

中國 三個夢： *China's 3 Dreams*



See 3 minute trailer @ <https://vimeo.com/75835549>

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China's 3Dreams

'In the 1970s we had only 3 dreams: a watch, a wireless and a bicycle...'

SYNOPSIS

From a thousand year old village in southwest China, a young woman named **LEI** searches for a meaningful existence. This leads her deep into **China's hidden history** - a fractured line that runs just beneath the surface of contemporary life. **LEI** discovers that her generation's images of their country's history are false...

Confused by the expurgated history they learned at school and the silence of their grandparents, China's young people are making their way with three new dreams to guide them: the dream of the present, to make China rich and powerful, the dream of the future, to find a better life; and the almost-impossible dream of the past, the dream of meaningful existence.

China's 3Dreams takes us deep inside the present dilemmas and dreams of China's people - without mediation from Western presenters or narrators. Featuring rare archive and extraordinary testimony from former Red Guards and Rebels, here is a powerful parable of China in the twenty-first century.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In the 1990s it was already clear that China would be the nation most crucial to the global future. But for most people, knowledge of China and our attitudes towards it came mainly from the selective agendas of news and current affairs with limited production schedules. I wanted Western audiences to know more, at deeper levels. So in 1997 I started this project, filming over many years, largely alone and at much of my own expense. The aim was to present not outsider analysis nor polemic, but to hear and carry the voices of China's people, showing how their lives are affected by the forces under which they live. I wanted to provide evidence from within and to provoke consideration of the implications of the events and responses that we see.

In 2007 I managed to access a small budget from the Australian Government's *Signature Documentary Fund* to continue. As time passed, I gained the whole-hearted trust of the film's main subjects and the project became a joint endeavour with the main subjects— a true collaboration. From there, as the stories developed, this circle of trust grew ever wider, extending to the subjects' families as well as people they knew of who had stories to tell of their times as Red Guards or Rebels during the Cultural Revolution.

Through this long-term confidence in the project, the subjects became candid with their information and their stories. They wanted very much for this film to be made and seen. So we are privileged to learn their thoughts, fears and dreams, and the crucial importance of the Cultural Revolution years, which today leave a permanent and traumatic imprint on almost every Chinese family, but are rarely discussed. In

China this “missing history” is neither taught in depth nor analysed, so the young are not interested - and their elders are silent.

I followed these stories until completion, when it premiered with two sold-out screenings at the Sydney Film Festival. Many festivals and sell-out screenings followed..

Through China’s sustained rise, this project has grown in significance. Very soon China’s “new generations” of young people will control its destiny. This film invokes the question: How will this change the future – **for all of us?**

Nick Torrens, June 2015 nicktorrens@gmail.com

SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

Nick Torrens is a leading Australian author of original, independent documentary, filming subjects in Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe, the US and Canada. His films observe the intimate lives of ordinary and extraordinary people - and the dramatic, unexpected worlds they inhabit. They have screened at major film festivals, in cinemas and on international television. Torrens read Literature and Psychology at the University of Queensland, and continued his education in the wider world on Greek fishing boats, German building sites as both labourer and photographer, as a Dresser in London theatre on *Oh Calcutta!* and he ran a bar in Paris.

He has commissioned documentary for the **SBS Television Network**, designed and directed courses for the **Australian Film, Television & Radio School**, conducted development programs for State and Federal agencies, taught documentary history and practice, chaired international forums, prepared industry submissions and reviews, assessed projects for federal and state film agencies, acted as mentor for emerging filmmakers and worked to enhance the profile and sense of community among documentary practitioners. He is a founding member and former **National Chairman of the Australian International Documentary Conference**, and Artistic Director of **HEADLANDS**, Australia’s first National Documentary Ideas Development Laboratory.

Torrens conducts Master Classes and seminars in documentary technique, including at the Australia-China Business Council, the Victorian College of the Arts, the Australian Film Television and Radio School and the Australian Graduate School of Management at the University of NSW. In 2015 he was Jury President for **Ecrans de Chine, the European Festival of Chinese Documentary** in Paris-Rome-Saarbrücken-Turin- Milan.

His much-awarded films include:

CHINA’S 3DREAMS (Documentary feature): This long-term study, filmed over 11 years, takes us deep inside the present-day dilemmas and dreams of China’s people - without mediation from Western presenters or narrators. Featuring rare archive and extraordinary testimony from former Red Guards and Rebels, here is a powerful parable of China in the twenty-first century.

Awarded Best Feature Documentary, Film Critics Circle 2015, Best Direction, Australian Directors Guild 2015 nomination, Best Documentary Sydney Film Festival nomination.

FESTIVALS TO DATE: FIPA Film Festival, Biarritz France 2015, the Human Rights Human Dignity International Film Festival, Myanmar 2015, Lasalle Festival international du documentaire en Cévennes 2015, Sydney Film Festival, Canberra International Film Festival, BOFA Film Festival, **Ecrans de Chine**, European Festival of Chinese Documentary Paris, Rome, Saarbrücken, Turin, Milan 2015, World International Film Festival Singapore 2016, World International Film Festival Los Angeles 2016, New York International Film Festival, Hong Kong Film Festival, Finalist in the American Insight Free Speech Awards, Philadelphia 2016.

LIBERAL RULE: THE POLITICS THAT CHANGED AUSTRALIA (3x one hour) Winner 2010 AFI Award for Best Documentary Series, Winner 2010 Australian Directors' Guild Award for Best Direction

THE MEN WHO WOULD CONQUER CHINA Best Feature Documentary, Film Critics Circle of Australia, Best Documentary, Sydney Film Festival Dendy Award, AFI Award-Best Editing in a non-Feature, International Public Broadcasting Festival 2005 in Taipei, Chicago International Documentary Festival, Shanghai TV Festival, Tri-Continental Film Festival, Asian Studies Film Festival USA, Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, Australian International Documentary Conference, New Zealand Film Festivals ... others

TO GET RICH IS GLORIOUS Sydney Film Festival, IDFA Amsterdam, Culture Unplugged Online Film Festival, Auckland, Wellington Film Festivals among others.

RUNNING FROM THE GHOST Cinéma du Réel Paris, Margaret Mead Festival New York, Melbourne Film Festival, Australian International Documentary Conference, TEN Network and international release

Vis à vis: TECHNO TRIBAL Winner Best Creative Work, 2010 Xi'an International Imaging Festival, Best Documentary Feature DownUnder International Film Festival 2004, Best Documentary finalist, Montréal Présence Autochtone 2004, Planet IndigenUS Toronto 2004, Sydney Indigenous Arts Festival 2004

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EARLY RESPONSES TO *China's 3Dreams*

From Jasmine Crittenden, METRO FILM JOURNAL: Torrens ventures deep into 21st century China, exploring what it means to grow up without access to one's own history... (He) creates a complex portrait of a nation in flux.. one that transcends common media impressions – those articulated by Westerners, for Westerners – instead representing the plural perspectives of individuals directly affected by the major changes that have swept through China ... His subjects discuss history, politics, values and dreams as they go about their daily rituals... Beautifully restrained, *China's 3Dreams* affects us with its deep engagement with character and its naturalism, avoiding contrived dramatic structure and sentimentalism. We feel that we're peering through a window on life as it happens...

From Dan Edwards, REALTIME : Torrens' film is far more nuanced and complex than much of the simplistic documentary work on China produced in the West—a result of the many years Torrens spent on the project, and the three China-related films he made before this one. Committed filmmakers like Nick Torrens should be recognised and supported as the leading cultural figures they are. Unfortunately, they are more often made to feel like pallbearers for our incredibly rich independent documentary tradition.

From Li Xin, Managing Editor, China Wall Street Journal: *It's very powerful: Chinese life that the West should know, that things are not black or white or red. Amazing you get them talk so candidly in front of the camera. Your work is so valuable, helping record lives in trying times, and making people search in their souls to find meanings and calling.*

From Xinran, Author and writer for The Guardian (UK): It has touched deep Chinese society! Less and less people care about a real past since that has been taken away by dead memory.. And dying elders.. After my book '**China Witness**', I became so worried about young Chinese. They have been transforming into 'materialists with American label beliefs' Thank you for making this film and sharing the same passion with me !"

From Dr Ying Qian, Writer & Post-doctoral Fellow, ANU Centre on China in the World: The film is edited almost as a dreamscape. It's so fragmentary, not chronological. It has the logic of a dream. I think of dreams as the unconscious. We are all driven by our *conscious* drives and desires. And so is the society. So when you see the China landscape through that emotional filming... you see the conscious shaping of the landscape. But you also get a glimpse of the **unconsciousness** in the society- the nightmares and the dreams.

From Hamdani Milas, Hong Kong producer: I am in awe. This is a truly fascinating, compelling story. How did you achieve this remarkable access to such vocal and frank people? It's been done over time I guess and you've built relationships and trust and a network of connections... Excellent work of integrity and purpose.

From Dr Luigi Tomba, political scientist and Senior Fellow, Australian National University: These are almost private conversations despite being filmed. Somehow they **were** private conversations. They cannot put this criticism in black and white because the risk is very significant, but in private they will do it. I imagine the movie in a way gave them a possibility to go on the record knowing that there will not be too many people in China who will see these statements.

From Julian Wood, FILMINK : There is a key scene towards the end... The fly on the wall camera catches a universal moment compacted with familial, personal, historical and political meaning. It is **documentary gold**. Only someone with Torrens' connections, cultural understanding and patient eye for everyday truth could have packaged it so.

From main film subject Zhang Lei The release of this film is a breaking through the fog. You proved again your outlook, also made me leave a bit footprints to the world. This requires the audience high attention, viewers need to watch carefully to see beneath the surface. There are many unspoken things which leave many sparks for thought and feelings. You want to see it again and again. There are many ways to enter, underground passages, dark alleys and forks, side tracks.. The movie has many surface riddles. The history of the nation's suffering is like a river of Saints history. Once again I deeply grateful to you for bringing me everything! 张蕾 Zhang Lei

The Chongqing screenings

When it was released, I took the film to Chongqing in Southwest China to screen for the film's subjects, their families and the former Red Guards and Rebels. It was an emotional visit; there were some who hadn't seen each other for over 35 years. Main subject **Zhang Lei's** parents had not met since she was very small during the Cultural Revolution after which they separated from each other. She was raised by her grandmother.

There were also lengthy meal-discussions held together with the former Red Guards and Rebels... and highly emotional responses. After all filming of these subjects are not permitted in China, and the previous generations have never been allowed discussion or "absolution" as one notable participant cries out for in the film. And main subject **Zhang Lei's parents** were now witnessing her discussing how her parents neglected her and were incompetent during the Cultural Revolution.

I sat between her father and mother, who said not a word to each other, but responded to the film afterwards in separate ways (Mother: "You don't understand! We were not unusual. We had no choice...") - Another layer of the massive impact the Cultural Revolution had on China's society.

One subject that caused long discussion after the screening was the way the story was told. The consensus was that it was a "*real movie*" when many had expected a "*western documentary where a western presenter tells you everything*" They said they had seen those, and that they were immensely grateful that this film is different.

"It is real and true, and every voice is a Chinese voice".

In return I recounted an insightful comment made in relation to television's current prioritizing of "specialist factual content" over documentary: ***"In the West we are separated from the real China by our own Great Wall of Media..."***



SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY : 1977-2014

- 2002-2014 **China's 3Dreams** - documentary feature
- 2007-2009 **Liberal Rule: The Politics that Changed Australia** TV series
- 2000-2004 **The Men Who Would Conquer China** documentary feature
- 2001 **Vis à vis: Techno Tribal** - documentary
- 1998 **To Get Rich Is Glorious – Deng Xiaoping-** documentary
- 1996 **The Queenslander: Tales from the tropical north** - documentary
- 1995 **The Ghan: A spiritual connection-** documentary
- 1993 **Me depressed? Don't make me laugh!** with Spike Milligan- documentary
- 1992 **Under Pressure-** documentary
- 1991 **International Cinematographers series**
Sacha Vierny & Allen Daviau
Robbie Muller & Peter James
Allen Daviau & Denis Lenoir
Denis Lenoir & Sacha Vierny
- 1990 **Is the Lawyer Listening?** Legal drama
- 1989 **Life After Debt-** documentary
- 1989 **Watershed** with Robyn Williams- documentary
- 1988 **Australia Daze** feature documentary
- 1987 **The Tank Stream: a history-** documentary
- 1987 **Sailors**, an observational documentary
- 1986 **Darling River Kids** - documentary
- 1985 **Tsau Gwei! Running From the Ghost-** documentary
- 1985 **More Than a Game** Documentary feature
- 1984 **All That Glitters...** Documentary feature 112 minutes
- 1983 **The Hurdle** - documentary
- 1983 **Marathon-** documentary
- 1983 **You Promised Me Gold** - documentary
- 1983 **Bertland-** documentary
- 1983 **We Both Want To Win** - documentary
- 1982 **Angella and Angela-** documentary
- 1982 **No Complaints As Such-** documentary
- 1982 **En Equilibre : The Balance-** documentary
- 1978 **Minh- a Vietnamese** - documentary
- 1977 **Arafura to Alice** - documentary