



76. Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin  
Berlinale Forum

PRESSEHEFT

# FLYING TIGERS

A FILM BY MADHUSREE DUTTA  
WITH MI YOU AND PURAV GOSWAMI

**Camera** Riju Das, Isabelle Casez, Guligo Jia Yanan | **Sound** Abhijit Chetiya, Pascal Capitolin, Junyi He | **Art** Suresh BV, Nina Sabnani | **Editor** Federico Neri | **Music** Bo Wiget, Monika Rinck, Chandril Bhattacharya, Upal Sengupta | **Sound Design and Mixing** Bobby John | **Image Post Production** wave-line Berlin | **Executive Producer** Meike Martens | **Line Producer** Tarshia Dutta, Xiaodong Guo, Mina Chen | **Commissioning Editor** Kathrin Brinkmann | **Producer** Alex Gerbaulet, Merle Kröger

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# FLYING TIGERS

EIN FILM VON MADHUSREE DUTTA

## LOGLINE

*Flying Tigers* ist ein Film über Erinnerung, Krieg und Infrastruktur. Die indische Filmemacherin Madhusree Dutta spürt einem historischen Fragment nach, aufgetaucht durch die Alzheimer-Erkrankung ihrer Mutter. Zusammen mit der chinesischen Medientheoretikerin Mi You und Purav Goswami, Autor aus Assam, begibt sie sich auf eine Reise voller Wendungen. Zum treibenden Beat des *Song of Infrastructure* erforschen sie das *Ende der Distanz*.

<u>Länge</u>	105 Minuten
<u>Produktionsland</u>	Deutschland, Indien 2026
<u>Drehformat</u>	2K
<u>Projektionsformat</u>	DCP
<u>Ton</u>	5.1
<u>Sprachen</u>	Bengalisch, Miya, Englisch, Mandarin, Deutsch und Polnisch
<u>Untertitel</u>	Englisch / Deutsch

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## KONTAKTE

Pressearbeit Kleber Film PR  
Dagny Kleber  
[dagny@kleberfilmpr.de](mailto:dagny@kleberfilmpr.de), +49 (0) 171 4024 803  
Katharina Maas  
[katharina@kleberfilmpr.de](mailto:katharina@kleberfilmpr.de), +49 (0) 178 8642 721

Weltvertrieb pong film  
Skalitzer Str. 62  
10997 Berlin  
[www.pong-berlin.de](http://www.pong-berlin.de)  
[mail@pong-berlin.de](mailto:mail@pong-berlin.de)

Verleih Arsenal Filminstitut  
Deutschland Gerichtstr. 31  
13347 Berlin  
[www.arsenal-berlin.de](http://www.arsenal-berlin.de)  
[distribution@arsenal-berlin.de](mailto:distribution@arsenal-berlin.de)

Regie [madhusreedutta@gmail.com](mailto:madhusreedutta@gmail.com)

## FLYING TIGERS

Ein Film über Erinnerung, Krieg und Infrastruktur  
von MADHUSREE DUTTA

### SYNOPSIS

*Schließ die Fenster. Der Tiger kommt. Ich kann ihn riechen!*

Ihre Alzheimer-Erkrankung fördert ein Erinnerungsfragment aus dem Gedächtnis einer alten Frau in Indien zutage, aufgezeichnet von ihrer Tochter, der Filmemacherin Madhusree Dutta. Sie folgt der Spur, die ihre Mutter hinterlassen hat, zurück in die Zeit des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Im nordöstlichen Bundesstaat Assam errichtete die US-Armee 1942 die erste Luftbrücke der Militärgeschichte über den Himalaya zur Unterstützung der chinesischen Stadt Kunming, ausgeführt von der Airforce-Spezialeinheit *Flying Tiger*. Die Errichtung der gewaltigen Infrastruktur zerstörte das ökologische Gleichgewicht des Dschungels und trieb die echten Tiger bis in die Teeplantagen von Assam, wo die Mutter der Regisseurin aufwuchs.

Im Verlauf ihrer Recherchen entdecken Madhusree Dutta und die chinesische Medientheoretikerin Mi You, deren Freundschaft nur in einem Drittland wie Deutschland entstehen konnte, einen gemeinsamen historischen Moment zwischen den Nachbarländern mit geschlossenen Grenzen. Zu ihnen stößt Purav Goswami, Autor aus Assam, mit seiner künstlerischen Erforschung von Landschaft, Boden und Gelände.

In einem wachsenden audiovisuellen Netzwerk aus Anekdoten, Briefen und Nachrichten, erkunden sie ihren Weg durch Zeit und Raum, zwischen fragilen Erinnerungen einer unbekannten Vergangenheit und unerforschten Nischen der Gegenwart.

Wie *Chars*, schwimmende Inseln im mächtigen Strom Brahmaputra, tauchen Geschichten im Film auf und wieder ab, fruchtbar und doch weder politisch noch dramaturgisch zu vereinnahmen.

Auf diese Weise lässt die Filmemacherin uns die Welt durch eine andere Optik sehen, wie es auch Alzheimer tut. Das Autobiografische wird hybrid, oder sogar halluzinativ.  
*Ende der Distanz.\**



## FLYING TIGERS

<u>mit</u>	Madhusree Dutta, Mi You, Purav Goswami
<u>Darsteller*innen</u>	Devika Hazarika Akangkha, Bishnu, Darshna, Kabyashree, Mriganka, Nandini, Prajnasri, Rajashree, Rashmi, Tanushree, Tejaswini, Zinnat, Moji Riba, Kazi Sarowar Neel, Abdur Rahim, Begum Asma Khatun, Shajahan Ali Ahmed, Kuzma, Ge Shuya, Prof. Yang Yuxiang, Cheng Xinhao, Mankong Ho, Mehmet Ozgur Bahçeci
<u>Buch&amp;Regie</u>	Madhusree Dutta
<u>Kamera</u>	Riju Das (Indien), Isabelle Casez (Europa), Guligo Jia Yanan (China)
<u>Ton</u>	Ahbijit Chetiya (Indien), Pascal Capitolin (Europa), Junyi He (China)
<u>Regieassistentz</u>	Cora Czarnecki, Jayadhar Boro, Kazi Sarowar Neel, Purav Goswami, Terry Wang
<u>Art Director</u>	Suresh BV
<u>Tiermasken</u>	Hemant Kumar
<u>Tiger-Animation</u>	Nina Sabnani Piyush Verma
<u>Montage</u>	Federico Neri
<u>Dramaturgie</u>	Merle Kröger Bina Paul
<u>Musik Arrangement</u>	Bo Wiget
<u>Sound Design&amp;Mischung</u>	Boby John
<u>Postproduktion Ton</u>	Pratibha Studio Mumbai
<u>Farbkorrektur&amp;Mastering</u>	Matthias Behrens
<u>Compositing&amp;Grafik</u>	Domingo Stephan
<u>Postproduktion Bild</u>	wave-line Berlin
<u>Lektorat Filmtexte</u>	Mitra Mukherjee Parikh
<u>Postproduktionassistentz</u>	Saehee Hwang
<u>Herstellungsleitung</u>	Meike Martens
<u>Produktionsleitung</u>	Tarshia Dutta (Indien), Xiaodong Guo, Mina Chen (China)
<u>Redaktion</u>	Kathrin Brinkmann
<u>Produktion</u>	Alex Gerbaulet, Merle Kröger
<u>Entwicklungsförderung</u>	Goethe Institut, Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und sozialen Zusammenhalt, Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln

Produktionsförderung

Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung  
für Kultur und Medien,  
Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg

Postproduktionsförderung

German Films

Eine Produktion von  
in Koproduktion mit

pong film  
TCG Studios  
ZDF/ARTE

## **TIGER TRAP SONG**

Text Chandril Bhattacharya  
Komposition Upal Sengupta  
Gesang Vedadit, Arhaan, Shuvro, Mehuli  
Mischung Thirthankar Majumdar

## **SONG of INFRASTRUCTURE**

Text Monika Rinck  
Komposition Bo Wiget  
Gesang Anna Clementi, Bo Wiget  
Mischung Werner Dafeldecker

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## MADHUSREE DUTTA

Madhusree Dutta ist Filmemacherin, Autorin und Kulturproduzentin und lebt in Indien und Deutschland.

Ihr Interessensgebiet ist das Hybride in öffentlichen und privaten Kulturen sowie dokumentarische und archivische Praxis. Dutta ist Gründerin und Direktorin (1998–2016) von Majlis, Zentrum für interdisziplinäre künstlerische Praxis in Mumbai sowie Direktorin (2018–2021) der Akademie der Künste der Welt in Köln. *Flying Tigers* markiert ihre Rückkehr zum Dokumentarfilm nach fast zwanzig Jahren.

## FILME (AUSWAHL)

*I Live in Behrampada*, 1993, 45 min.

*Memories of Fear*, 1995, 57 min.

*Sundari: An Actor Prepares*, 1997, 30 min.

*Scribbles on Akka*, 2000, 90 min.

*Made in India*, 2002, 38 min.

*From Here to Here* (co-directed with Philip Scheffner), 2005, 60 min.

*Seven Islands and a Metro*, 2006, 100 min.

*Cinema City Shorts* (Kompilation), 2009

Weitere Informationen: [www.madhusreedutta.net/](http://www.madhusreedutta.net/)



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENTS

### KURZES DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

(Januar 2026)

Was als persönliches Zwiegespräch mit meiner unter Alzheimer leidenden Mutter begann, ist zu einer interkontinentalen Reise durch Stätten von Krieg und Infrastruktur geworden.

Der Begriff *Flying Tigers* gehört zur US-amerikanischen Militärgeschichte. Ich erfuhr davon im Kontext der Region, in der meine Mutter aufgewachsen ist: Assam, Indien. Ich hatte dorthin keinerlei biografische oder arbeitsmäßige Beziehungen. Als Filmmacherin und Kuratorin habe ich zu urbaner Kultur, feministischen Erzählungen und postkolonialer Identität gearbeitet. Grenzregionen und Militärgeschichte haben mich künstlerisch und politisch nie interessiert. Aber das Rätsel, das mir meine Mutter kurz vor ihrem Tod aufgab, beförderte mich ins Zentrum kultureller Praxis rundum militärische Unternehmungen. Und dann holte mich die weit zurückliegende Vergangenheit ein und wurde Teil meiner eigenen Gegenwart mit all ihren politischen und künstlerischen Anliegen.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

(January 2023, English only)

The term *Flying Tigers* belongs to military history. It came to me as a backdrop of the time and the land where my mother had spent her childhood. It had no connection with my lived-in experiences, neither had that kind of history interested me before. As a filmmaker and curator I have been invested in urban cultures, feminist narratives and post-colonial identities. Border lands and military history never engaged me artistically or politically.

But a riddle thrown by my ailing mother, before she died, landed me at the centre of cultural issues around military endeavors. She was suffering from Alzheimer's and repeatedly said – 'Tigers are coming! Close the windows!' Everyone else thought it was delusional. But my study on the disease confirms that Alzheimer's patients never make up a new story – they only mix up the chronology, perspective and scale of an event. Measurements such as memory and experience, major and minor, near and distant lose their specificities in the agitated brain of an Alzheimer's patient. Thus the riddle of the tigers stayed with me since 2015. While thinking around it, I gradually got interested in memories, both personal and cultural – how they survive, change contour, sometimes remain latent and occasionally surface. Resolving the riddle of the tigers became a way of tracing the life of my mother, who lived an apparently quiet and discreet life in 1936–2015. And then I came to my ordinary mother's extraordinary connection with the military initiative of World War II in Assam. A monumental operation by the American army to send military aid from Assam to China across the Himalayas disturbed the wild animals and brought them to the human settlements.

I almost got obsessed to understand how a little girl had perceived and chose to remember the mighty military operation. As I began to talk with my mother's siblings it got clear that there were two parallel streams – the excitement of experiencing something wild and the family's apprehension about the girls going haywire due to sudden change in demography and social structure. 'Tigers are coming' – was the first and 'Close the windows' – was the second. My long term interest in feminist biographies and the construction of women's memoirs got rekindled in the process.

In 2020 I decided to make a trip to Assam, where my mother was born and apparently met the tigers in the 1940s. But I was stopped. The Indian state was executing stringent citizenship laws to eject out the 'doubtful' people. That exercise turned violent and a mini civil war had ensued that came to be known as Anti NRC (national registration of citizenship) Movement. Many of those, who were marked as 'doubtful' and were facing immediate deportation, were Bengali (which is my mother tongue) speaking people in Assam. Though they speak a completely different version of Bangla and they broadly belong to the community of Muslim farmers from the coastal land. That makes their affinity with me quite thin. Yet, it was deemed too dangerous for me, with a Bengali name, to visit Assam in 2020. This incident made me aware of the demographic problems in border regions, which are coveted for their wealth of mineral resources. This also foregrounded the problem of ultranationalism in post-colonial countries. When was war?

Interestingly, around that time I came to Germany to lead an art institution in Köln. In the year 2021, during a break between pandemic lockdowns, I met You Mi, a German-Chinese media theorist, in a pub in Köln. As it was the pandemic time our conversation inevitably turned to illness and mortality. I began to tell my friends my experience as a care giver during my mother's last days. I mentioned my mother's tiger stories and their connection with the American army operation across the Himalayas. You Mi looked stunned. Her parents' families were living in Kunming, the China-end of the operation. She had grown up hearing about stories of the people under siege waiting for the American aid to arrive from Assam. Every story has multiple sides to it – what was a story of destruction in Assam turned out to be a story of solidarity in Kunming. But the realisation that shocked me was why I never thought of exploring this story from a China angle. After all, China is the neighbouring country to India (the shared border area is more than 4000 km). But grown up under colonial education, China has always been the Far East for us. China's self-isolation till the end of the 20th century also fueled the alienation. Additionally, India and China are engaged in a long drawn military conflict around the Himalayas. Hence it was impossible to even imagine that we could have had a common family legacy, a shared moment in world history. We had to meet in Europe after 80 years to find our common umbilical cord. Sometimes dislocation is necessary to find one's self.

2021 was already 10 years after the inauguration of the legendary Chongqing-Duisburg cargo train route – the new Silk Road of trade between China and Europe. Different infrastructure, different logistics, different skills, different hybridity and also a different urban culture. Duisburg was close to where You Mi and myself were living during the pandemic. We witnessed the train transporting life saving vaccines and equipment both ways. This train changes its track gauge when it leaves China and then again when it enters Europe. Could it be the central strategy for exchanges and solidarity – adjusting the track gauge constantly and still evolving newer ways of interfacing? Thereafter, our respective search for moving goods led You Mi to the Central Asian territories of the old Silk Road and I ended up in Małaszewicze on the Polish-Belarusian border.

Meanwhile I fell ill with a life-threatening disease. The long months of isolation in hospitals provided enough opportunities to solve the riddle. By now enough clues were collected from diverse sources. While connecting all the dots across times and geographical zones, the Flying Tigers turned into a project about thresholds. Thresholds between territories, economies, memories and mortalities.

Discovering a family legacy that I was not born into, realizing that the colonial upbringing still influences one's worldview, my impatience towards the contemporary trend of simplistic call for de-colonisation, my disappointment over the emergence of post-colonial ultra-nationalism in India and other Asian countries, my interest in the fragility of women's memories, my experience of working on multicultural projects in the volatile region of NRW (a post-industrial region in Germany), and then my brush with mortality – have seeped in and coloured the narrative. Thus, researching the background of my mother's childhood has actually brought me to the summing up point of my own life.

Hence, this project is widely historical as well as deeply personal. In my earlier works I have never featured myself. That has never been my style. But in this film I feel compelled to place myself as a protagonist – it is a film from my mother to me.

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## FLYING TIGERS

### KÜNSTLERISCHE ARBEITEN IM FILM

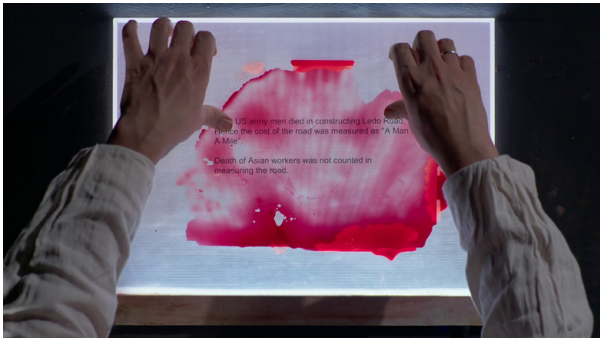
#### Tiger-Animation von Nina Sabnani



#### Kunstinstallationen von Suresh BV



#### Performance von Purav Goswami



#### Videokunst von Mi You („If On The Silk Road A Traveller“)



## LYRIK

### **DETENTION CAMP von SHAJAHAN ALI AHMED**

(translated from Miya)

With you in her womb  
the woman moved shy and fearful in the crowd.  
To birth you a man gathered all his virility.  
The rays of the sun made you cry.  
Others laughed.  
You learned to walk, talk and sing  
of spring and eternal monsoons.

Like a citizen you dreamt of rice, clothing and shelter;  
you longed to drown in the enchanting eyes  
of the princess of your dreams in springtime;  
you were to journey downstream in your wonder boat  
into the kingdom of light.

You had dreamt of giving a name to your sperm,  
but the poisonous wind killed it all –  
in the light of day, in full view.  
A dark room kept waiting for you  
but unknown to you  
oneday the address got lost.  
Nothing is different in your blood from theirs.  
But they love the sky, they keep alive  
tales of rain, floods, drought and spring.

The child of Khalek is now taking baby steps  
learning to say Dad  
while being far away.

For like you  
their address too is now

Detention Camp.

## **SONG of INFRASTRUCTURE von MONIKA RINCK**

contained container contained container contained container contained

aluminium  
bricks, coal  
airport and camera  
gasoline and opium  
ammunition  
ointment and rails  
jeep and fur  
tobacco and molasses  
aeroplanes

infrastructure infrastructure infrastructure infrastructure

It will take you.  
And forsake you.  
It will suck you up and will  
spit you down (down down down down down)

It will tell you	Echo-Choir: (customs clearance)
where to go and wohin nicht!	Echo-Choir: Travel Ban! Stay with us!!

on reconstructed roads, in rivers without water

Infrastructure will inform you  
what to build  
how to walk  
(like a dog)  
where to go  
(you can't pass)  
where to go  
(to go, to go  
Where to go  
(to go, to go)  
VERTIGO VERTIGO VERTIGO

Smart sind die Borders. In einer weiten Welt aus Geld,  
die für Waren viel schneller als für Menschen ist.

Do you know do you know do you know do you know that?  
Tu le sais, tu le sais, tu le sais, tu le sais

Tigergeister, Geistertiger  
Tiger Ghosts Ghosts of Tigers

Wo ist der Tiger? It's in the distance.  
But there is no distance.

Infrastructure will inform you:  
what to build  
how to walk  
(like a dog)  
where to go  
(you can't pass)  
where to go  
(to go, to go, Vertigo)  
Where to go  
(to go, to go)  
VERTIGO VERTIGO VERTIGO

You may go and you may not  
In einer schnellen Welt aus Geld

Where is the tiger  
Not in the distance  
Tiger is close. War on the tiger.  
Tiger's arrival  
Up in the air

End of the distance

Aggressive Menschenkatzen.  
Wenn sie kommen, fliegen Fetzen.

Menschenkatzen stellen Fallen, und danach die Felle sellen!

Flagge Unterhemd im Wind, flatter flatter flatter,

Tiger starrt vor Waffen. When is infrastructure?  
War on wild winds.

Infrastructure Infrastructure Infrastructure Infrastructure

It will suck you up up up up up  
it will eat you  
and once your eaten:  
it will spit you down (down down down down down)  
And where you are now: we will build a road!