

Palace

L.A. L.A. END

A FILM BY CHANTAL STOMAN

RA JEWELER

628

632

Castillo



**« The California
sun that lights up
the city can be
seen every night
in movie theaters
around
the world »»**



Introduction

At the origin of Hollywood, there was a dream and a reality. Gorgeous theaters, gigantic palm trees, dazzling sunshine, golden light, glamorous women, gleaming cars in pastel colors . . . Today, the California sun is still shining, the palm trees are growing even taller, and the light still gives every view a movie feeling . . . but most theaters have closed, their abandoned facades are no longer a dream, and sports cars have replaced the elegant Cadillacs. On the stars of Hollywood Blvd, the homeless took their place and the red carpet premieres are rare. News articles announcing Hollywood's decline sparked my urge to go search for a past projected onto the surface of the present, the desire to confront the myth of the Mecca of cinema and the reality of Hollywood, when the dream capital that sold America to the rest of the world, is slowly dying out. Through a look-alike of Marilyn, a symbolic figure of the golden age of cinema, the film will be the story of a disappearing myth.

A portrait of a woman who is also the portrait of a city.



Just a year ago I discovered Los Angeles through an exhibition of my photographs there. After my *Omecittà* project where I had observed the memory of cinema displayed on the walls of a tiny Japanese town, I was impatient to discover the Mecca of cinema described by Blaise Cendrars in 1936. Los Angeles was beautiful ! Its light, its architecture, its endless avenues . . . I was dazzled.

However, something was missing.

In Hollywood, I expected to find a city steeped in cinema, the spectacle of the 7th art visible around every street corner. Impressive movie theaters from which one would feel the vitality of a rich and varied program followed by a large and loyal audience. I almost imagined seeing Julia Roberts jogging on Venice Beach, George Clooney buying coffee capsules at the supermarket, or Quentin Tarantino in one of the city bars... Shooting in the streets, Cadillacs from another era coming out straight from a scene played a few blocks away. Clearly I had created a film in my head.

Cendrars' book, *Hollywood, the Mecca of Cinema*, published in 1960, accompanied my stay. The myth was already exploding in his words.

It was on Colgate Av. that I first saw a cinema turned into a synagogue, then The State on Broadway transformed into a church, still on Broadway the famous Rialto cinema transformed into a clothing store for trendy young people, or the Studio City cinema on Ventura Bld, cult place of author cinema transformed into a bookshop...

The list is unfortunately long. The theaters of Los Angeles, however impressive with their architecture, their size, their imposing facade, ruins of a time when cinema was essential in the city, like the true DNA of the city of angels, were collapsing, and the announced decline was palpable long before the consequences of the pandemic that we are experiencing today.



Theme and main idea

L.A-L.A End seeks to understand the present through the past. To make the mute vestiges of history speak and unknowingly reveal a deeper and truer truth than that of the official archives. It is in three stages, through individual and collective memory that I distinguish the different dimensions of this incarnation: the evocation of the place and its history, the trace, and the imprint.

Hollywood is the place that is a symbol of all fantasies and dreams, and the absolute incarnation of the 7th art.



Why Now ?

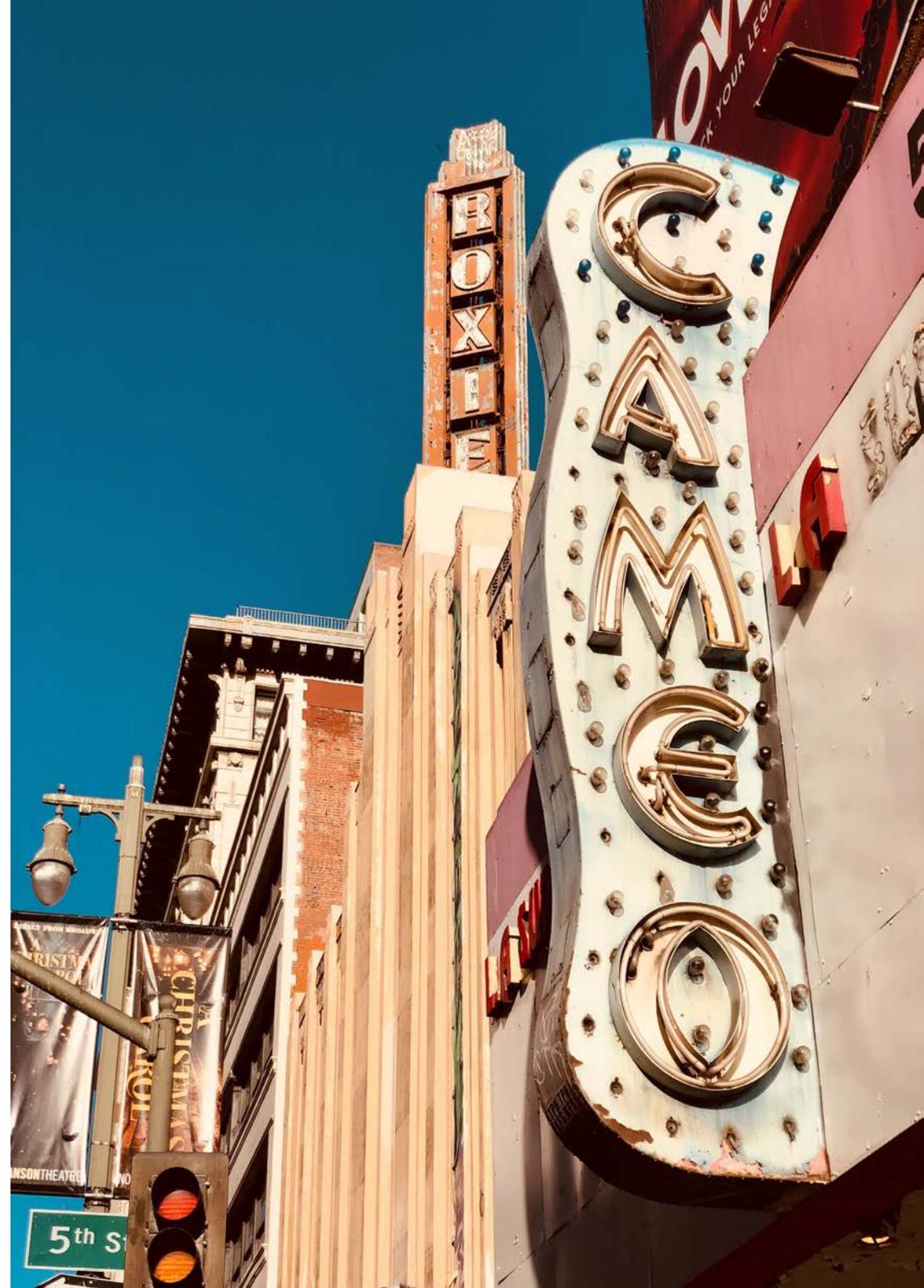
Cities are an immense receptacle for the labor of men, they are the work of our hands and for that, they become human things... they are also a testimony of values, a permanence and a memory.

The city is made of its history. »

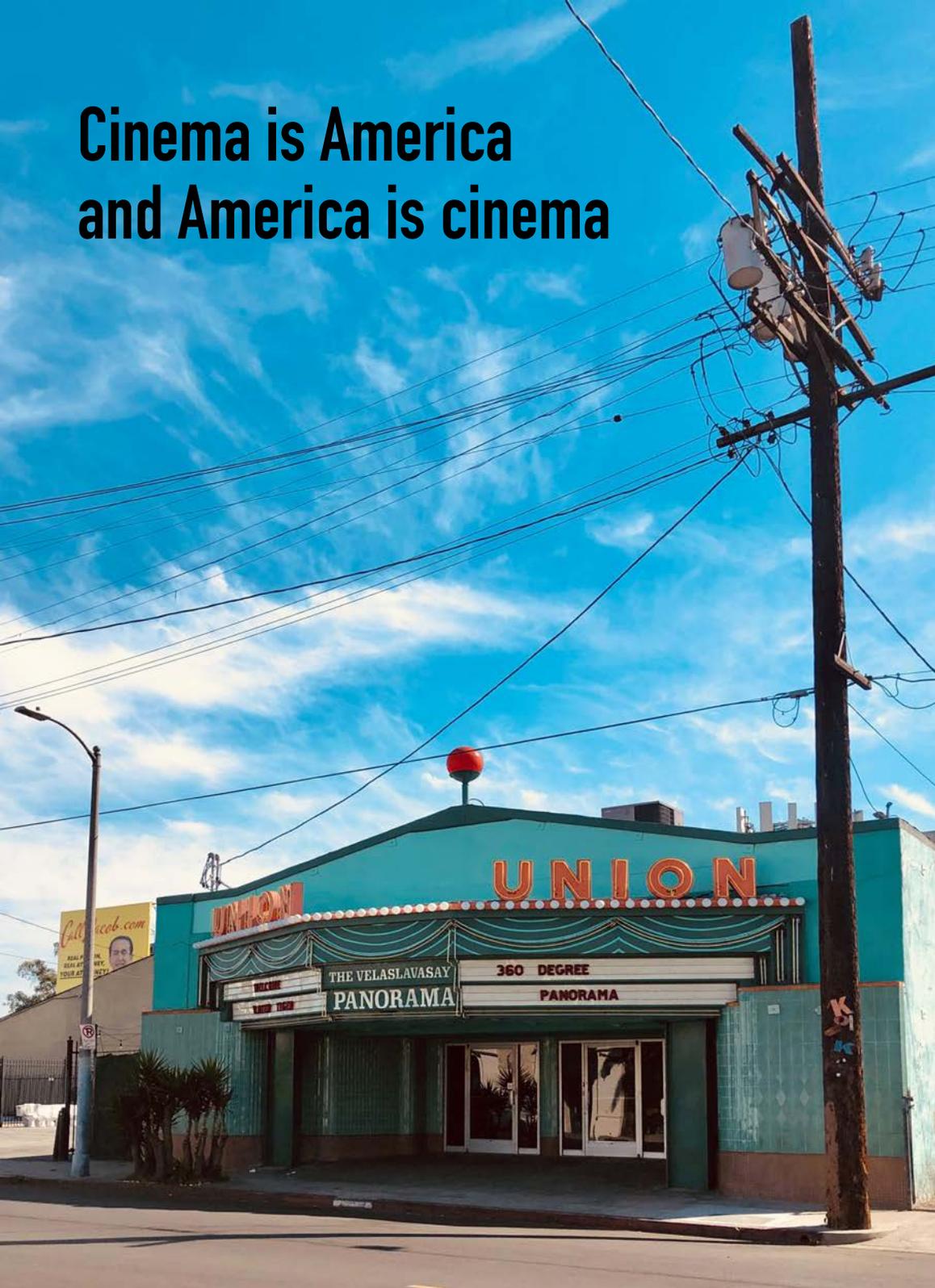
Rossi, 1966

“Heritage” is essential, a treasure that the city shares as a heritage.

However, it is estimated that many historic theaters supposed to be protected are in poor condition or in danger, yet it constitutes an element of transmission between generations. Preserving historical buildings and neighbourhoods helps to maintain a city's distinctive character and engender a sense of belonging.



Cinema is America and America is cinema



LA-LA END a film by Chantal Stoman © 2022

The trace, this infinitely thin, hardly perceptible presence of the past which represents both the tiniest testimony and the most concrete degree of the presence of the past.

The imprint, which is a more lasting and deeper mark, brings us back to the idea of an inscription in space. It is these closed cinemas that constitute the mark of what remains despite the passage of time. It is a question of continuing a story, but also of contributing to a story of cultural memory by taking care to anchor it in a framework :What is Hollywood's symptom – or rather, what is the memory of cinema a symptom of in American society?

For a long time America has expressed itself in the cinema, through the cinema, and cannot be perceived outside cinematographic images. This particular complicity between cinema and America has long been exposed on the screens. Through an emblematic character, a Marilyn of today who has adopted the panoply of the icon she admires so much, I want to tell the story of Hollywood cinema who is dying slowly.

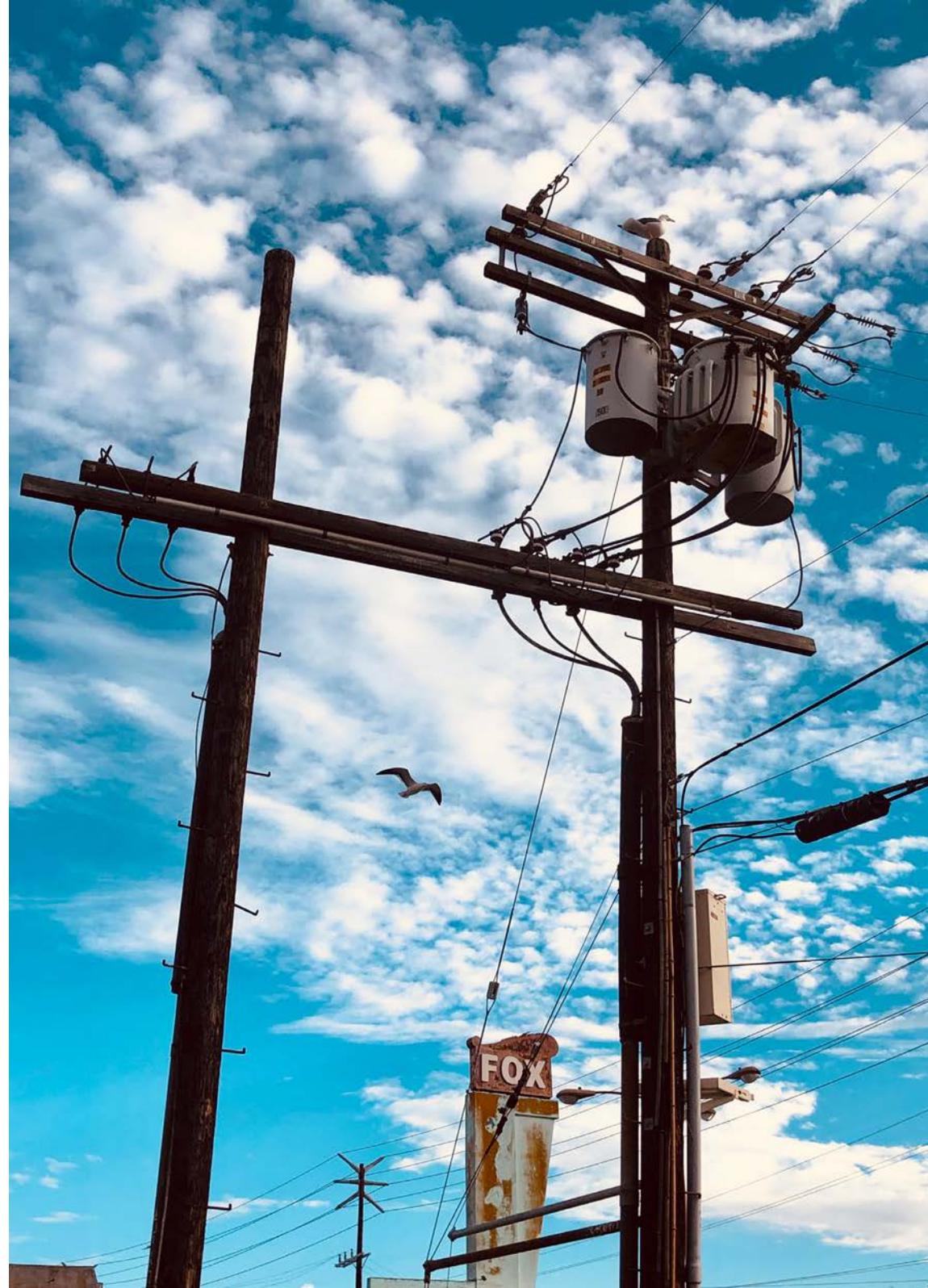
L.A L.A End is a portrait of a city.

Artistic statements

Los Angeles is a horizontal city, with endless avenues ideal for long track shots. The landscapes, the architecture of the 1930s and the more modern one, the luxuriant gardens, gives the city a cinematographic vision.

It is undoubtedly its contradictions that make Los Angeles fascinating. Just look at the number of authors who have made it the backdrop of their novel or their film. The landscape of Los Angeles, a coastal plain between sea and mountains, a gigantic suburban oasis in the Californian desert. I came several times to observe Los Angeles. I first felt a fascination for the city with this cinematographic look, probably like many people. The second time, I focused on Hollywood history, the connections between the neighborhoods that housed cinemas and studios, because everything is visible in Los Angeles. Powerful and different sequences follow one another when we explore it.

To tell the best story about these encounters, I imagined different characters. Then, I turn to these transformed places. These theaters have become shops, gyms, churches, searching ghosts of the 7th art that inhabit these metamorphosed places.



What does Hollywood evoke to you?

I started by asking this simple question around me in Paris. From the speech of the vegetable vendor on Blvd de Belleville evoking the stars, to the students of a school summoning Star Wars, or Avengers and the intellectualized speech of those involved in cinema, analyzing the tragic end of a system. The dozens of answers collected will guide my research in L.A. Among the words heard, the most frequent: Marilyn ! The glamorous icon alone symbolizes the city of cinema.



I have to go and find her. Dozens of look-alike agencies in Hollywood, I discovered an impressive number of Marylins. Present to embody the icon in blockbusters or available for all parties and corporate events, promotions at exhibitions, trade shows, and other events. These Marylins, pale copies of the authentic one, or almost perfect clones, individually reproduce the symbol of glamor within everyone's reach.

The casting of «my» Marilyn marks the start of a stroll through Los Angeles, in search of the vestiges of the Golden Age period of cinema.

Hollywood was above all Marilyn !

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Then, in Los Angeles, I will ask :

« What's left in Hollywood ? »

In cinema theater's lines, screenings exit. I will enter the buildings located opposite the cinemas, I will listen to the stories of the inhabitants whose windows have theater's views.

The Hollywood myth is never far away.

These visions, the film will bring them to light.

Then, all those cinemas located on Main street, this street which at the time was considered the red-light district of Los Angeles, a street full of cafeterias, inexpensive restaurants and 5 cents theaters... Cameo, abandoned for years where only the name in neon remains on the top of the facade... The Roxie, and the Arcade which has become a bar...



Characters

Stéphanie, «My» Marilyn, this young woman, living in Los Angeles, opens up to the city to us. My Marilyn left her native Texas several years ago, her family and her friends for Hollywood, where she dreams of making a career. Attractive and sexy, she relies on chance of unexpected encounters to quench her thirst for ambition. She lets her life exist according to what she feels, does not play at being anything other than what she embodies with her blonde wig and her pleated white dress. On this declension of false appearances, on this moving and shrunken identity, my Marilyn sometimes gets lost, the tracks are so distorted. Sealed under her wig, her make-up and her evening dress, deprived of her identity, my Marilyn becomes a detective, wandering in search of traces of cinema in this city where she dreams of making a name for herself.



Ruta Lee is a Canadian-American actress and dancer who appeared as one of the brides in the musical *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. She had roles in films including Billy Wilder's crime drama *Witness for the Prosecution* and Stanley Donen's musical comedy *Funny Face*, and also is remembered for her guest appearance in a 1963 episode of Rod Serling's sci-fi series *The Twilight Zone* called «A Short Drink from a Certain Fountain».

In addition to films, Lee has appeared in dozens of guest-starring roles on television. For a number of years, she seemed to be everywhere on the small screen. She will appear in *L.A. L.A. End* as her own character. Ruta Lee was part of Hollywood Golden Age, she met several times Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Dean Martin, John Wayne, Frank Sinatra, ect... She has her star is on Hollywood Blvd.



Other character gallery

Esther Silberman lives at 610 South Broadway. Her living room overlooks the monumental façade of the Tower Theater. For her, cinema was every week at her window ! This unique building, which since 1927 has shown the most important films in the history of cinema, was a real institution, and just became the Apple Tower Theater...store. Esther tells me that for 30 years, each time the program changed, she sat in front of her living room window and waited patiently to decipher the title of the film which was displayed letter by letter. Today, cinema no longer interests many people, she whispers to me. But, sometimes, I put on my beautiful dress, I cross the street, and I go to dream in front of a film, romance if possible !”

Farid has been a seller for two years at the Urban Outfitters store located in the Rialto cinema building. I ask him how it feels to work in a place that evokes dreams and emotion. He replies that most of the customers don't even know that the building was a famous cinema in the city. Personally, he likes movie screenings. He grew up in Beirut and remembers that the weekly outing to discover new films was a party for him and his brothers. He feels sorry that places like this are turned into business. Sometimes he imagines the films screened in this theater, the families, the lovers, or quite simply the moviegoers . . .



Device

L.A L.A End will be a one hour film.

With a small team, I will work with a director of photography and a sound engineer. My activity as a photographer gave me a taste for solitude, and the shooting of my first film allowed me to see that it is possible to make films with a very limited team.

The camera intimidates people. The relationship of intimacy with a place or a character is essential for my project. By limiting myself to very few collaborators, I favor the approach. To film the meeting of a myth like Hollywood, we will follow two trajectories, that of the protagonist who reveals her emotions through the image; and the testimonies of the citizens of the city, who participate in its legend.



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L.A L.A END
A CREATIVE DOCUMENTARY
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