Director Chuyên Bui Thac presents a lush, sensual and dewy film about emerging sensuality in Adrift. The film is reminiscent of Trịnh Anh Hùng's classic Scent of Green Papaya. But Hùng's story is about old Vietnam, its old ways and old traditions. Thac's Adrift looks squarely at the beginning of the transformation of a woman from an artless innocent to awakened woman in modern Hanoi.

Duyen (Do Thị Hai Yen) and Hai (Nguyễn Duy Khoa) are newlyweds, but they seem more like siblings that husband and wife. The early scenes of Duyen and Hai are filled with light, color and vast open shots of teeming people filling the streets of Hanoi. The glow of Duyen and Hai's innocence is in plain view. Although, Duyen doesn't expect much because "If you don't expect too much, everything's simple," she does have sense that sex is a part of her duty, but Hai is uninterested and their marriage remains unconsummated.

But open vistas lead to dank passages, small rooms and dark corners. In these rooms everything is in shadow, candlelight or moonlight. The juxtaposition of light and dark creates haunting drama, mystery and tension. Duyen has a friend Cam (Linh-Dan Pham), a worldly, sophisticated writer, who does not believe that Duyen and Hai's marriage will last. Cam proceeds to throw Duyen in the path of Tho (Johnny Tri Nguyen), a handsome, experienced and potent tourist guide. When Duyen meets Tho she is quickly seduced by him.

This seduction and the series of events that lead up to it open Duyen's eyes to her own desire as well as that of others around her and signals the emergence of a new philosophy regarding love and passion. In the final scenes of rain-soaked city streets reflect the emotion laden falling away of Duyen's innocence and the emergence of a new unchartered way of life.

Cast (credited cast):
Do Thị Hai Yen (Duyen), Linh Dan Pham (Cam), Nguyễn Duy Khoa (Hai), Johnny Tri Nguyen (Tho).
Release Date: 6 September 2009 (Venice Film Festival). Director by Chuyên Bui Thac; written by Phan Dang Di; released by Global Film Initiative. Running time: 110 minutes; MPAA NR; genre: Documentary.

Playing at Mill Valley Film Festival on Friday, October 09, 2010 at 4:45PM, at the Smith Rafael Film Center, San Rafael.

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