

TRUE LIVESA New Limited Series from the Producers of *P.O.V.***For Immediate Release**

Contacts:

Cynthia López, 212-989-7425, clopez@pov.orgCathy Lehrfeld, 212-989-7425, clehrfeld@pov.org**MAYA LIN: A STRONG CLEAR VISION***An Academy Award® Winning Portrait of a Remarkable Artist*

Documentary Distributed by American Public Television

Available for January – December 2005 Scheduling

It was one of the most bitterly disputed public monuments in American history. Only 21 when her design for the Washington, D.C. Vietnam Veterans Memorial was chosen in 1981, Maya Lin has never shied away from controversy. Her starkly simple slash of polished black granite inscribed with the 57,661 names of those who died in Vietnam was viciously attacked as “dishonorable,” “a scar,” and “a black hole,” but Lin remained committed to her vision, and the Memorial, a moving tribute to sacrifice and quiet heroism, was built as planned. Since then, Lin has completed a succession of eloquent, startlingly original monuments and sculptures that confront vital American social issues. Freida Lee Mock’s Academy Award® winning feature documentary follows a decade in the life of this visionary artist.

Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision airs on public television stations as part of *True Lives*, a series presented by American Public Television and American Documentary, Inc. *True Lives* is a new programming initiative from the producers of *P.O.V.*

The film opens with footage chronicling the hailstorm that followed the selection of Lin’s unconventional design. Political commentator Patrick J. Buchanan and Illinois Republican Representative Henry Hyde led the fight, circulating letters alleging that one of the jurors on the selection committee was a communist and that four had been active anti-war protestors. The detractors wanted the Memorial’s color changed from black to white. Attacking Lin’s memorial, outraged Vietnam veteran Tom Carhart howled, “Black, the universal color of sorrow and shame and

TRUE LIVES/MAYA LIN 2

degradation, in all races and all societies worldwide.” Protestors also lobbied for a flagpole to be planted at the vertex of the walls. Lin’s retort was, “That’s like putting a mustache on the Mona Lisa.” Says Freida Lee Mock, who spent five years filming the artist for this documentary, “I was struck by how a person could stand up under such tremendous pressure at a very young age.”

Lin withstood the personal and artistic attacks with clarity and grace, and she prevailed with her original design. Continues Mock, “The Memorial would not have been built without her central position in the fight to maintain the integrity of that design.... It was her single-minded devotion to what she thought was right.” The Memorial’s dedication in 1982 was a profoundly cathartic moment – not just for those who fought in Vietnam, but for the entire nation. Since its completion, Americans have flocked to the site to grieve, to contemplate the consequences of war, and to heal. In one of the film’s most moving segments, veterans and surviving family members search for the names of their loved ones arranged chronologically by date of death. “So many guys on the same day. It’s incredible,” says one veteran, shaking his head sadly. “What difference does it make if you find one name?” his friend asks, beginning to weep angrily. “Look at all the ... names!”

“If you can’t accept death, you’ll never get over it,” says Lin. “So what the Memorial’s about is honesty.... You have to accept, and admit that this pain has occurred, in order for it to be healed, in order for it to be cathartic.... All I was saying in this piece was the cost of war is these individuals. And we have to remember them first.”

Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision follows Lin as she works on a variety of projects, tackling such diverse issues as world peace, with her design for the Peace Chapel at Pennsylvania’s Juniata College, and race relations at the Civil Rights Memorial she created for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. In Montgomery, a city where, ironically, Rosa Parks Avenue crosses W. Jefferson Davis Avenue, Lin designed a flat circular stone sculpture with a civil rights timeline marking political and legislative acts intertwined with the names of those who have died in the struggle for social justice. A sheet of water flows steadily over the words of the adjacent sculptural wall, visually echoing a stirring line from Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech: “We shall not be satisfied until justice flows like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision features rare behind-the-scenes footage of Lin at work in her studio, offering viewers a privileged glimpse into the mind of this singular artist. When Morris Dees approached her to design a memorial for civil rights, she says she wanted to “understand conceptually what the piece is about or what its nature should be” before actually visiting the site.

TRUE LIVES/MAYA LIN 3

She explains the time line as a “table of events that intertwined people’s deaths with political and legislative acts that happened because someone died. So you really begin to see a cause and effect of how people actually helped to change history.” Visitors run their hands over the names and dates, “until the whole circle [has] been filled by a ring of hands, by rings of people,” says Lin. “And in a way, they [are] symbolically ... linked by this history they [are] reading quietly.”

As she continues to tackle controversial topics, Lin bravely explores new aesthetic territory, fusing art and ideals to create ever more provocative works that engage the viewer, demanding as much from us as Lin demands from herself. Speaking of his former student, Yale art history professor Vincent Scully says with heartfelt admiration, “She’s like a blade. She’s ruthlessly focused on her objective.... The word for Maya is courage and effrontery.”

About the Filmmaker:

Freida Lee Mock is a Santa Monica based independent filmmaker who has produced both Oscar® and Emmy Award-winning films including *ROSE KENNEDY: A LIFE TO REMEMBER* and *TO LIVE OR LET DIE* (Academy nominees); *LILLIAN GISH: AN ACTOR’S LIFE FOR ME* (Primetime Emmy Award). Her numerous film biographies include *IRVING THALBERG* and *STEPHEN SPIELBERG* for the Academy Awards. She co-produced *NEVER GIVE UP: THE 20TH CENTURY ODYSSEY OF HERBERT ZIPPER*, which was nominated for an Oscar. She co-founded the American Film Foundation with Terry Sanders to produce films on the arts, sciences and humanities and is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the International Documentary Association, the Independent Feature Project, and the Writers Guild of America.

Credits:

Director/Producer/Writer	Freida Lee Mock
Producer	Terry Sanders
Executive Producer	Eileen Harris Norton
Camera	Eddie Maritz and Don Lenzer
Editor	William T. Cartwright, Sr.
Composer	Charles Bernstein
Sound Designers	Steve Flick & Weddington Productions, Inc.
Sound Mixer	Rick Ash of Disney Studios

Cara Mertes is the Executive Producer of *True Lives*. The series is produced by American Documentary, Inc. Major funding for *True Lives* is provided by the Tides Foundation.

American Public Television

For 42 years, American Public Television (APT) has been a prime source of programming for the nation’s public television stations. APT has more than 10,000 hours of available programming including *Discovering the Real World of Harry Potter*, *Globe Trekker*, *Muhammad Ali: Through the Eyes of the World*, *Nightly Business Report*, *Rick Steves’ Europe*, *Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home*, *Ballykissangel*, *Brian Jacques’ Redwall* and *Sinatra: The Classic Duets*. APT is known for identifying innovative programs and developing creative distribution techniques for producers. In more than four decades, it has established a tradition of providing public television stations nationwide with program choices that enable them to strengthen and customize their schedules. For more information about APT’s programs and services, log on to www.aptonline.org.

American Documentary, Inc. (www.americandocumentary.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. Through two divisions, *P.O.V.* and *Active Voice*, and additional initiatives, AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, on-line and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation.

###