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Shoot for the Contents

102 mins color film - 1991

Produced by:	Jean-Paul Bourdier and Trinh T. Minh-ha
Directed, written and edited by:	Trinh T. Minh-ha
Cinematography in the US:	Kathleen Beeler
Mise-en-scene and Lighting Design:	Jean-Paul Bourdier
Film and Video Camera in China:	Trinh T. Minh-ha
Sound:	Jim Kallett, Lynn Sachs, Dina Ciraulo
Narrators and performers:	Ying Lee-Kelley Dewi Yee
Interviewees and performers:	Wu Tian Ming Mayfair Yang, translator Clairmonte Moore
Calligraphy and drawing:	Fu Wen-Yan

"There must be some criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and fragrant flowers from poisonous weeds" wrote the *Beijing Review* not long ago in an attempt to reinterpret Chairman Mao's principle of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend."

The film, whose title plays on the meanings of an ancient Chinese guessing game, is an excursion into the maze of allegorical naming and storytelling in China. Weaving the points of view of both insiders and outsiders engaged in differing realms of social and artistic activities, the film ponders questions of power and change, politics and culture, as refracted by the Tienanmen Square event.

The multiple exposure of what Mao called the "verbal struggle" in its intricacies is here also presented as an inquiry into the creative process of filmmaking--whose formal realizations are but "one of the possible ten thousands facets of a reality." Graphically composed video images evoke the gestures of calligraphy in counterpoint with contemplative film footage of rural China and of stylized interviews. Sounds and voices punctuate the visual space, layering two women's dialogue with folk songs; the sayings of Mao and Confucius; and the words of artists, philosophers as well as other cultural workers. Like traditional Chinese opera, the film unfolds through the interplay of "bold omissions and minute depictions" to render "the real in the illusory and the illusory in the real." While such freedom in cinematic documentation attempts to recreate its own hundred flowers through an exploration of color and rhythm and the changing relationship between ear and eye, it also materializes on screen the shifts of interpretation in Chinese contemporary culture and politics.

Dear Kathy,

Please note that
I have a new (revised)
synopsis for the film.
The Peero package may
be useful for the news-
paper people
Mick-ha