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CHOICE

A Tale of Love

Like her previous works, Trinh T. Minh-ha's fifth film, her first in 35-millimeter and her first narrative feature, is both beautiful and difficult (1995). The difficulties begin with the title: this is not a tale, and it doesn't really concern love—though one of its points of departure is "The Tale of Kieu," the 19th-century Vietnamese national poem of love. Set in San Francisco, the story focuses on a Vietnamese writer named Kieu who works for a women's magazine and as a photographer's model to help support her family back in Vietnam. The beauties include the aggressive music score and the oddly contrapuntal mise en scene, which often seems to have a very different agenda from that of the actors. At times a frankly erotic film that interrogates its own eroticism, it challenges the audience as well with its acting styles and disorienting means of storytelling. Clearly not for everyone, but nothing else around is even remotely like it. Kino-Eye Cinema at Chicago Filmmakers, 1543 W. Division, Friday and Saturday, February 16 and 17, 8:00, 384-5533.

—Jonathan Rosenbaum