with the digitisation of prints (in high-resolution) wherein images undergo elementary colour correction. Following this, technicians work on repairing the digital files using specialist restoration programmes. Finally, the data files are exported onto analogue prints or tapes. Before 2013, the VFI had fully restored two films at 1k resolution: the 10-minute black-and-white film *Bac Ho o Viet Bac* (Uncle Ho in Viet Bac) and the 20-minute colour film *Lang nho ven ho* (Little Village by the Lake), as well as the colour film *Viet Nam tren duong thang loi* (Vietnam on the Road to Victory) at SD resolution.

In 2013 VFI's film-digitisation and -restoration system received a significant upgrade, with newly-acquired collaterals including a Golden Eye III film scanner, Editshare Xstream HT storage system, Da Vinci Resolve 12.0 colour-grading software, four HP Workstation Z620s, an HP StoreEasy 1630 (Raid 5, 12 TB) centralised data storage system, and the Diamant Film Restoration 7.0 software. With this upgrade, the VFI has since managed to digitise 3,000 movies at 2K resolution, as well as outsourced the digitisation of 470 films at 4K resolution. Digitised files are in RAW, DPX and MOV formats and are stored in hard drives and LTO 7 tapes.



g. The Centre for Film Studies and Film Archiving in Ho Chi Minh City

The Centre for Film Studies and Film Archiving is a Ho Chi Minh City-based subsidiary of the VFI, founded in 1976 following the reunification of Vietnam. Currently the archive holds around 38,000 film reels – mostly taken from the former Southern Vietnam cinema industry, as well as retrieved from different production and distribution offices in the Southern provinces. Amongst the films archived here are 2,300 negative reels and 34,500 positives, with the rest duplicates. All the films have Acetate Cellulose base and are in either 16mm or 35mm format. The oldest film was produced in 1947.

Upwards of 90 per cent of the reels are on the lower-rung Level 3 and Level 4 in terms of their technical condition. The Centre's storage has an area of 366 square metres, maintained at a temperature of 11-22°C and a humidity level of 35-40 per cent, and is equipped with an automatic fire-extinguishing system. Specialised mobile shelves are also utilised. Since late 2016 the Centre has commissioned the 4k-resolution digitisation of its holdings, and to date 30 films have been digitised in this way. As with the main VFI premises in Hanoi, at the Ho Chi Minh City-subsidary digital files (in RAW, DPX and MOV formats) are also stored in hard drives and LTO tapes.

8. Other Organisations

The People's Army Film Studio has the second largest film archive in Vietnam (after the VFI). Since 2011, the Studio has invested in a large quantity of digitisation equipment such as real-time 2k Telecine scanner, a colour-grading system, digital film-editing software, digital cameras, amongst others. Currently, the Studio continues making major investments in new facilities and equipment. In undertaking this research, the VFI group was not able to approach the Studio due to it being part of the Ministry of Defence and holding confidential information.

The Historical Archive of the Central Party is a unit under the Archive Office of the Communist Party, which also holds a certain amount of analogue prints. The amount of films here is reportedly not significant and the nature of the Archive's holdings is confidential. As such, the research group also could not undertake any survey here.

The Ho Chi Minh Museum also has an analogue film archive, but all of its holdings have been deposited at the VFI archive. The total number of these films is 213, including 10 colour films and 203 black-and-white films. The oldest films were produced in 1952, including *Dai hoi chien si thi dua toan quoc* (The National Festival of the Soldiers) and *Sinh hoat cua Bac o Viet Bac* (Uncle Ho in Viet Bac).

IV. ANALYSIS

1. Technical Condition

The survey shows that only two of the archives – the VFI and the DSF – have conducted any thorough inspection and evaluation of the technical condition of prints in their holdings. This task can be undertaken in accordance with either an internal standard developed by the organisations themselves or the national standard TCVN 11773:2016 Archival motion picture films – Technical requirements and test methods which was developed by the VFI at the request of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (the standard was also reviewed by the Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality, and published by the Ministry of Science and Technology).

Aside from certain fundamental sections of a standard such as Scope of Application, Citations, Terminology and Definition and References, the technical parameters set out in TCVN 11773:2016 towards the purposes of evaluating and categorising the conditions of archived film prints are summarised in the following table:

Criteria	Level			
	1	2	3	4
1. Acidity (vinegar syndrome), tested with A-D strip	<1	1	2	3
2. Shrinkage	≤ 0.5 per cent	> 0.5 to ≤ 1.5 per cent	> 1.5 to ≤ 3 per cent	3 per cent
3. Mold	No mold or damages caused by mold	Light mold at the edges, can be cleansed	Mold has not eaten too deep into the image	Mold has eaten too deep into the image
4. Image Discolouration				
Black-and-white	No discolouration	Discoloured to light brown	Discoloured to dark brown, decreased density	Discoloured to dark brown, loss of density
Colour	No discolouration	Discoloured to light pink	Discoloured to pink, little green pigmentation left, images fade considerable	Complete loss of green pigmentation, loss of density, loss of details

5. Physical Deformities				
Physical film	Pliable, flat; no patching	Curled at the edge; very few tears (≈1 to 5 small scratches)	Signs of deformation; bended edges; brittle or slightly sticky; torn	Brittle; deformed; considerably sticky; torn and missing many parts
Scratches on the film base	Few to no scratches (tiny scratches at the beginning and end of the roll), little image noise	Few scattered scratches; fixable by base coating or wet printing	Many scratches; not fixable by base coating or wet printing	Several significant scratches; not fixable by base coating or wet printing
Scratches on emulsion layer	Few to no scratches (tiny scratches at the beginning and end of the roll), little image noise	Few, scattered scratches; fixable by emulsion swelling or wet printing	Many scratches; not fixable by emulsion swelling or wet printing	Several significant scratches; not fixable by base coating or wet printing
Splices	In good condition, showing no signs of dryness, peeling or tearing	Signs of dryness; light little restoration required in three -four spots	Dry, considerable peeling, misaligned; considerable restoration required	Considerable peeling and torn; very difficult to restore; high frequency of splices
Dirt and dust	Clean; very little noise	Scattered; can be resolved with ultrasonic cleaning	Considerable amount of dirt and dust; cannot be completely cleaned	Excessive amount of dirt and dust; cannot be cleansed
Perforation	In good condition, showing no signs of deformities, curling, cracks, tearing, patching	Little curling and few cracks; some places need to be reinforced (one-five spots)	Considerably cracked; needs to be reinforced with clear tape	Missing; requires considerable patching; at risk of damage if put in projector
Film-leaders	All present, up to standard	All present however some places require technical handling Signs of deterioration; cracked edges, some peeling	Some missing, patching in some places; not up to standar	Non-existent; torn and mangled
6. Emulsio	Fine; transparent; no signs of stickiness or peeling	Signs of deterioration; cracked edges, some peeling	Cracked; loss of details; scattered peeling; crystals or bubbles are formed in some places	Too deteriorated; large size cracks; sticky and peeling in many places; considerable loss of details

7. Optical sound	Target density achieved, good audio quality; no noise; no distortion	Target density not achieved; light damages, noise, and distortion	Target density not achieved; moderate damages; uneven sound levels; some noise and distortion	Target density not achieved; sound level too low; considerable noise and distortion
8. Thiosulfate excess level	≤ 0,4 mg/cm ²	> 0,4 μg/cm ²		

Before becoming the national standard, the previous version of the aforementioned TCVN 11773: 2016 was an internal standard of the VFI (*The Criteria for Assessing the Technical Status of Archived Prints*). This internal standard has been applied at the Institute since 2011 towards categorising archived prints into the four different levels in accordance with their condition.

As a reference, the percentages of prints belonging to each of the four categories in three of the surveyed organisations are as follows:

- VFI: 95.2 per cent in Level 1 (of which films that show signs of deterioration account for about 9.1 per cent); 1.9 per cent in Level 2; 1.2 per cent in Level 3; and 1.7 per cent in Level 4
- Centre for Film Studies and Film Archiving in Ho Chi Minh City: upwards of 90 per cent of films in Level 3 and Level 4.
- DSF: 10 per cent in Level 1; 15 per cent in Level 2; 20 per cent in Level 3; and 55 per cent in Level 4.

Aside from human errors or natural disasters, the technical condition of an archived analogue print is the result of a combination of many factors: historical factors, regular storage environment, the dissemination and exhibition of film prints, processes of assessment, evaluation and preservation. In particular, regular storage environment is the factor with the most impact on technical condition of archived analogue prints.

The situation of archiving analogue prints in the surveyed organisations varies greatly, and likewise the investment that each archive has made also varies. One should refer to international standards in order to determine whether the condition of each archive is, thus far, adequate enough.

Within the scope of this report, the writer specifically considers two external factors: temperature and humidity. The relevant standards to be referenced against are *ISO 11799:2003 Information and documentation - Documentation storage requirements for archive and library materials*, and *ISO 18911: 2010 Imaging materials - Processed safety photographic films - Storage practices*.

For instance, according to *ISO 18911: 2010*, under medium-term storage conditions (which would be suitable for an archival period of minimum 10 years), the average relative humidity (RH) should not exceed 50 per cent, and maximum relative humidity should not exceed 60 per cent. Ideal temperature for an extended period of time should not exceed 25°C, while the preferred temperature is below 21°C, and peak temperature for a short period should not exceed 32°C. Extended-term storage conditions (suitable for preserving information recorded on new analogue prints for a 500-year period) are specified as follows (extracted from the full table): As such, most of the environmental conditions currently applied by the surveyed archives would be sufficient to ensure medium-term preservation (minimum 10 years). For extended-term preservation, some of the storages only meet the requirements for certain types of prints (such as black-and-white prints with Polyester base), while for preserving other types such as colour film with Cellulose base, no storage has met the requirements. However, according to *ISO 18911: 2010*, even when archives are unable to meet the

Image Type	Base Type	Maximum Temperature °C	RH Range per cent
Black-and-white silver gelatin	Cellulose Ester	2 5 7	20-50 20-40 20-30
Black-and-white silver gelatin Processed silver or thermally-processed silver	Polyester	21	20-50
Colour	Cellulose Ester *	-10 -3	20-50 20-40
Temperature fluctuation must not exceed $\pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ in any 24-hour cycle RH fluctuation must not exceed 5 per cent in any 24-hour cycle and should not be lower than the minimum or exceed the maximum RH limit as set out in this table *including Cellulose Triacetate, Cellulose Acetate Butyrate, and Cellulose Acetate Propionate.			

requirements of low humidity and temperature levels specified in the standard, aiming for and maintaining a next-best scenario would still bring about significant benefits to the life expectancy of an archived print. To more accurately estimate this life expectancy measurement, we can refer to one of the following two methodologies:

- *New tools for Preservation: Accessing long-term Environmental Effects on Library and Archives Collections* by James M. Reilly (Image Permanence Institute): a simple way to determine the life expectancy of short-term organic materials such as paper, colour photo or magnetic tape in a stable storage environment is to base the assessment on Preservation Index (PI) values. The table below presents PI values corresponding to the life expectancy (by year) of organic materials at different temperature and humidity levels.

Measuring current storage conditions of various Vietnamese archives (as discussed in the previous section) the writer obtained certain PI values (as highlighted in red).

- The second way to determine the life expectancy of archived analogue prints is to use one of the tools developed by the Image Permanence Institute to determine the time a newly-processed film print with Acetate base would start forming acid (in other words, reaching an acidity level – pH – of 0.5) under certain storage environment conditions. This tool shows that once a film starts to form acid, the rate of base de-

Temperature (°C)														
		0	2.7	5.5	8.3	11.1	13.8	16.6	19.4	22.2	25	27.7	30.5	33.3
	5	2634	1731	1147	767	516	350	240	165	114	80	56	40	28
	10	2234	1473	979	656	443	302	207	143	99	70	49	35	25
	15	1897	1255	837	562	381	260	179	124	86	61	43	30	22
	20	1613	1070	716	482	328	224	155	107	75	53	37	27	19

RH (%)	25	1373	914	613	414	282	194	134	93	65	46	33	23	17
	30	1170	781	525	356	243	168	116	81	57	40	29	21	15
	35	998	668	451	307	210	145	101	71	50	35	25	18	13
	40	852	572	387	264	182	126	88	62	43	31	22	16	12
	45	729	491	333	228	157	109	76	54	38	27	19	14	10
	50	624	421	287	197	136	95	66	47	33	24	17	12	9
	55	535	362	247	170	118	82	58	41	29	21	15	11	8
	60	459	312	213	147	102	72	51	36	26	18	13	10	7
	65	394	269	184	128	89	62	44	31	22	16	12	9	6
	70	339	232	160	111	77	54	39	28	20	14	10	8	6
	75	292	200	138	96	67	48	34	24	17	13	9	7	5
	80	251	173	120	84	59	42	30	21	15	11	8	6	4
	85	217	150	104	73	51	36	26	19	14	10	7	5	4
	90	187	130	90	63	45	32	23	16	12	9	6	5	3
	95	162	112	79	55	39	28	20	15	11	8	6	4	3
PI values (year)														

composition will accelerate and the time it takes for Acetate film to reach an acidity of 2.0 or higher will be increasingly shortened.

The results yielded using each method are relatively similar, and yet it is worth noting that there are other factors that affect the life expectancy of an analogue print, such as the fact that a print would need to be moved out of its storage environment for it to be used. We can take this factor into consideration based on *IPI Storage Guide for Acetate Film* by James M. Reilly. The table below provides examples of the correlation between the number of days (per year) a print is kept in room-temperature environment (as opposed to standard archival environment) and the amount of time it would take for said print to reach acidity level of 0.5:

According to the table above, hypothetically, for an Acetate film permanently stored in storage condition of 10°C and 40 per cent humidity to reach an acidity level of 0.5, it will take 200 years. However, if that film is moved to the outside environment for 10 and 90 days every year, the life expectancy is shortened to 175 and 70 years, respectively.

Archival Conditions		Number of days in room temperature (yearly)				
		0	5	10	30	90
Temperature °C	RH %	Number of years to reach acidity level of 0.5				
21	20 40	90 50	80 50	80 50	70 45	50 35
10	20 40	400 200	300 200	250 175	150 125	70 70

Therein lies the dilemma: in order to make the most of our film heritage we should attempt to exhibit the films as much as possible, yet moving analogue prints outside of their storage will necessarily shorten their life expectancy and accelerate the deterioration of their quality. To resolve this issue, archives tend to digitise their analogue prints and focus on digital-based usage.

2. Factors that Affect the Archiving of Analogue Prints

Overall, the quantity of analogue prints currently archived in Vietnam is quite significant. The organisations responsible for the archiving of these films are aware of the importance to preserve this crucial heritage of the country and its people.

Nevertheless, the archival and preservation process greatly varies across Vietnam's film archives. Beside those that have been able to develop high-quality storage, many have yet to be able to install dedicated storage facilities and even have to store prints in normal offices – together with other audio-visual materials – at room temperature and high humidity level, as such significantly damaging the prints. At the same time, a number of archives store prints in environments that are too cold without adequate means of thawing, causing over-shrinkage and brittleness. Haphazard use of sub-par film containers has also been observed, and this is an issue since the material and size of containers can impact on the life expectancy of a film print.

If we are to compare storage conditions of the surveyed archives against criteria set out in *ISO 18911:2010* then no film archive in Vietnam currently satisfies international standard for archival practices, although it is worth noting that certain archives manage to meet the requirements for individual categories (such as with regard to film containers, temperature, or humidity).

There are many reasons, both objective and subjective, that have led to an archival situation as described above. Two such reasons stand out:

- Lack of resources: this is common in all fields and areas in Vietnam, however the situation is even more dire for the country's film organisations. In general, meagre amounts of funds are allocated towards film archiving. Budget allocated to these agencies and units for film preservation activity is usually not very high. In addition, Vietnam only has just completed its transition from analogue to digital technology, requiring organisations to invest heavily in both digital equipment and digital training; at the same time, many film organisations (including a number of those that were surveyed) are in the midst of privatisation, only just starting to get used to financial autonomy. The combination of these two factors mean that archival budget of each organisation is almost non-existent, while setting up archival facilities that could meet international standards demands a colossal budget.

Human resources also remain substandard, due to the fact that governmental film organisations are often unable to offer competitive incentives to attract and retain capable staff. At the moment, there is also no school or programme specialising in the archiving of analogue prints. The majority of staff currently working in this profession have been trained in another field and only learned about preservation and restoration on the job, without any proper and in-depth training.

- Lack of national standards regarding archival facilities. There needs to be a standard to be applied nationwide that can offer a common, cohesive set of essential requirements for storage conditions, dedicated film storage, film shelving unit, container, label, etcetera. Such a standard would be a clear and important goal for film organisations to work towards; likewise, it would form the basis that archives can refer to, for requesting funding or calling for investment towards building adequate storage facilities.

3. The Digitisation Trend

As noted in the previous section, the analogue-digital transition in Vietnam has only just completed. For an overwhelming majority of productions all stages of the film value chain are now carried out using digital means, from pre- to post-production, from shooting to projection. The archiving of film is thus no exception. Apart from digitally storing films that have been shot in digital in recent years, there is also a great need to

digitise existing analogue prints. With the rapid development of technology, film digitisation has become a substantial trend on a global scale, bringing about with it a great number of advantages as follows:

- Scale expansion: while with the analogue-archiving model there would always be difficulties with storage construction and lack of space, a digital-based storage can take in a considerably larger data load without an urgent need for site expansion.

- Duplication: duplicating analogue films requires a complicated process and comes with the inevitable deterioration of image quality. With digital duplication, on the other hand, quality degradation is nearly insignificant.

- Film restoration: as with the duplication process, analogue-based restoration requires a complex handling process, whereas digital restoration has emerged as an optimal method, ensuring the safety of the original analogue print while allowing for image corrections to be made easily.

- Usage and dissemination: the use of analogue film projectors has become more and more rare and is now something of a niche cinephile practice. Film distribution exhibition these days, especially in the more commercially focused arena, is largely based on digital formats, also given the ease of transportation. Digital usage is also a solution to the dilemma noted in the previous section regarding dissemination of analogue prints and the damage that can be caused to those prints.

With these advantages, the digitisation of analogue films to maximize their values and preserve the original copies is a necessary process, and Vietnam's film archives cannot go against that trend. However, as with other archival activities, the process of digitisation also varies in different Vietnamese archives in terms of investment and scale of implementation, and is – in general – still at an early stage. There are archives that have never received investment from the government towards digitisation, archives that undertake digitisation using non-specialist equipment, while some have been more fortunate and received significant funding to acquire synchronous systems with the aim of digitising their entire print archives.

Even the choice of digital file format is far from cohesive: each organisation selects a format suitable for its use and needs without referring to a common standard. As for digital storage, in general most archives only go as far as small-scale storage on individual hard drives, or tape systems with limited storage space. It is very rare for a unit to have a large data storage system, also known as a data centre. Likewise, no archive has been able to obtain synchronous equipment in all stages of the process, from digitisation, storage, restoration, to backup. In the context of these many difficulties and shortcomings, archives with analogue-print holdings should consider greater co-operation and support amongst themselves, in various stages. For example, archives with storage advantage could provide support in film preservation (and similarly for those with specialist knowledge and equipment in digitisation or restoration) so that film organisations can perhaps concentrate production of new works instead of having to disperse resources to too many different jobs.

In summary, well aware of the value of their holdings as well as of the importance of film preservation, the surveyed archives highly value the benefits of film digitisation in various areas, not least in the promotion of Vietnam's film heritage. Nevertheless, investment towards archiving and digitisation is still very much limited, and thus each archive needs to consider carefully its actual needs and budget capacity to develop suitable strategies in preservation, digitisation and restoration. The more developed countries have been ahead of us for a very long time and it is their valuable experience that we can learn from, in order to archive as much as possible, preserve the prints for as long as possible, and showing the films to the largest audience possible.

Le Tuan Anh graduated from the Hanoi University of Theatre and Cinema in 2004 and has been working at the Vietnam Film Institute since 2005. He currently works as Vice Head of the Technical Department of the Institute and is involved in processes such as archiving, digitising and restoring. He has also been a member of the Technical Subcommittee for developing various national standards in film archiving in Vietnam.

Archival Films Come to Life, Beckoning for More Engagement

Do Thuy Linh



Originally published on the author's blog (www.dothuylinhblog.wordpress.com)

It was an enriching experience to watch the four films screened recently in Hanoi as part of the Film as a Cultural Heritage series of events organized by the British Council and the Vietnam Film Institute. The films are all excellent works: Virginia Heath's 2014 documentary *From Scotland with Love*; Franz Osten's 1928 silent feature *Shiraz: A Romance of India* starring Himansu Rai, a pioneer of Indian cinema; two Vietnamese films: Trần Vũ's 1974 black-and-white classic *Đen hen lại len* (We'll Be Seeing Us Again), and Đặng Nhật Minh's 2000 movie *Mùa oi* (The Season of Guavas).

The films were screened for free on four evenings to packed theatres at the National Cinema Centre alongside a workshop and a conference that discussed the archiving of moving images in Britain and Vietnam. These activities were part of an ongoing two-year cultural project conducted by the British Council to help Vietnam preserve its filmic and musical heritage. Vietnam is one among a few emerging economies such as China, India, Egypt and South Africa that have been identified as those that may benefit from British expertise.

The screenings covered the documentary and fictional film genres and offered a vivid viewing experience of *Shiraz* in which a Vietnamese narrator translated the film's written English narration orally and live. This experience effectively evoked the screening of films alongside live musical performances in the silent film era, reminding that cinema was a young visual art-form that partook of various arts that came before to create a total sensual experience. The films themselves provided enlightening snapshots into the different cultures where they were made, and along the way, raised ultimate questions about what it means to be human.

Cinema Reclaimed

Culled from thousands of hours of archival footage, the 75-minute *From Scotland with Love* is an epic portrait of Scotland in the 20th century. This film is set to a critically acclaimed original soundtrack which singer-songwriter King Creosote composed based on the footage he saw. Virginia Heath's documentary sketches the working Scottish men and women who with their sweat and blood have forged a country out of a breathtakingly beautiful land. *From Scotland with Love* can be considered a counterpoint to German documentary filmmaker Harun Farocki's insightful critique of cinema, *Workers Leaving the Factory*.

In Farocki's film, he argues that throughout its 100-year history, cinema has simply reshot, with a childish fixation to immortalize an original pleasure, the first shot ever made by the Lumière brothers that features workers leaving the Lumière factory in Lyon. Cinema is a self-deceiving capitalistic tool that looks at things from the outside to control and make believe, always shoots workers after work, and whenever possible, hastily moves away from factories, never shows the hell that is inside, and the implications that may arise.

Against this context, *From Scotland with Love* offers a plethora of scenes about real labor. Scottish men and women are seen working hard everywhere: on the fields, inside the factories, at the docks, under the mines. Cinema, which originally cast working people as its object, is reclaimed here. Workers' strikes make up an essential part of this film. A dramatic sequence set to King Creosote's powerful track *Pauper's Dough* includes footage from the carters' strike in Dundee in 1911, one of the first strikes in Scotland, and the 1919 Battle of George Square in Glasgow in which British troops were mobilized to crack down on thousands of workers who fought for 40-hour workdays. Virginia Heath's work is a well-sung tribute to the documentary, cinema's very first genre with its integral working-class subject.

A Gendered Masterpiece

Though Franz Osten's silent feature *Shiraz: A Romance of India*, which was restored by the British Film Institute, is also a captivating movie, it can best be read not as a tribute to cinema itself, but to another form of artistic excellence with less Western influence and more Indian authenticity: architecture, as exemplified by the Taj Mahal in Agra. With a dramatic narrative, *Shiraz* captures the gender dynamic that might have empowered the human genius that created the Taj Mahal in the 17th century. The movie opens with Queen Mumtaz Mahal, for whom the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan built the white marble mausoleum, being a little princess caught up in a bloody ambush. Her mother and followers are all killed.

A potter walks by and rescues her. He takes her home, names her Selima and brings her up. His son Shiraz, played by Himansu Rai, who founded the Bombay Talkies studio in 1934, grows up falling in love with her. One day, Selima, now a lovely young woman, is kidnapped by slave raiders and sold to Prince Khurram. Shiraz tries but fails to rescue her. He follows her to the royal palace in Agra. Unfortunately for Shiraz, Selima falls in love and marries the prince. Nevertheless, Shiraz keeps an eye on his heartthrob for years until she dies. Her emperor husband later calls for artists throughout the kingdom to submit designs for a palace to house his beloved queen's tomb. Shiraz, who has turned blind, creates a superb model and wins the contest.

Shiraz draws its gender dynamic with a fine brush. In this story, a woman exists in an inextricable relationship with men. Without an independent identity, power or overt talent, she nevertheless plays a vital role. She connects different kinds of men and drives them to heroic endeavours. Selima serves as the wife to a king and the source of inspiration to an extraordinary artist. The ending sequences in which the two men work to build the Taj Mahal with the queen now being dead and passing out of sight sum up this dynamic. The final shot shows the ultimate players in this great human stage: the aging king and the blind artist looking at their joint venture, a crowning human achievement that Tagore hailed as a "tear drop on the face of eternity".



Giving Voice to Woman

Moving from India to Vietnam, through *Shiraz* to *Den hen lai len*, one encounters a more feminine cinema. In Tran Vu's movie, the woman occupies a more powerful role: she herself is the artistic genius of Vietnamese culture. *Den hen lai len* tells the story of a talented *quan ho* (northern folk music) singer named Net (meaning 'virtue') living during the French colonization of Vietnam. This film features substantial *quan ho* performances in which groups of female and male singers deliver musical challenges and responses. Net is forced into marriage with a rich French-educated man though she loves a poorer one with a revolutionary touch. On her wedding night, Net takes to her heels in a highly symbolic sequence.

She runs away from the rich man's house and throws herself on her dead mother's tomb asking tearfully, 'Where can I go now, mother?' This is as if, to borrow from the feminist scholar Gayatri Spivak, Vietnamese culture is on the run, fleeing persecution by the French colonizers and the local upper-class, seeking help from its native roots, which are now dead and so cannot help. Right after, Net seeks shelter in a Buddhist temple, another symbol of succor in times of distress. Yet, the Buddha statute is also cold and mute to her pleading. As the husband's men and dogs are fast following closely, Net runs out and away again, toward the river. Here, the film cuts to a thunderous sky with the year '1945' written on the screen, heralding a stormy but brighter future brought about by the revolution.

Touching Ode to Memories

Fast forward in time and we move from this revolutionary optimism of Vietnam in the 1970s to the pervasive post-war skepticism that imbues Dang Nhat Minh's *Mua oi*. If culture is rescued in *Den hen lai len*, it is destroyed again in Dang Nhat Minh's film. Culture here is a man named Hoa, a kind simple man whose mind is arrested at the age of 13 after he falls off the guava tree in his family's garden. This accident omens unbearable change that follows: his mother passes away, and his father, a lawyer under French rule, is forced to hand over his house to the new revolutionary government. Hoa grows up under the care of his younger sister into a changing materialistic world, works for a meager wage as a fine arts model, and often stealthily visits his old tree and house.

Mùa oi's slow pacing and understated characterization in which the characters often speak softly and interact politely belie Dang Nhat Minh's stringent criticism of the erasure of culture and memories. Even a childlike man's harmless memories are not allowed to exist. After being falsely reported to the hospital for his supposed mental illness and being injected with a high dose of sedative medication, Hoa completely loses his mind, unable to recognize even his beloved guava fruits. The guava tree in the old garden is also cut down, to make way for more parking space. Everything and everyone must give room to change. One can reasonably guess that when Hoa dies, all memories will perish with him.

Here we come to face with the fundamental inescapable transience of life. As the staff of a Japanese film archive told film-maker Phan Dang Di, even though celluloid films can last for 500 years, and digital formats can live infinitely longer, there may still be extraordinary circumstances in which everything on earth, our digital footprints included, are destroyed. By its very nature, film is a time-based art, characterized by a time duration. This modern essence inherently counteracts any vain hope for immortality. So the answer to last week's conference's rhetorical question 'What way ahead for Vietnam's film archives?' is not so much how to preserve films through time for future generations but rather how to create public space to screen archival films to interested audiences at our present moment in time.

The screenings of the four above-mentioned films in Hanoi are a good start. Between Virginia Heath's precious footage of hard-working Scotland, Franz Osten's captivating vision of the Taj Mahal, Tran Vu's feminine portrait of Vietnamese culture, and Dang Nhat Minh's touching ode to human memories, the films show such skills and insight that one should not treat them as belonging to the past, but as a present being stored away somewhere waiting to come out. Indeed, according to Le Tuan Anh, Vice Head of the Technical Department at the Vietnam Film Institute, archival films at his place are still being shown, but mostly within the institute's compounds during relevant anniversaries. This leaves us plenty of room to improve our screening of time-based art.

Do Thuy Linh is a Hanoi-based freelance translator and journalist. She graduated from a Bachelor's degree in Literature at Massachusetts University (Boston, USA) and took part in a number of cinema programmes in Vietnam. Linh has also been collaborating with various English-language publications in the country.

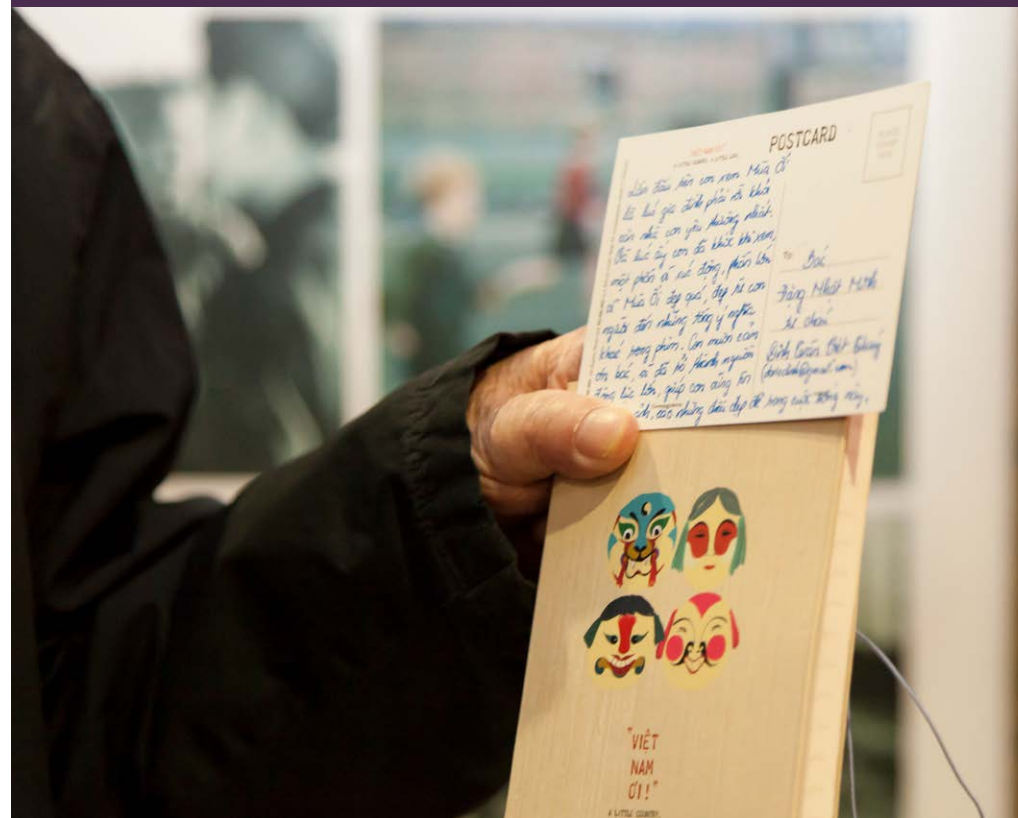
www.dothuylinhblog.wordpress.com/

Further reading:

1. *From Scotland with Love*: www.fromscotlandwithlovethemovie.com/
2. *Shiraz: A Romance of India*: www.shirazmovie.com/
3. *Den hen lai len*: www.mubi.com/films/well-be-seeing-us-again/
4. *Mùa oi*: www.mubi.com/films/season-of-guavas/

Afterword

Shona Thomson



It has been nearly two months since I returned home to Scotland after my first ever visit to Hanoi in January for the British Council's Film as Cultural Heritage symposium and accompanying series of workshops on archival film materials: Dreaming/Remembering.

Since then, in parallel with producing the silent film and live music tour Silent Divas: ASSUNTA SPINA and finalising the archive film curation with community groups for the event Our Maryhill at Glasgow Film Festival, the inspiring experience of sharing creative practices in archived film with some of Vietnam's leading filmmakers, film critics, archivists and visual artists has continued to resonate. The overriding sense of what might be possible is what struck me the most.

'The archived films are gold, but they are buried too deep.' These were the words of Nguyen Nhu Vu, Director of the Documentary Film Studio, during the Symposium panel discussion, and this valuable insight reflected the conversations that took place across the week of Symposium presentations and group workshops.

At the Symposium, the value of Vietnam's national film collections was highlighted by Ngo Dang Tra My, Vice-Director of the Vietnam Film Institute (VFI), and renowned film journalist Le Hong Lam gave us a tour through Vietnam's rich cinema history. Evidence of the national cinema's popularity came in the form of sell-out enthusiastic audiences for the evening selections of two classic Vietnamese films programmed with a recent UK archive film re-release *Shiraz: A Romance of India*, and the innovative re-purposing of Scottish archive materials in the feature film *From Scotland With Love* (2014).

It felt like there was a curiosity in audiences about how the past was being presented to us. Sharing common stories of residential displacement in the post-screening audience Q&A with *Mua or* (The Season of Guavas) director Dang Nhat Minh was one of the most moving moments. Sitting next to a young woman for the 1974 classic *Den hen lai len* (We'll be Seeing Us Again), I felt honoured to bear witness to her singing along to the traditional romantic songs that brought the lead couple together. The presence of so many young people in the audience made me aware of how this age group is well-known in the UK as the least likely to cross the cinema foyer, preferring to consume their media on smaller portable screens. So much so that the 18-30 age group is now an audience engagement priority in the British Film Institute's current 5-year strategy and must be addressed in all publicly-funded screening activity. As Le Hong Lam pointed out, there is more work to be done in bringing Vietnamese cinema to a younger generation, but I could not help wonder what we could be learning from the Vietnamese cinemagoing culture.

Similarly, the participants in the daytime workshops possessed an energy, passion and creativity that could really bring to life the national film organisations' archive collections currently being carefully preserved. With a recent VFI survey recording over 97,000 films held in these institutions, the potential to widen access to audiences across the country cannot be underestimated. Engagement projects being led and proposed by the workshop participants range from personal family histories to events such as the FY Short Film Festival in Ho Chi Minh City to collaborations within Vietnam's vibrant visual arts community.

However, it is the access that currently provides a challenge. Whether it is the resources for archives to be able to offer affordable access to independent curators and filmmakers, a reduction in the number of screening venues, or few opportunities for the creative community to interact with the materials, the gold of archive film really is still buried too deep.

This raises important questions around the direction of a national cinema. Questions that are also being asked in other countries like mine, Scotland: what infrastructure needs to be in place to ensure the jewels of our moving image heritage contribute to creative and inclusive growth in the country, to be of benefit to a wider cross-section of society? How can the energy and passion of younger generations be engaged and encouraged through the cultural heritage of a nation, of their own communities?

One of the workshop participants made a very perceptive remark: 'A film is not finite.' To me, it is about the life a film can have once it has been safely preserved in an archive. It is then that there is the potential for celebration, repeated screenings, inspiring conversations, even repurposing the footage to facilitate a contemporary relevance to the people and places we see on-screen and live in now. It is the potential of life that I had a glimpse of in January and hope will continue to grow.

IMAGE CREDITS

Page 1 (Front cover) – Installation and image courtesy of Hanoi University of Theatre and Cinema

3 – Artist Kim Chung (left) and film-maker Tran Viet Long (right) at the premiere of the film *Kiep hoa* in Hanoi (1953). Image c/o family of artist Kim Chung

4 – The screening of the film *Mua oi* in Hanoi (January 2019, National Cinema Centre), organised by British Council in Vietnam. Image by Tu Nguyen

5 – The symposium Film as a Cultural Heritage in Hanoi (January 2019, National Cinema Centre), organised by British Council in Vietnam in conjunction with the Vietnam Film Institute. Image by Tu Nguyen

6 – A session from the workshop Dreaming/Remembering (January 2019, TPD), organised by British Council in Vietnam. Image by Tu Nguyen

8 – Q&A session with director Dang Nhat Minh and actor Bui Bai Binh following the British Council screening of *Mua oi* (January 2019, National Cinema Centre). Image by Tu Nguyen

9 – Visit at the Vietnam Film Institute premises, part of the British Council workshop Dreaming/Remembering (January 2019). Image by Tu Nguyen

11 – A screening of *Kiep hoa* in Hanoi (1953). Image c/o family of artist Kim Chung

13 – Still image from the film *Chuyen xe bao tap*. Image c/o Vietnam Film Institute

14 – Still image from *Kiep hoa*. Image c/o family of artist Kim Chung

15 – The shooting of *Kiep hoa*. Image c/o family of artist Kim Chung

17 – Still image from the film *Em be Ha Noi*. Image c/o Gerald Herman

19 – From the front cover of the DVD edition of *Em be Ha Noi*. Image c/o Gerald Herman

20 – Skype Q&A session with Gerald Herman, part of the British Council workshop Dreaming/Remembering (January 2019, TPD). Image by Dao Linh Trang

22 – A screening of the film *Drifters* with live score by Jason Singh (August 2017, Hull Marina, UK), presented by A Kind of Seeing and UP Projects. Image c/o UP Projects

24 – Screen Archive South East website. Image c/o Screen Archive South East

25 – CINECITY website. Image c/o CINECITY

26 – A screening of *Drifters* with live score by Jason Singh (August 2017, Hull Marina, UK), presented by A Kind of Seeing and UP Projects. Image c/o UP Projects

27 – A screening of *Drifters* with live score by Jason Singh (August 2017, Destiny Church Leith, UK), presented by A Kind of Seeing, LeithLate and Citizen Curator. Image by Kat Gollock

29 – Still image from the film *Fifth Cinema*. Image c/o Nguyen Trinh Thi

30 – Still image from the film *Everyday's the Seventies*. Image c/o Nguyen Trinh Thi

31 – Still image from the film *Den hen lai len*. Image c/o Vietnam Film Institute

33 – Still image from *Fifth Cinema*. Image c/o Nguyen Trinh Thi

35 – Still image from the film *The Miners' Hymns*. Image c/o Forma

36 – The world premiere of *The Miners' Hymns* (July 2010, Durham Cathedral, UK), part of Durham International Brass Festival 2010. Image by Colin Davison

37 – A live-score screening of *The Miners' Hymns* (March 2014, Easington Welfare Centre, UK). Image c/o Forma

38 – Still image from *The Miners' Hymns*. Image c/o Forma

40 – The symposium Film as a Cultural Heritage in Hanoi (January 2019, National Cinema Centre). Image by Tu Nguyen

44 – An analogue film reel at the National Documentary and Scientific Film Studio. Image c/o Vietnam Film Institute

45 – Film storage at the Technical Department of the People's Police Television. Image c/o Vietnam Film Institute

50 – Film storage at the Vietnam Film Institute. Image by Truong Que Chi

58 – Still image from *Mua oi*. Image c/o Vietnam Film Institute

60 – Still image from the film *From Scotland with Love*. Image c/o the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive

61 – Still image from the restored version of the film *Shiraz: A Romance of India*. Image c/o British Film Institute

63 – Director Dang Nhat Minh at the British Council screening of *Mua oi* in Hanoi (January 2019, National Cinema Centre). Image by Tu Nguyen

68 – Artists Kim Chung (left) and Kim Xuan (right) during the shooting of *Kiep hoa*. Image c/o family of artist Kim Chung

70 – The National Cinema Centre, Hanoi. Image by Tu Nguyen



DREAMING/ REMEMBERING

PRACTICES AROUND VIETNAM'S FILM HERITAGE

Texts: Do Thuy Linh, Do Van Hoang, Frank Gray, Gerald Herman, Le Tuan Anh, Nikki Locke, Nguyen Trinh Thi, Shona Thomson

Translation: Bui Thu Uyen, Marilyn Pham Dacusin, Nguyen Trong Nhan

Proof-reading: Pham Minh Hong, Sean Campbell, Simon Drought

Edited by Tran Duy Hung

Designed by WE.Ideation

With thanks to: all contributors to this publication, British Council Vietnam (Arts team, Communications team and all volunteers), British Council UK Film team, British Council *Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth* team, Vietnam Film Institute, TPD, National Cinema Centre, National Documentary and Scientific Film Studio, Hanoi College of Theatre and Cinema, WE.Ideation, Gary Thomas, Frank Gray, Shona Thomson, Phan Dang Di, Bui Thu Uyen, Donna McGowan, Dang Nhat Minh, Bui Bai Binh, Le Hong Lam, Caroline Smith, Le Thuan Uyen, Marilyn Pham Dacusin, and everyone who supported, spoke at and attended the Film as a Cultural Heritage series of events that took place in January 2019

Dreaming/Remembering (16-18 January 2019, TPD, Hanoi)

Participants: Dao Le Na, Dinh Thi Nhung, Dinh Tran Viet Thuy, Georgia Golebiowski, Hoang Da Vu, Hoang Thu Thuy, Hoang Vu Huyen Chau, Le Hong Lam, Le Xuan Tien, Nguyen Anh Thu, Nguyen Le Hoang Viet, Nguyen Thi My Dung, Nguyen Thi My Trang, Nguyen Vu Xuan Ha, Pham Huy Anh, Pham Quoc Dung, Pham Thi Hao, Tin Dirdamal, Tran Trung Hieu, Truong Que Chi

Speakers: Bui Nguyen Cong Anh, Do Van Hoang, Frank Gray, Gerald Herman, Nguyen Trinh Thi, Nikki Locke, Shona Thomson, Tran Hoang Bach

Screening: *The Miners' Hymns* (Bill Morrison and Jóhann Jóhannsson)

Film as a Cultural Heritage (15 January 2019, National Cinema Centre, Hanoi)

Speakers: Dang Kim Son, Frank Gray, Le Hong Lam, Le Tuan Anh, Nguyen Nhu Vu, Phan Dang Di, Shona Thomson

Screenings (15-18 January 2019, National Cinema Centre, Hanoi)

Den hen lai len (Tran Vu, 1974, 2k-resolution version digitised by the Vietnam Film Institute), *From Scotland with Love* (Virginia Heath, 2014), *Shiraz: A Romance of India* (Franz Osten, 1928, restored by the British Film Institute), *Mua oi* (Dang Nhat Minh, 2000, 2k-resolution version digitised by the Vietnam Film Institute)



This publication is part of



A Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth project
undertaken by the British Council in Vietnam

www.britishcouncil.vn
© British Council 2019