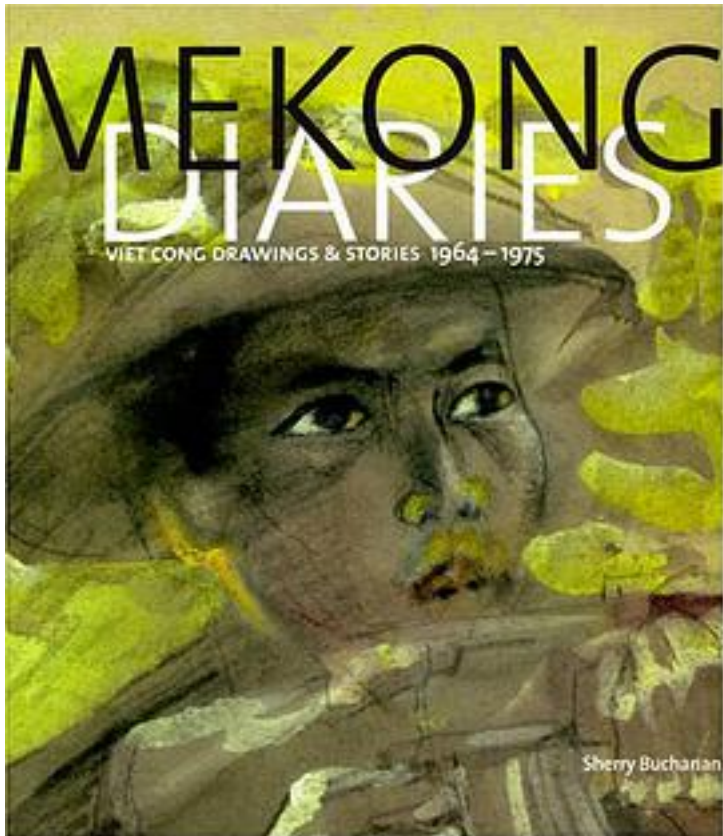


Mekong Diaries



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著者:Buchanan, Sherry

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In May 1965 Vice President Hubert Humphrey declared that 'the Viet Cong has committed the most unbelievable acts of terrorism the world has ever known.' And throughout the long conflict in Vietnam, Americans similarly demonized the enemy fighters as reds, gooks, and fanatical killers. Offering a radically different view of these supposedly savage soldiers, "Mekong Diaries" presents never-before-published drawings, poems, letters, and oral histories by ten of the most celebrated Viet Cong

war artists. These guerrilla artists - some military officers and some civilians - lived clandestinely with the fighters, moving camp alongside them, going on reconnaissance missions, and carrying their sketchbooks, inks, and watercolors into combat. Trained by professors from the Hanoi Institute of Fine Arts who journeyed down the perilous Ho Chi Minh Trail to ensure a pictorial history of the war, they recorded battles and events from Operation Junction City to Khe Sanh to the Tet Offensive. They also sketched as the spirit moved them, rendering breathtaking landscapes, hut and bunker interiors, activities at base camps, troops on the move, portraits for the families of fallen soldiers, and the unimaginable devastation that the conflict left in its wake. Their collective record - which Sherry Buchanan skillfully compiles here - is an extraordinary historical and artistic document of people at war. As such, it serves as a powerful response to the self-centeredness of American accounts of Vietnam, filling a profound gap in our national memory by taking us into the misunderstood worlds of those whom we once counted among our worst enemies.

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