

# Diana Cam Van Nguyen about LOVE, DAD

## “We still don’t talk about it”

When Diana Cam Van Nguyen rediscovered the letters her dad wrote her from prison, she was surprised about the loving tone. That tone seemed to have disappeared now – where has it gone? She decides to write him back, in the form of a short film, that is not only stunningly honest, but also astonishing on a graphic level. No wonder she has to climb the stage at the doxs! Festival to receive her award for LOVE, DAD, and face the audience...

Diana Cam Van Nguyen: In 2005 my father was taken one year in custody for not paying taxes on the brand of tobacco he launched. When stumbling upon the letters that he sent from prison I was surprised - they were full of emotions that now I don't feel any longer. I wondered why he could only share those feelings in letters and never in person. I made my movie as if it was a letter to him.

**How did your approach towards your father evolve during the production process?**

Van Nguyen: It took me 1.5 years to

write the script and develop the film (the entire process took 2.5 years) and only then I understood what I actually wanted to say. In the early versions you could feel a great anger, but later I softened my tone. I understood that my father should be the first person to see this film, and when he finally did, there were no expectations on my side - the change already took place inside me. He didn't comment at all on the topic, but just asked practical questions about the actors and the budget. For me it was important that he understood the message I wanted to convey, even if we still don't talk about it.

**The animation technique you used is remarkable.**

Van Nguyen: It was hard to develop as I didn't have many references. The idea was to layer my footage as if it was a collage of memories. Describing this to my crew, nobody understood what I really wanted so we did a lot of tests to make my method clear. We had 10 shooting days on locations and in a studio with a green screen. Then



we took it to post production.

**Was the biggest challenge in the technical or in the emotional part?**

Van Nguyen: Since I couldn't distance myself from the topic, it was hard to define my position; sometimes I was the director and sometimes I was the protagonist. As I hadn't solved the issue inside myself, throughout the entire writing process it was difficult to protect my own feelings. I would recommend you not to do it simultaneously; wait until you have processed your emotions and only then make the film.

**Has the film helped you to find acceptance?**

Van Nguyen: I see it as a part of my life that I shared with others by making this movie. Growing older and having

my own life helped me to deal with the issue and to feel less connected to my dad. He and I are still living in the Czech Republic, while my mum and sister have returned to Vietnam. I visit him every now and then and met his new family.

**You're already working on your next project?**

Van Nguyen: The script is still in an early stage of development. It will be a feature fiction, combining live action and animation, inspired by my experiences with arranged marriages. Having a double Vietnamese/Czech citizenship, I got an offer to marry a Vietnamese guy for money, just to get him to live in Europe. That is the starting point of my story.

Based on a Q&A at the doxs! festival