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A Tale of Love

Trinh T. Minh-Ha

USA, 1995

108 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
 Production Company: **Moongift Films**
 Producer: **Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Jean-Paul Bourdier**
 Screenplay: **Trinh T. Minh-Ha**
 Cinematographer: **Kathleen Beeler**
 Editor: **Trinh T. Minh-Ha**
 Production Designer: **Jean-Paul Bourdier**
 Sound: **Jim Kallett, Laretta Molitor**
 Music: **Greg Goodman, J.A. Dean**
 Principal Cast: **Mai Huynh, Juliette Chen, Dominic Overstreet, Mai Le Ho, Kieu Loan**

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**Moongift Films, 35 Alamo Avenue,
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For a decade and a half, the work of Trinh T. Minh-Ha has been almost synonymous with the concerns of cinematic intellectualism, emphasizing politics and film theory. Her films and books comprise a body of thought and practice relating to issues such as ethnography, identity and culture, post-colonialism and feminism, representation and cultural politics. Known primarily as a theoretical documentarian, Trinh has now completed her first dramatic feature film.

Set in the framework of contemporary American life, *A Tale of Love* follows the quest of a woman in love with love. The film is loosely inspired by "The Tale of Kieu", the Vietnamese national poem of love. The poem tells of the misfortunes of Kieu, a martyred woman who sacrificed her "purity" and prostituted herself for the good of her family. Vietnamese people see the poem as a mythical biography of the "motherland," marked by internal turbulence and foreign domination, and recognize their country in the karma-cursed and passion-driven Kieu.

The film portrays the Vietnamese immigrant experience through Kieu, a freelance writer who sends money to her family in Vietnam by working for a women's magazine and posing for a photographer who idealizes the headless female body. As Kieu struggles over traditional values and the demands of modern life, she submits to the photographer's exoticizing portraiture and engages in a dangerous game of conflicting desires. Kieu comes to understand how

"The Tale of Kieu" resonates with her own personal life, and finally overcomes the sorrows of love and exile by reinventing both herself and the 200-year-old poem.

A fictionalized film essay rather than a dramatic narrative, *A Tale of Love* features characters who embody varying theoretical positions, and deploys a denaturalized space of acting and a cinematic style in which light, setting, camera movement, music and text all have a logic and language of their own.

■ **Kay Armatage**

Trinh T. Minh-Ha was born in Vietnam, has lived in Africa, and teaches at Berkeley. She has published books of poetry and essays on contemporary arts and film theory. Her books are "En minuscules" (87), "Un Art sans oeuvre" (81), "African Spaces – Designs for Living in Upper Volta" (85), "Woman, Native, Other" (89), "When the Moon Waxes Red" (91) and "Framer Framed" (92). Filmography: *Reassemblage* (82), *Naked Spaces – Living is Round* (85), *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (89), *Shoot for the Contents* (91), *A Tale of Love* (95).

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