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Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Renwick Gallery

“Drawn to Tiffany Chung”

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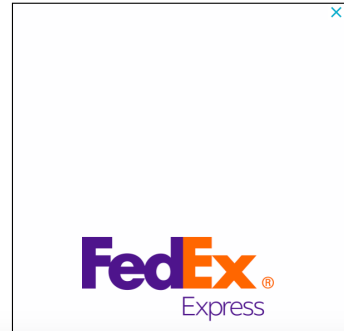
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Drawn to Tiffany Chung

Celebrating the renowned artist with a comic about her life and work

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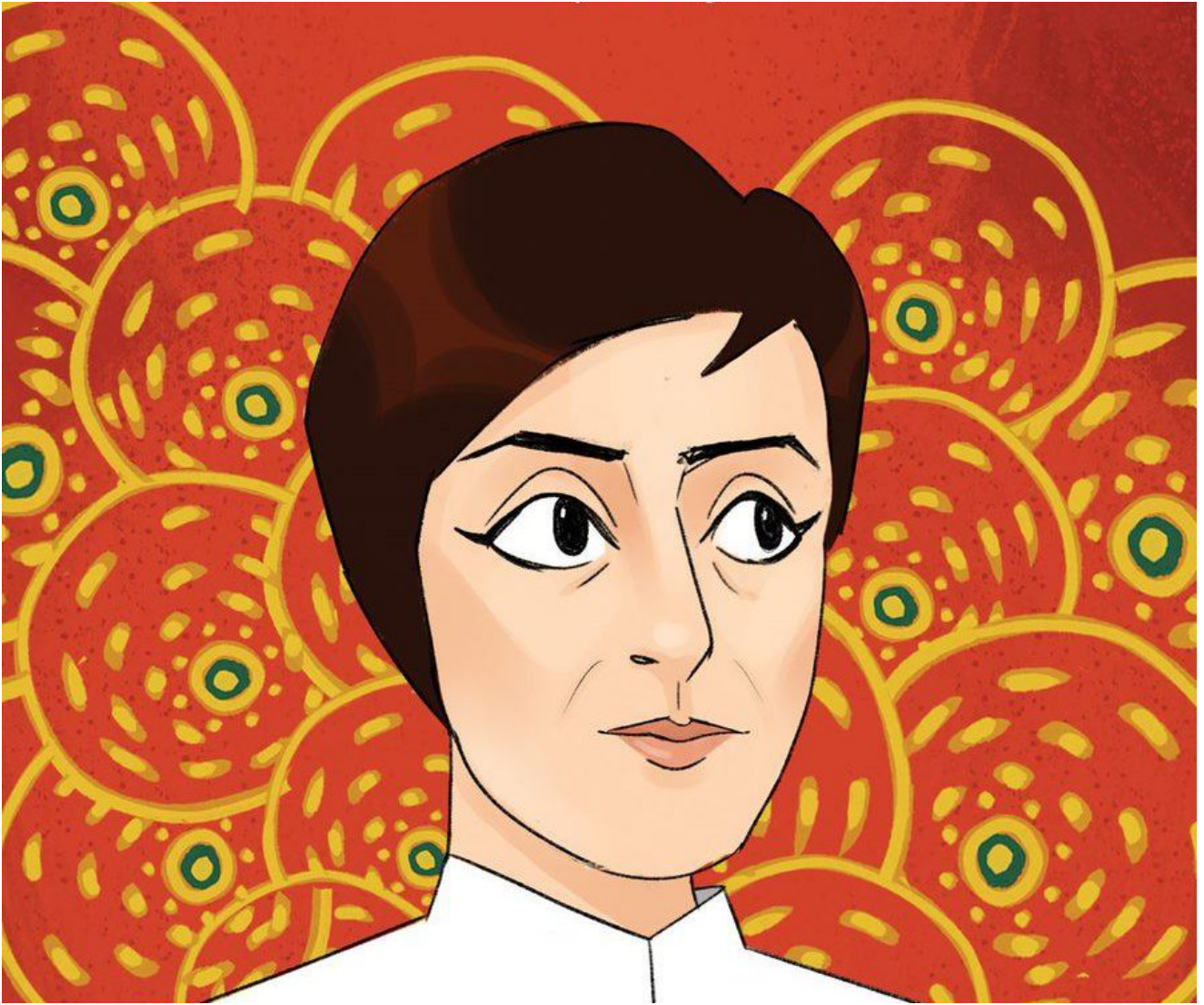
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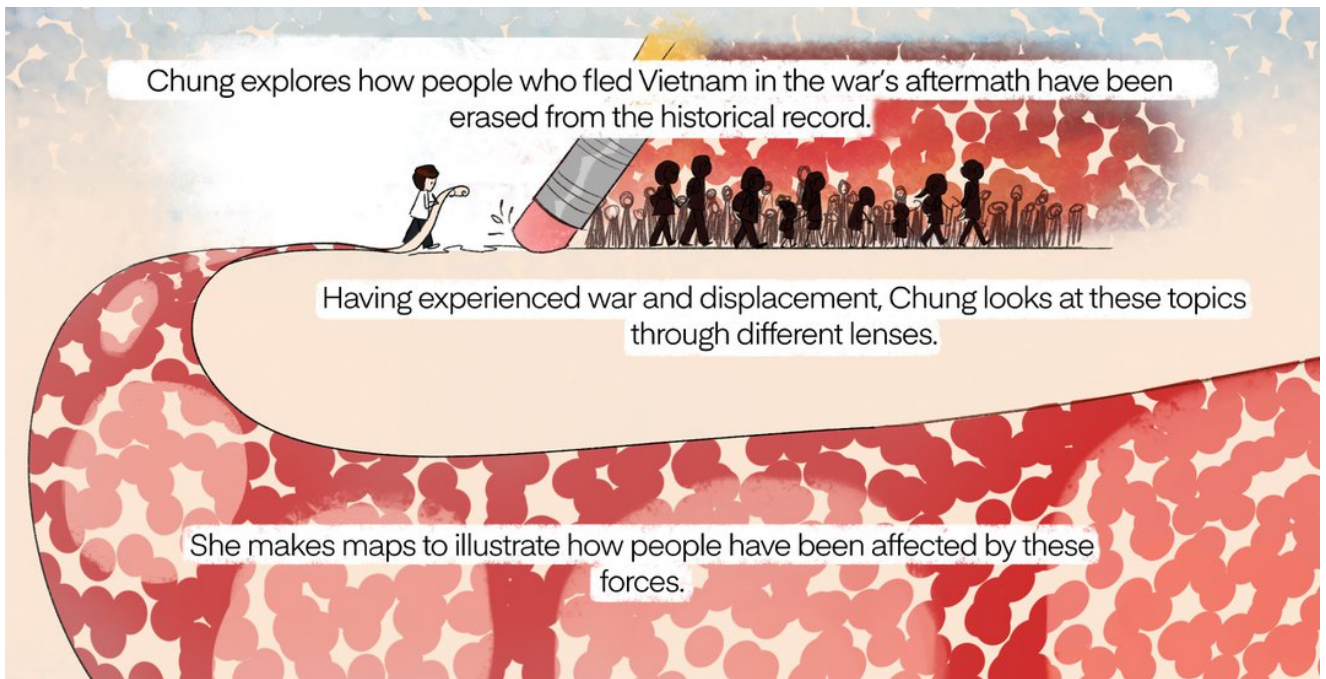
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All illustrations by Rebe Chen

Born in Vietnam in 1969, internationally acclaimed artist Tiffany Chung is known for her multimedia work that explores migration, conflict, and shifting geographies in the wake of political and natural upheavals. Her 2019 exhibition at SAAM, *Tiffany Chung: Vietnam, Past is Prologue* examined the legacies of the Vietnam War and its aftermath through maps, videos, and paintings that highlight the voices and stories of former Vietnamese refugees.

In the comic, *Tiffany Chung: Drawing on History*, the artist looks at her father's wartime journey in search of those memories erased from historical records. Her father, a helicopter pilot for the South Vietnamese was captured when Chung was only one year old and held prisoner for 14 years. After his release the family moved to California.



Rebe Chen, a student-illustrator at the Ringling College of Art and Design, takes the story of war, immigration, and personal history and illustrates it with a steadfast hand. When Chung talks about “erasure,” Chen employs a real pencil eraser that leaves its mark across the pages of the comic—small red and pink circles that will reappear throughout the comic.



We fast forward to 2002 and Chung's first trip to South Asia to discover her family history. The journey is an adventure as she travels by bus through small towns and the jungle. On one leg of the trip, she is joined on her journey by farm animals—a goat and a chicken—beautifully rendered by Chen as a meeting at an isolated bus stop in the middle of the night.

The comic continues through Chung's second trip to South Asia and what she learns about her father and his helicopter missions. She traces his footsteps as best she can, and through the course of her research and discovery, weaves her stories into the larger fabric of the Vietnam War and those histories that have been forgotten. "Just from a very simple, personal urge to understand my father's journey, it opened up this whole history," Chung writes.

Tiffany Chung explores all sorts of avenues to address the past, and it's really impressive to see how many different ways one can approach history. Her work is extremely nuanced, and as a first-generation Asian American, her mission to uncover her family's history and past really resonated with me.”

REBE CHEN

Throughout the journey, Rebe Chen is a wonderful traveling companion whose visual storytelling brings to life the difficult ideas that Tiffany Chung grapples within her work.

This comic is part of a series, *Drawn to Art: Tales of Inspiring Women Artists*, that illuminates the stories of women artists who are represented in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Inspired by graphic novels, these short takes on artists' lives were each drawn by a student-illustrator from the Ringling College of Art and Design.

We invite you to read the comic and share with your friends and young people in your life.