

WIP E Children of the Mist



REGION: Vietnam

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:

Documentary | Digital Format | Vietnamese, Hmong | 90mins

DIRECTOR:

HA LE Diem

PRODUCER:

Swann DUBUS

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Sales agents, Pre-sales

BUDGET: US\$ 201,319

SECURED BUDGET: US\$ 139,319

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2016 *Beautiful Beds*

2015 *My Son Goes to School*

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

In the misty mountains of North Vietnam, a teenage Hmong girl walks the thin line between childhood and becoming an adult.

SYNOPSIS

Di is a 13-year-old girl living in a village lost in the mist of the North Vietnamese mountains. Di belongs to the Hmong ethnic minority, where traditionally women get married very young — some of them from the early age of 12. In this society, marriage is linked to a very particular and controversial tradition: the “bride-kidnapping”. When a boy is interested in a girl, he organizes her kidnapping before forcing her back to his own home. On some occasions this process turns dangerous and dark. When Di enters puberty, her personality changes drastically: the carefree little girl has turned into an impetuous, hypersensitive teenager. She often has arguments with her mother who is trying to forbid her to have reckless relationships. Her mother worries that her daughter could be harmed or mistreated and will not have enough maturity to handle the situation. On the eve of the Lunar New Year, when Di's parents come back home after celebrating, the house is silent and empty: Di is disappeared. Her mother breaks down in tears, realising that her daughter has been kidnapped. Yet, this may signify the end of Di's childhood and the beginning of her life as a woman.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was born in North Vietnam. When my closest friend married at the age of 15, I broke into tears: I remember this as the end of my childhood. At 17, I left my hometown and discovered a big world that I could not have ever imagined. After a few years of studies, I discovered documentary and had the opportunity to become a filmmaker myself. Two years ago, I taught a video workshop in a remote village hosting Hmong minorities. Observing the young girls playing in the foggy landscapes, I felt like I was looking at my own reflection in a mirror with fifteen years of distance. It took time to gain her trust but I finally became very close to Di, who introduced me to her family and gave me access to the whole community. She became like a younger sister, sharing with me all her hopes and fears. I realise how much pressure and danger are threatening girls of this age. I think my camera can be used as a defensive weapon that could curtail tension and violence. This is how the idea came to make a film about the holy time of childhood and its disappearance.

DIRECTOR

HA LE Diem

Ha Le Diem was born in 1991 in the Tay community, an ethnic group in Northeast Vietnam. She left her hometown to study Journalism at the VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Hanoi, from which she graduated in 2013. After joining a filmmaking workshop at TPD, a centre that supports young cinematic talents, she begins to devote her time to making documentaries. Her short documentary, *My Son Goes to School*, about a HIV-positive mother living in an isolated mountain village caring for her young son, won the Silver Kite Award of the Vietnamese Cinema Association in 2013.

PRODUCER

Swann DUBUS

After earning a Master of Literature, Swann Dubus (b. 1977) completed a PhD about intimacy in cinema at Paris III University in 2006. At the same time, he worked as a Director of Photography, editor and directed several documentary features both in Europe, Africa and Asia. Since 2007, he has been living and working in Hanoi, Vietnam.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Varan Vietnam Co., Ltd.

Varan Vietnam Co., Ltd. was founded in Hanoi in 2011 by filmmakers willing to develop creative documentary productions in Vietnam. Since then, the company has produced ten feature-length award winning documentaries, including *Bua's Carpet* (Ogawa Shinsuke Prize - Yamagata IDFF 2013), *With or Without Me* (White Goose Award - DMZ Docs 2012), *Finding Phong* (Grand Prix Jean Rouch International Film Festival 2015), and *My Father, the Last Communist* (Best Director Award in Dehong Documentary Film Festival 2018). In 2015, Varan Vietnam's production *The Last Journey of Ms. Phung* became the first documentary widely distributed in Vietnam and gained a commercial success, selling 35,000 tickets.