

Dinh Q. Lê Elegies

February 4 – March 13, 2010

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 4, 6-8pm



South China Sea Pishkun, 2009

P·P·O·W is pleased to present *Elegies*, our sixth solo exhibition with **Dinh Q Lê**. *Elegies* is an installation of two videos, *From Father to Son: A Rite of Passage* (2007) and *South China Sea Pishkun* (2009) and related large scale photographic works. This will be the first New York screening for both videos. The videos focus on the specters that embody the psychological and physical inheritance of the Vietnam War. They also act as endings, one as an ending of the journey of a father and a son, and the other as an ending of America's misadventures in Vietnam. *South China Sea Pishkun* has been shown in Hong Kong and at the recent Fukuoka Triennale.

South China Sea Pishkun is **Dinh Q. Lê's** first animation. It is based on an historic event that took place on April 30th, 1975. The North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong were marching towards Saigon and other cities in South Vietnam, while the Southern Vietnamese Army, American military, and U.S. diplomatic personnel were trying desperately to escape. Hundreds of U.S. helicopters were fleeing in panic toward the South China Sea, searching for U.S. Army aircraft carriers to land on. Many eventually crash-landed in the sea when they ran out of fuel and hundreds of helicopters that did reach the aircraft carriers found themselves stranded, hovering in the air, because the carriers were full. Eventually an unknown number of helicopters were pushed into the South China Sea to make room for others to land. "Pishkun" is a Blackfeet American Indian term referring to the site where they used to kill roaming bison by driving them to a panic, and then running them over a cliff. *South China Sea Pishkun* shows these powerful machines that reined terror over Vietnam for so long in their last moments, crashing, struggling, flailing, sinking, and dying in the sea. Ironically, helicopters were the technology that the U.S. military was counting on to give them the advantage. In their last moments, their failure was tragic and spectacular. With America contemplating its position and withdrawal strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan, *South China Sea Pishkun* is a timely revisit to this tragic event.

In *From Father to Son: A Rite of Passage*, **Lê** takes film footage of two iconic Hollywood movies about the Vietnam War, "Platoon" and "Apocalypse Now," and re-edits the two films, blurring what is fact and what is fiction. This video depicts Charlie Sheen's character witnessing his father, Martin Sheen's character, suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. The younger Sheen in turn enlists in the same war and becomes the same person as his father, perpetuating a never ending cycle of violence and trauma.

Elegies is connected to the upcoming solo exhibition **Dinh Q Lê** will be having at **MoMA** in June 2010 entitled *The Farmers and The Helicopters*. MoMA will be showing **Lê's** video *The Farmers and The Helicopters*, which is the story of Vietnamese farmers who built their own helicopters from their memories of them being magical even in the time of war. The helicopter in this exhibition serves as a symbol of the end of the helicopter as a war machine and the beginning of the helicopter as a machine of peace in Vietnam.

Dinh Q. Lê lives in Vietnam and holds an MFA in photography from the School of Visual Arts (New York, NY). In June 2010 Lê's work will be the subject of a one-person exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He has exhibited extensively internationally, recently participating in the 2009 Biennale Cuveê in Linz, Austria, the 2008 Singapore Biennale, and the 2006 Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, in Brisbane, Australia. His work has been exhibited at PS1 Contemporary Art Center (Long Island City, NY), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, IL), The Museum of Fine Arts (Houston, TX), the Asia Society (New York, NY), among many others, and was recently featured in a solo exhibition at the Tufts University Art Gallery (Medford, MA). Lê's work is also included in numerous permanent collections including The Museum of Modern Art, The Ford Foundation, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art.