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Scanned by IndieCollect, Nancy Kelly's acclaimed
THOUSAND PIECES OF GOLD (1990)
Premieres in 4K at [Queens World Film Festival](#),
Museum of the Moving Image
March 26, 2019

A dazzling new 4K restoration of Nancy Kelly's *Thousand Pieces of Gold* will be unveiled March 26, 2019, at the Museum of the Moving Image, when the Queens World Film Festival bestows its **Spirit of Queens Award** on director Nancy Kelly and producer Kenji Yamamoto. Lead actress Rosalind Chao will also make a personal appearance.

The New 4K restoration premieres at MoMI's Redstone Theater at 7:00pm.
Purchase tickets [here](#)



Set in a mining town in the 1880s, *Thousand Pieces of Gold* was developed by the Sundance Institute and premiered at the San Francisco International Film Festival in 1990. After its theatrical release, *Thousand Pieces of Gold* aired on the PBS *American Playhouse* series, the UK's Film Four and around the world.

It won immediate acclaim for its portrayal of the real-life story of Lalu (Rosalind Chao), a young Chinese woman whose desperately poor parents sell her into slavery. She is trafficked to a nefarious saloonkeeper in Idaho's gold country. Eventually Charlie, a man of different ilk, played by Chris Cooper, wins her in a poker game and slowly gains her trust.

Way ahead of its time, the film resonates even more powerfully today in the era of #MeToo. But Nancy Kelly became a victim of prejudice against women directors within the American film industry and was never offered another movie to direct in spite of extraordinary reviews from critics, some of whom compared her talent to that of John Ford.



Michael Wilmington, Los Angeles Times:

Independent in the best sense of the word, "Thousand Pieces of Gold" gives us the Old West through a piece of candle-lit silk, hardship diffused through tears and smoke. The landscapes are clear, the action wedded to emotion. This is classic Western filmmaking: the lucid lyricism of a John Ford, a Budd Boetticher, a George Stevens. But, since Kelly is dealing with different kinds of conflicts, the film always seems to be opening up a new world.

Judy Stone, San Francisco Chronicle:

Kelly's astute direction is all the more noteworthy because her only previous films were the documentaries "Cowgirls" and "A Cowhand's Song." Anne Makepeace's script deftly touches on the loneliness of the raucous miners even as their anti-Chinese bigotry spills over into violence. The jewel in the crown is Rosalind Chao's stunning performance as Lalu Nathoy.

Stephen Holden, The New York Times:

Even in moments of terrible anguish, Rosalind Chao projects the character's steely will.

Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times:

Angry and romantic, "Gold" tells a powerful, poignant tale.



About Nancy Kelly

A native of North Adams, Massachusetts, Nancy Kelly is self-taught. As a public health educator, she was hired to produce five short dramas about how to drink responsibly. Having fallen in love with filmmaking, she quit her job and moved to the high desert on the California/Nevada border. Though she had never ridden a horse or made a documentary, she learned to do both, making her living as a ranch hand while she shot *A Cowhand's Song* and *Cowgirls*. Both films won awards.

Kelly discovered Ruthanne Lum McCunn's novel *Thousand Pieces of Gold* while touring with *Cowgirls*, and immediately saw it as a narrative feature. She and Kenji Yamamoto, her husband and filmmaking partner, spent six years financing the film with support from *American Playhouse* Theatrical Films, CPB, Film Four International and private investors.

Although Kelly's career as a movie director stalled -- the victim of sexism that stymies the career of [so many women](#) -- she continued to direct documentary films, including *Rebels with a Cause*, *Downside UP*, *Smitten*, and *Trust: Second Acts in Young Lives*. She is currently developing *When We Were Cowgirls*, a feminist adventure story loosely based on her own experiences as a ranch hand.

Kelly's work has been supported by the Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, ITVS, National Endowment for the Humanities and California Humanities. She has won artist-in-residence fellowships at Yaddo, UCross, the MacDowell Colony and the Banff Center for the Arts. When not in production, she teaches filmmaking at the California College of the Arts.

About Kenji Yamamoto

Kenji Yamamoto and Nancy Kelly have been partnered in life and work since 1980, when they decided to make a movie based on the novel, *Thousand Pieces of Gold*. Yamamoto served as producer and editor of the film. He is currently making his directorial debut with *Hacker House*, about a Spanish entrepreneur who risks everything on a Silicon Valley incubation hive where he plays "father" to dozens of nascent entrepreneurs, while neglecting his own children back home in Madrid.

A California native, Kenji Yamamoto studied painting, photography and filmmaking at the San Francisco Art Institute and later made narratives and documentaries, mainly about people on the fringes of society. He participated in the Sundance Institute Documentary Editing Lab with Jennifer Maytorena's *New Muslim Cool* and won an artist-in-residence fellowship at the Banff Centre for the Arts.

About Rosalind Chao (Lalu)

Rosalind Chao received the Best Actress Award from the Festival de Cinéma Jeune, Paris, for her role as Lalu in *Thousand Pieces of Gold*. Since then, she has starred in *The Joy Luck Club*, *Nanking*, *Six Feet Under*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *The West Wing*. She gained popularity among *Star Trek* fans for her long career on two *Star Trek* series.

About Chris Cooper (Charlie)

Chris Cooper is known for his intense, understated performances. Since *Thousand Pieces of Gold*, he has acted in more than sixty films, winning an Oscar and a Golden Globe for his role opposite Meryl Streep in *Adaptation*. He starred in *American Beauty*, *August: Osage County*, *Breach*, *October Sky*, *The Bourne Identity*, *Seabiscuit*, *Capote* and *The Horse Whisperer*.

About the Restoration & IndieCollect

IndieCollect is a non-profit organization whose mission is to rescue, restore and re-activate American independent films so they can be brought to new audiences in state-of-the-art digital formats. Its film restoration initiative is supported in part with funds from Just Films / The Ford Foundation, Weissman Family Foundation, Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust, Hollywood Foreign Press Association Trust, Amazon Studios, DELL, NVIDIA, and private donors.

The original 35mm negative for *Thousand Pieces of Gold* was scanned by the IndieCollect team, using a 5K Kinetica Archival Scanner. Gary Coates did the color-correction in Resolve under the supervision of Nancy Kelly and Kenji Yamamoto with final quality control and digital delivery handled by the IndieCollect team in New York City.

The original film and sound elements for *Thousand Pieces of Gold* are part of the Sundance Collection at the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

Press Interviews

For interviews with director Nancy Kelly, producer Kenji Yamamoto or lead actress Rosalind Chao, please contact Bella Racklin, IndieCollect Communications, bella.racklin@indiecollect.org



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