

**DINH Q. LÊ  
THE COLONY**

25 August – 9 October 2016

at 133 Rye Lane  
Peckham  
London SE15 4ST

The Colony is a new film installation by the leading Vietnamese artist and filmmaker Dinh Q. Lê on the site of one of London's earliest cinemas, Peckham's Electric Theatre which opened in 1908. Lê's films immerse the viewer in the desolate environment of the Chincha Islands off the coast of Peru.

The islands were once amongst the most prized and contested places in the world. Colonised by huge numbers of seabirds, mountains of guano built up over centuries. When its miraculous properties as a fertiliser became known in Europe and North America, the Great Guano Rush began.

Spain, Peru and Chile went to war over the islands. In 1856 the United States House of Congress passed the Guano Act, authorising US claims over uninhabited islands anywhere in the world. British merchants controlled the trade, using bonded Chinese labour working under brutal conditions. A mound of guano was displayed in London's Great Exhibition of 1851 alongside other agricultural advancements of the time. The Gibbs family built Tyntesfield Manor, a huge neo-Gothic pile in the west of England, on the profits of the guano trade.

The islands have not been permanently inhabited for more than a century, but the work of harvesting the guano still takes place every few years. Filming from different perspectives – a boat approaching the islands, drones circling above, and cameras on the ground – Lê's three-screen film installation, accompanied by composer Daniel Kramer's apocalyptic soundtrack, plunges the viewer into the bleak landscape, haunted by sequences of animation showing the ghosts of the Chinese workers in some of the abandoned buildings on the islands.

The presentation of Lê's work is accompanied by photographs of the Chincha Islands, taken by the famous American Civil War photographer Alexander Gardner in 1865, and mid-nineteenth century maps of the Guano Islands.

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For further press information and images, please contact: Artangel Head of Communications Anna Larkin at [anna@artangel.org.uk](mailto:anna@artangel.org.uk), Communications Co-ordinator Nick Chapman [nick@artangel.org.uk](mailto:nick@artangel.org.uk) or the Artangel office on +44(0)20 7713 1400

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **PRESS VIEW:**

Wednesday 24 August      09:30 – 12:00

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Address:                    133 Rye Lane  
                                  Peckham  
                                  London SE15 4ST

Open:                      25 August – 9 October 2016  
                                  Wednesday – Sunday  
                                  11.00 – 19.00

Entry:                      FREE

Visitor Information:    [artangel.org.uk/thecolony](http://artangel.org.uk/thecolony)

Public enquiries:      [info@artangel.org.uk](mailto:info@artangel.org.uk) / 020 7713 1400

Disabled Access:      Those with specific access requirements are encouraged to visit the Artangel website to read the full access statement or call the Artangel office for further information before their visit.

**Dinh Q Lê** was born in Hà Tiên in then South Vietnam in 1968. In the late 1970s, his family escaped by boat before eventually settling in the US where he completed his education. He is the co-founder of Sàn Art in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where he has been based for the past decade. In 2010 he was awarded the Prince Claus Award for his outstanding contribution to cultural exchange. Lê's work has been included in many international group shows including Documenta 13 in Kassel, Germany (2012), the 2nd Singapore Biennale (2008), the Gwangju Biennial (2006) and the Venice Biennale (2003). He was the first Vietnamese artist to have a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010).

**133 Rye Lane** sits on a plot of land first developed by George Bussey in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1867 Bussey opened a gun manufacturers and shooting range in what is now known as The Bussey Building. The front part of this plot meets Rye Lane and was used to build one of London's earliest cinemas at 133 Rye Lane. The Electric Theatre seated 400 and opened on 24 September 1908, one of the sixteen pioneering and influential Electric Theatres across London. The building has since been used as a church, nursery, artist studios and for light industry. It is currently vacant and awaiting redevelopment into studios and shared work spaces.

**Artangel** presents exceptional projects by outstanding contemporary artists in unusual spaces. Over the past two decades, audiences have encountered Artangel projects in a wide range of different sites and situations across Britain from film and video to sculpture and sound installations. Artangel has generated some of the most talked-about art of recent times, including projects with Clio Barnard, Jeremy Deller, PJ Harvey, Roger Hiorns, Ryoji Ikeda, Michael Landy, Steve McQueen, Rachel Whiteread, and currently Jorge Otero-Pailos's *The Ethics of Dust* in Westminster Hall.

**[www.artangel.org.uk](http://www.artangel.org.uk)**

Dinh Q Lê's The Colony is commissioned by:

Artangel  
Ikon, Birmingham  
Han Nefkens H+F Collection  
Proyecto Amil, Lima

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The Colony is part of The Artangel Collection, an initiative to bring outstanding film and video works, commissioned and produced by Artangel, to galleries and museums across the UK. The Artangel Collection has been developed in partnership with Tate, is generously supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and The Foyle Foundation and uses public funding from Arts Council England.