

4748 Moons and 13 Elliptical Years (video cycle in 7 parts, 1991-2005)
(Linda Lai / 145 minutes / Hong Kong)

Artist Statement

The work is a video cycle with 7 independent yet connected pieces constructed from video diaries collected for over 13 years. The bulk of material contains more than just home videos set out to document events and others. There is also footage meant for serious observation of moments of historical significance; there are video essays written on the spot and at the moment of shooting, as well as self-conscious camera exercises and visual games. In fact, the closer the footage was to the present, the more self-conscious on shooting and video-making I was. The tension of creating images with video and becoming reflexive on such activities only intensifies, especially when my interest in image-and-text dialogues also grew in my other areas of artistic involvement.

The eclectic nature of the footage subsequently confronts me with, first of all, questions of organization and narrative construction in the broad sense of the term. The act of looking back at images I made myself was alienating. Most of the time, it was like looking at someone else's story. I was in reminiscence of my past and, more often, trying to make sense of what I saw. The multiple "I" – the present "I" looking at the "I" of the multifarious moments of the past -- demands a method to images that take them as both memory and factual existence, both the signifier and the signified, and expositions as well as enigmas.

The act of counting, paralleled by the tendency to classify and to look at images as possible inventories of lived experiences, decided the final 7-part division. One additional rule to the above was to ensure that towards the end of each of the 7 parts, the narrative takes on a new style, like an organism about to mutate into a new phase of life. Certain fragments of an episode and isolated images are deliberately repeated at various points of the 7 parts to refuel them with new impact each time they appear in a different context.

I Told Them my Camera Was On seeks to find a structure that hold 13 women found in my footage. It subverts mainstream causal narrative logic and shows 13 women's stories as a network of acquaintances (with me in the centre) based on the rule of playful chain-connectivity. Each woman is shown in an isolated moment of her life, thus questioning the necessity of an epic approach. Instead, a composite story made up of women from diverse backgrounds is invented. *Trespassing World Cities* records how I struggled away from the tourist video style to seek for an impersonal form to pose my response to a world of big cities whose individual distinctive is increasingly blurred. *Other Space/Non-place*, mainly compiled from image of the city space in Hong Kong and Macao, is an alternative to *Trespassing*, asserting that there are many space and temporal sheets in one single place. The notion of "walking through" becomes precarious. One penetrates, dives into, emerges and immerses in... *Love Diaries*, too, plays with time: many moments are the same moment, many different places form the backdrop for the same events. Does the mobility of bodies always mean fluidity of emotions? Strange repetitions call my attention: *Chair Talks* does not explain my love for chairs, but the very articulation of such unfathomable indulgence, a focused attempt to give minimal structure to carry forth the unspeakable power of

things and objects beyond the service of signification for the world of humans. *Camera Exercises* is a history of my playing with the camera. It has been be part of this cycle: for this is the first phase of my life in which the camera plays an essential part in my relation with the world. Almost like an epilogue, *the Tickled Faces of Big Mansions*, salutes to time and the window view at home that has inspired many of my creative and intellectual activities.

(Linda Lai, November 2005)