
The 2nd
IndieChina
Film Festival
Presented by
IndieChina Institute
HERE HERE Arts Center
November 10 to 15, 2026
New York

Program Sections

01 Chinese Indies

02 A Tribute to Ai Xiaoming

03 Rupture and Reconciliation

04 IndieAsia

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06 Special Retrospective Ogawa Shinsuke

Film information, synopses and filmmaker biographies in festival program order, followed by keynote and panel information. Review notes appear at the end.

01 Chinese Indies

The Crack

2002 | 102 min | Director: Li Wake



Format:
35 mm Kodak film
Screenwriter:
Li Wake

Synopsis

In the end of 1970s, Xiangyang, a young worker, cut his left hand in order to leave from the factory to learn the painting. Once he went to the academy of the art to do some exercises of the painting with his friend, . His memory of the past was aroused by a woman model: The normal relationship between men and women was condemned as a serious problem of clasis in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Women couldn't wear beautiful dresses, skirts and high-heel shoes. Men couldn't wear hair long but the gray clothes with the red badge of Mao and the red armband. If men and women did so, they were treated as the "immoral behaviors" and condemned to the hell.

The Chinese people impulsed by the naturality would rather save the coin to see the proletarian foreign movie of <Lenin in 1918> than had less meal just like Xiangyang. Because there was the ballet of <Swan Lake> in the 13. Xiangyang, a fifteen boy, was illumined by the beauty. But when he learned that human could be hybridized like the rabbit, he felt so shameful and immoral. So the "immoral behaviors" became the eternal riddle of his life.

In the 21th century, the vitality of the Chinese were liberated and Xiangyang took the chance to search the "immoral behaviors" on the TV program unceasingly.

Filmmaker biography

Li Wake, formerly known as Li Qun, was born in September 1959. In 1985, he participated in the "Shandong Young Artists' Exhibition," with works such as "Self-Loss" featured in the publication Towards the Future. In 1989, he took part in the "China/Avant-Garde" exhibition (also known as the "China Modern Art Exhibition"). His "Inflatable-ism" series is documented in A History of Modern Chinese Art. In 2002, he directed his first 35mm feature film, The Crack.

Ex-Voto

2026 | 87 min | Director: Hu Jiamin



Synopsis

A visual and sonic elegy, Ex-Voto interweaves the author's series of political votive paintings with the global events and personal affairs connected to them—the pandemic, protests, resistance, exile, his arrest in China in 2017, and his journey to Russia in 2025, among others—in an intricate, nuanced, poetic, and humorous way. Composed of historical archives and the author's own footage, the film explores disaster, survival, and gratitude—themes at the heart of the ex-voto tradition—as a means to confront our chaotic times.

It is not a film that illustrates the author's paintings (just as his paintings are not created to illustrate the stories behind them). Like his pictorial works, the film expresses the way globalized history incarnates itself in our existences, depicting the tension between the simplicity and fragility of everyday life and the inexorability of the historical and political forces that underlie it.

Filmmaker biography

Hu Jiamin is a Chinese-born artist based in France, working in both painting and video. With a background in science, he began his artistic practice in a village in Yunnan province; his experience in rural China profoundly influenced his sense of artists' social responsibility. In 2017, the censorship and destruction of his mural in Shenzhen, and his subsequent detention during the Shenzhen and Hong Kong Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture, led him to reflect on the relationship between art and dissent. Among various directions, his work probes the way the materiality of painting questions and defies the virtualization of the images that inundate our lives at the time of the spectacularization of the world. Ex-Voto (2026) is his first film.

He moved to France in 2016. The Chinese source identifies his censored mural by a title that translates literally as Time Difference.

The Cemetery

2026 | 124 min



Synopsis

A cemetery, a memory of the violence of the Cultural Revolution, and a film completed on the 60th anniversary of the launch of the decade-long turmoil in 1966, inviting us to reflect on a fundamental question: who are the victims, and who are the perpetrators?

Shadow Days

2014 | 95 min | Director: Zhao Dayong



Synopsis

Liang Renwei and his pregnant girlfriend, Pomegranate, leave a shady past in the city behind and return to the remote mountain town of Renwei's childhood. The couple's plan is to remain until the child is born and then see what new opportunity arises. The mayor of the mostly deserted town is Renwei's uncle, whose most pressing priority is meeting the One-Child Policy quotas set by his Communist Party superiors. When the chairwoman of the local women's federation mentions over a card game that the family planning team is short-handed, Renwei's uncle urges him to pitch in and make a bit of extra money. Renwei takes to the job with alacrity, finding cruel and creative ways to round up women for forced abortions. Before long the team reaches its quota.

The days drift by. Pomegranate tires of the empty rooms, and she begins to glimpse faceless ghosts of the past lurking in the corners.

Late one night Uncle steps out to relieve himself and is touched by a tiny spirit in the darkness. His health deteriorates and the locals spurn him, fearing the taint of his presence. Uncle turns to a local shaman, who performs an ancient exorcism ritual and determines that the tiny spirit abides on the west side – in the direction of Pomegranate's room.

And so Uncle's haunting plot unfolds.

Filmmaker biography

Zhao Dayong lives in New York. He started out as a painter, and turn to directing commercials from the late 1990s. He became an independent film maker in 2004, making both documentaries and feature films. His first documentary "Street Life" was made in 2007, followed in 2008 by the documentary "Ghost Town" and in 2010 the documentary "My Father's House". Also in 2010 he directed the feature film "The High Life", and the experimental short film "Rough Poetry". These were followed in 2014 with the "Shadow Days". His works have often been shortlisted for international film festivals and received international awards. His later works include One Says No (2018)/

Cast: Liang Ming, Li Ziqian, Liu Yu | Screenplay: Fu Xinghua, Zhao Dayong | Cinematography: Zhang Tianhui | Editing: Li Qing, Zhang Tianhui

Taming the Fish

2025 | 108 min | Director: Ding Jiancheng



Synopsis

After working hard in the city for several years to no success, Desheng finally decided to return to the fish pond in his hometown to raise fish, get married and have children.

In 2001, when I first photographed him, Desheng was 29 years old. I lived with them for a few months and felt that his family was full of happiness and joy.

Twenty-four years later, I entered this family again. Desheng is 53 years old. His parents passed away one after another, and his wife left the village after divorcing him. Now, in addition to this fish pond, there is also a grown-up daughter who is with him.

Since ancient times in China, there has been a legend of "fish jumping over the Dragon Gate". Once the Yellow River carp jumps, it can incarnate as a dragon. Desheng was also the fish who struggled to jump to Longmen. He left his small fish pond and swam to the wider river and ocean. But in the end, Desheng returned to the place where his life began, and Desheng's fate completed his taming in the way of returning?

Filmmaker biography

Ding Jiancheng is an independent film director. He studied at the People's Liberation Army Academy of Arts and Beijing Film Academy. His films include Taming the Fish, Phoenix (2003), and The Paper (2000), adapted from Su Tong's novel of the same name. He also directed making-of documentaries for Zhang Yimou's Not One Less, The Road Home, and Turandot at the Forbidden City, and served as cinematographer on Rainclouds Over Wushan (1997). At CCTV, he directed for Oriental Time and Space.

02 A Tribute to Ai Xiaoming

Taishi Village

2005 | 120 min | Director: Ai Xiaoming



Format: DV, colour
Cinematography: Ai Xiaoming
Editing: Hu Jie; Ai Xiaoming

Synopsis

In the autumn of 2005,in Taishi Village, Panyu, Guangzhou, hundreds of people signed a petition for the removal of the village head according to law. The villagers sealed up the finance office of the village committee office and expressed their demands by sit-down strike.The local government sent police force to arrest activists in the village, but the villagers insisted that the recall process be initiated. The government department then sent a working group to the village to verify the signature.

The recall campaign of Taishi Village has attracted high attention from the Chinese and foreign media, and has also caused unrest in the local government. On September 12, the government dispatched police to surround Taishi village and detained dozens of villagers who were sitting in at the village committee. Despite all the suppression, the villagers of Taishi insisted on electing the election committee to remove the head of the village committee. The government then sent another working group to put further pressure on the elected members to withdraw one by one. In the autumn wind and cold rain, hired thugs formed to patrol, under such a threat, the lawyers of the villagers and reporters were forced to leave.....

Following the process of the event, the film records the struggle scenes and tragic ending of the villagers' autonomy movement in four episodes, showing the consciousness of rights surging in rural Guangdong. It's tribute to the villagers who were eager to fight for their right to vote.Sadly,these rights are simply written on paper, and the government is far from ready to respect them.

Filmmaker biography

Ai Xiaoming taught in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at Sun Yat-sen University and led its Sex/Gender Education Forum. She translated and directed The Vagina Monologues. Her documentary collaborations with Hu Jie include White Ribbon and The Vagina Monologues: Stories from China.

Her collaborations with Hu Jie also include Garden of Heaven and Taishi Village. She worked on independent documentaries from 2004 to 2017. Her major works include a five-part series on schoolchildren affected by the Sichuan earthquake and a five-part historical documentary about Jiabiangou.

Garden of Heaven

2005 | 179 min | Director: Ai Xiaoming; Hu Jie



Format: Colour, SD, 4:3
Cinematography and editing:
Hu Jie; Ai Xiaoming

Synopsis

By tracking the case of HUANG Jing, a victim of date rape who was a woman teacher in a primary school in Xiangtan, Hunan province, this documentary captures the signs of change ongoing in China during a period between 2003 to 2006, before and after the sentence of respecting and protecting of human rights by state was written into the Constitution: awareness of human rights, women's struggle against judicial corruption and women taking actions to fight against domestic violence. Starting with the solution to SUN Zhigang Case, the film presents how difficult for the victim's mother to set up the rape case into court, what controversial issues raised during the process in the campaign for HUANG Jing. It also shows representation of the case by mainstream media and the impact made by people through Internet. By highlighting the effort made by legal assistance and advocacy from feminist organizations and other NGO's, the documentary-makers intend to record the cultural debates between women and law, the responsibilities of intellectuals, while igniting the continuous discussion on the possibility of civil society in China .

Five autopsies and six forensic assessments produced inconsistent findings, exposing problems in forensic assessment procedures. The film ends with the suspect's acquittal, although the assessment system underwent some reform, helped in part by public efforts surrounding the case.

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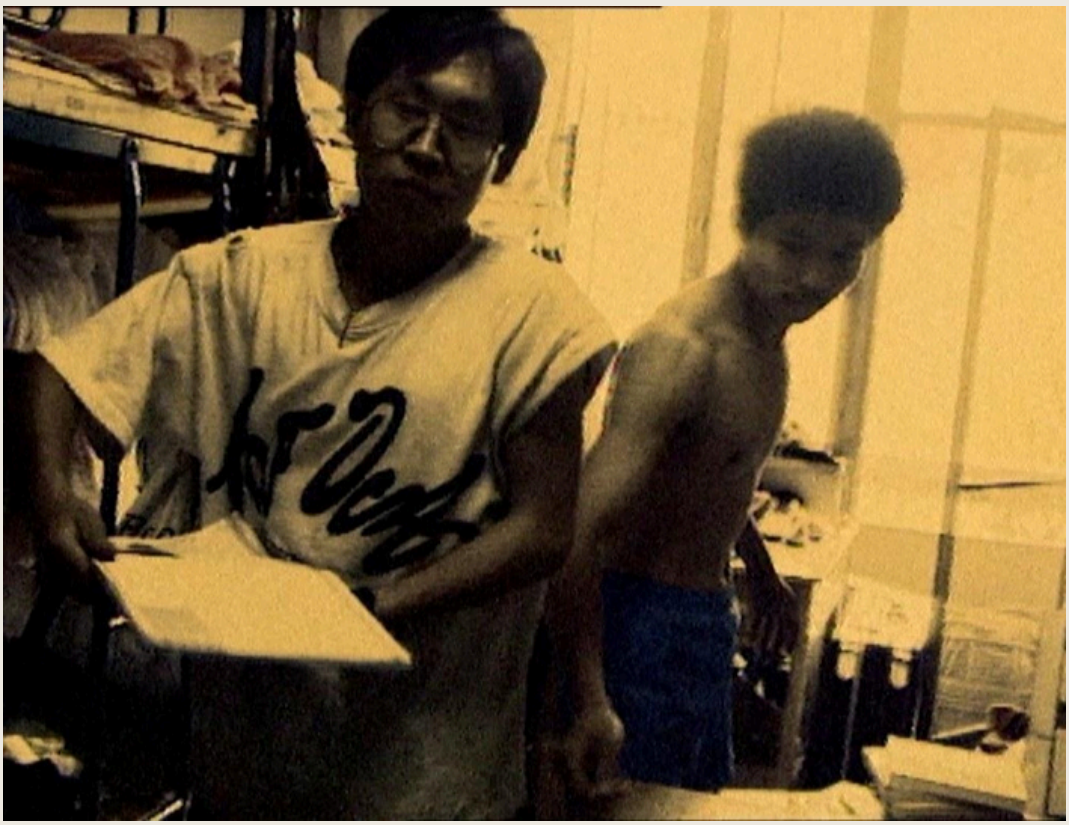
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Hu Jie. Independent documentary maker. His works, among others, are Remote Mountain, Folk Songs on the Plain, By the Sea, In Search of Lin Zhao's Soul. He participated in the establishment of Digital Video Studio of Sex/Gender Education Forum at Sun Yat-sen University as artist-in-residence since 2004.
Hu Jie completed The Vagina Monologues: Stories from China and also served as a trainer in the documentary project Beijing+10: China's Actions.

03 Rupture and Reconciliation

Special Screening – New Introduction

1992 | 112 min



Notes from Beijing — Part 1: “Glimpses from the Capital”

1988–1991 | 28 min | Director: Wang Zijun



Synopsis

Wang Zijun’s eight-part Notes from Beijing—made for Beijing Television—portrays the capital through the lives of its ordinary residents and the director’s personal relationship with his hometown. Combining first-person narration, archival footage, and street conversations, Wang develops a diaristic account guided by memory and curiosity. Shoppers and neighborhood barbers, college students singing together, a bus driver, and a traffic policeman populate a city understood through work, family responsibilities, and attachments to familiar places. These encounters become occasions for historical reflection, tracing how social change enters daily routines and how the past persists in people’s lives. Wang’s subjective voice gives coherence to this varied material, making the act of observing Beijing part of an ongoing effort to understand his own place within it. Filmed across the upheaval of 1989, the series pursued these possibilities within television as the scope for public expression narrowed; only seven of its eight completed episodes were permitted to air. Seen today, it preserves an intimate record of the capital at a moment of profound uncertainty, attentive to experiences that larger accounts of national transformation tend to overlook.

Notes from Beijing — Part 4: “Notes on Labor”

1988–1991 | 31 min | Director: Wang Zijun



Synopsis

Wang Zijun’s eight-part Notes from Beijing—made for Beijing Television—portrays the capital through the lives of its ordinary residents and the director’s personal relationship with his hometown. Combining first-person narration, archival footage, and street conversations, Wang develops a diaristic account guided by memory and curiosity. Shoppers and neighborhood barbers, college students singing together, a bus driver, and a traffic policeman populate a city understood through work, family responsibilities, and attachments to familiar places. These encounters become occasions for historical reflection, tracing how social change enters daily routines and how the past persists in people’s lives. Wang’s subjective voice gives coherence to this varied material, making the act of observing Beijing part of an ongoing effort to understand his own place within it. Filmed across the upheaval of 1989, the series pursued these possibilities within television as the scope for public expression narrowed; only seven of its eight completed episodes were permitted to air. Seen today, it preserves an intimate record of the capital at a moment of profound uncertainty, attentive to experiences that larger accounts of national transformation tend to overlook.

Bumming in Beijing

1988–1990 | 135 min | Director: Wu Wenguang



Synopsis

Wu Wenguang's Bumming in Beijing follows five young artists seeking creative freedom in the capital: photographer Gao Bo, theater director Mou Sen, writer Zhang Ci, and painters Zhang Dali and Zhang Xiaping. Their candid accounts of precarious housing, financial insecurity, artistic ambition, and going abroad offer an intimate portrait of Beijing's emerging counterculture. Initially undertaken for a CCTV documentary series, the project became an independent film after its subjects and approach proved too sensitive for broadcast. Following the crackdown of June 1989, Wu resumed filming among friends whose uncertain circumstances increasingly resembled his own. The film's pursuit of independent expression thus developed alongside the struggles it recorded. Widely recognized as a foundational work of China's New Documentary movement, Bumming in Beijing became internationally known during its film festival run through a substantially shortened version. Presented here in its original extended cut, it gives greater space to domestic routines, artistic practice, and conversations about residence permits, inequality, gender, and the commercialization of art. Wu's presence behind the camera, sometimes audible as he works out how to film, brings the process of documentary-making into this account of lives being improvised. Seen alongside SWYC's work, the film traces how the cultural aspirations of the late 1980s survived, changed, or faltered in the aftermath of 1989.

Special Screening – Digital Restoration

1988–1991 | 92 min



04 IndieAsia

Three Narrow Gates

2008 | 120 min | Director: Vincent Chui



Country region: Hong Kong
Colour: Colour
Languages: Cantonese

Synopsis

It has been ten years since the historical handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China. However, Hong Kong's progress toward democracy is still dissatisfactory while people in the society tend to play safe and be indifferent to the political environment. 6277 is a good-for-nothing who was kicked out from the police force due to his addiction to gambling and the subsequent debts, Eva is a green and aggressive woman reporter who is eager for promotion. Mr Ma is a pastor who is reproached for hosting a programme on social commentary on the radio. The three have been unrelated until now a murder in a yacht links them together, and leads them to unmask a scandal about some secret deals between the dominating business tycoons and the governments in Hong Kong and Mainland China. The Bible says, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Mathew 7:14). "It is a long and difficult road to truths and justice. Could the three protagonists be conscious and determined enough to persevere in revealing the truth while people around them are either ignorant or indifferent?

Filmmaker biography

Vincent Chui graduated from the Film Department at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Upon returning to Hong Kong, he worked in television and film production companies before venturing into independent filmmaking in 1993, winning accolades at the Hong Kong Independent Short Film and Video Awards (ifva). In 1997, he co-founded "Ying E Chi" with fellow independent filmmakers to promote and distribute Hong Kong independent cinema. That same year, he co-directed the documentary As Time Goes By with acclaimed director Ann Hui.

In 2001, Chui completed his debut feature film, Leaving in Sorrow, which was invited to numerous international film festivals. He followed this with Fear of Intimacy, starring Tony Leung Ka-fai, which served as the closing film of the 2004 Taipei Film Festival and entered the main competition at the Moscow International Film Festival. His subsequent directorial works include Three Narrow Gates starring Liu Kai-chi, the youth drama Love Is Elsewhere, and Fig, filmed in Macau, which was selected for the competition section of the 10th China Independent Film Festival.

In addition to directing, Chui has produced several independent films, including End of Love, which was screened at the 2009 Berlin International Film Festival, and Yellowing, which was nominated for Best Documentary at the Golden Horse Awards. As the former Artistic Director of Ying E Chi and curator of the Hong Kong Independent Film Festival, he distributed the crucial documentaries Taking Back the Legislature and Inside the Red Brick Wall. The latter won prestigious international accolades, including awards at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) and the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival. In 2024, Chui relocated to Taiwan, where he established Narrow Road Film Co., Ltd. and founded the Ying E Chi Independent Short Film Awards to continue championing independent cinema.

Breaking the Wall

2026 | 115 min | Director: Kevin H-J Lee



Languages: Taiwanese, Chinese, English
Subtitles: Chinese and English

Synopsis

On April 24, 1970, outside the Plaza Hotel in New York, Peter Huang (Huang Wen-hsiung), a PhD candidate at Cornell University, launched an assassination attempt against Chiang Ching-kuo, who was then the Vice Premier of the Executive Yuan. Though this single gunshot did not disrupt the Chiang family's succession plans, it left behind a defining declaration: “Let me stand up like a Taiwanese.”

"Breaking The Wall" goes beyond the single shot fired on April 24. What we most want to explore is why this brilliant overseas student, with a promising future ahead of him, was willing to pay the price of a lifetime to assassinate Chiang Ching-kuo without looking back. Why, after ending 25 years of exile and smuggling himself back to Taiwan, did he choose the most grueling path of "building a nation through human rights"?

" Hong-chue " is the Taiwanese word for a kite. A kite flies against the wind, bearing the "action and reaction forces" on its body —much like Peter Huang’s life, which has been closely intertwined with seven Presidents of the Republic of China. His life trajectory reflects Taiwan's human rights evolution and collective memory. As the lens gazes directly at this assassin, we cannot help but ask: "What on earth have you been fighting against your whole life?"

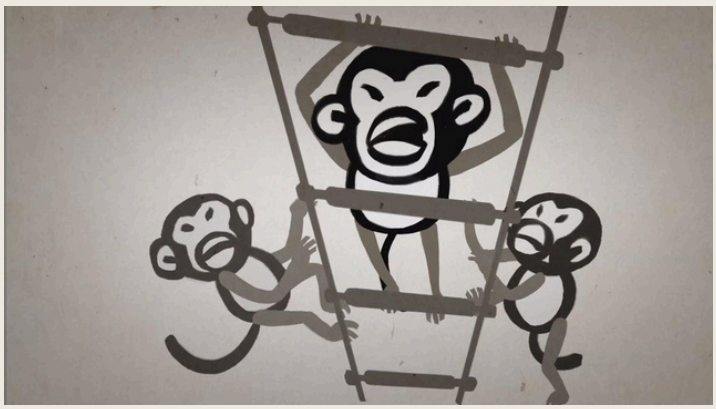
Over a span of seven years, director Kevin H.J. Lee documented Peter’s later years through long-term companionship and close observation. Through the film, we witness his body and memory growing increasingly frail, yet his spirit and will become sharper and clearer than ever.

Filmmaker biography

Kevin H.J. Lee has worked as a cameraman at half of a dozen broadcasters in Taiwan since the expansion of cable TV in the 1990s. He was a producer at Eastern Broadcasting Company (EBC) before resigning on 12th February 2008, when the headlines of the day was that the former vice-president had become a grandfather. Lee has won numerous awards for his work. Contain Unveil the Truth 2: State Apparatus won Taipei Film Festival's best documentary and Grand Prize in 2014, Media Choice Award for Taste of Apple at the 2016 Taipei Film Festival.

Self-censorship

2017 | 113 min | Director: Kevin H-J Lee



Country region: Taiwan
Languages: Mandarin, Cantonese
Subtitles: Chinese and English
Genre: Documentary
Formats: ProRes & MP4
Producer: Wennie Liu
Screenwriter: LU LU LU
Editor: Kevin H.J Lee

Synopsis

Director Kevin Lee: People are controlled through fear. What defeats fear? Despair is one; Hope is another. Which will you choose? This film is dedicated to all before us who have given their life and sacrificed their youth to the cause of Taiwanese democracy. The ‘value’ of democracy sustains and supports all other values. Thank you all. We shall continue forward together on Taiwan’s democratic road.

Filmmaker biography

Kevin H.J. Lee has worked as a cameraman at half of a dozen broadcasters in Taiwan since the expansion of cable TV in the 1990s. He was a producer at Eastern Broadcasting Company (EBC) before resigning on 12th February 2008, when the headlines of the day was that the former vice-president had become a grandfather. Lee has won numerous awards for his work. Contain Unveil the Truth 2: State Apparatus won Taipei Film Festival's best documentary and Grand Prize in 2014, Media Choice Award for Taste of Apple at the 2016 Taipei Film Festival.

404NotFound

2026 | 77 min | Director: Le Binh Giang



Format: DCP | Resolution: 4K | Sound: 5.1 | Colour: Color and B&W | Director and script writer: Le Binh Giang | Executive producer: Linh Vo - Le Binh Giang | Co- Executive producer: Vo Son Anh, Huan Nguyen | Producer: Linh Vo, Nguyen Doan Thao Quyen | Co-Producer: Ryohei Ueno | Cinematographer: Nguyen Khac Nhat | Production designer: Linh Vo | Sound designer: VENTUNO Studio - Midoriko Fukai| Music: Le Binh Giang | Editor: Le Binh Giang | Cast: Le Binh Giang, Le Lam Vien, Maria Ozawa, Mon (cat)

Synopsis

A homeless man returns to his old apartment building, hoping to find a place to sleep for the night. He seeks help from an old friend who now lives there with his pregnant wife, but is turned away.

With nowhere else to go, he wanders through the building, where fragments of memories and buried secrets gradually emerge. The apartment complex becomes more than a place to live—a space filled with stories of loneliness, abandonment, and things left unresolved.

That night, during a summer rain, the man falls asleep outside. When he wakes, he finds himself in a completely different world: a peaceful landscape filled with herds of cows, as if decades have passed.

There, he encounters the image of Maria Ozawa, seemingly an apparition born from his memories and desires. Reality, memory, and imagination begin to merge.

In the end, the man takes his own life, believing that after death he may be reborn as a cow—a simple creature he has encountered in this strangely peaceful world.

404NOTFOUND is a journey from homelessness, loneliness, and abandonment into a surreal world where a man longs to escape his human existence and return as something simpler.

Filmmaker biography

Lê Bình Giang is an independent Vietnamese filmmaker known for his bold, genre-bending cinema that blends body horror, surrealism, and social commentary. A graduate of Ho Chi Minh City University of Cinema, his debut feature Kfc (2017) premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam and earned a Jury Special Mention at the New York Asian Film Festival. He has participated in major international development programs including Tokyo Talent Campus, the Asian Project Market in Busan where he received the ArteKino Award in 2020 and Locarno Open Doors (2021).

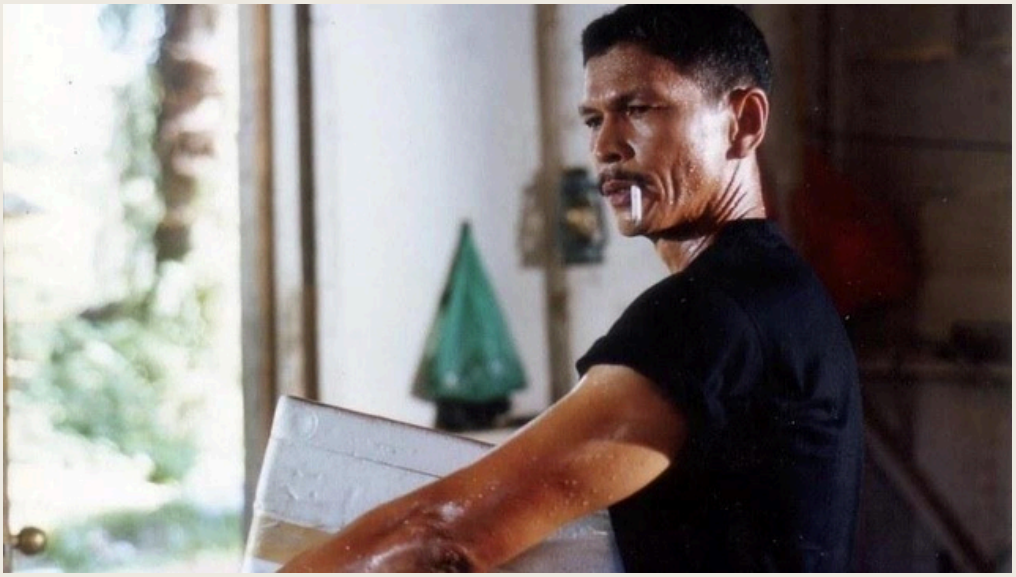
His later features Jackpot Island (2022), Rock-a-bye Baby (2023), and 404 NOTFOUND (2025) further affirm his poetic yet unsettling cinematic voice, exploring psychological trauma, social realities, and folkloric horror.

He is the founder of Trigger Film Academy and an active organizer of film community initiatives, including the La Gi Short Film Party, the retrospective The Time Has Come for October honoring Đặng Nhật Minh, and French Cinema Rendezvous with the French Institute in Vietnam. In November 2025, he co-organized the Hong Kong Gala Film Presentation Vietnam, welcoming Sammo Hung and Louis Koo to Vietnam, fostering regional dialogue between Asian film industries.

05 Spotlight on Malaysia

Swing My Swing High, My Darling

2004 | 94 min | Director: U-Wei Haji Saari



Alternate title:
Buai Laju-Laju

Synopsis

Loosely adapted from James M. Cain's classic novel The Postman Always Rings Twice, Swing My Swing High, My Darling follows the illicit affair and criminal conspiracy between an enigmatic vagabond and a woman trapped in a loveless marriage. Bound by moral and social isolation, the two protagonists retreat into a self-constructed island of sin—cutting themselves off from societal norms in a desperate, tragic pursuit of a false freedom.

Filmmaker biography

Back from New School of Social Research New York for film studies I directed 16 tv dramas before doing my first film 'Perempuan Isteri dan Jalang (Woman Wife and Whore)' in 1993 and also did radio programmes on Jazz at Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM). I wrote and directed stage plays and had a weekly column in 'Watan' newspaper.

My films been invited to film festivals in Singapore, Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Kalkutta, New Delhi, Da Naang, Phenom Phemn, Pyongyang, Busan, Manila, Taipei, Tokyo, Dubai, Brisbane, Cannes, Nantes, Berlin, Frlbough, New York, Telluride, Rotterdam, Poland, Brussels and others.

Two of my films were official selections (Uncertain Regards and Director's Fortnight) at Cannes Film Festival and had received best film, best director and other awards in Malaysia and in Belgium and Cambodia.
Nantes Filem Festival (France) did a retrospective of my film works in 2001.

Almayer's Folly

2012 | 114 min | Director: U-Wei Haji Saari



Alternate title:
Hanyut / Adrift

Synopsis

Based on Joseph Conrad's debut novel Almayer's Folly, Hanyut stands as a monumental exploration of complex, multi-layered isolation. Set along a remote riverbank in 19th-century Borneo, the film follows Kaspar Almayer, a Dutch trader living in total alienation—rejected by the indigenous community for his white privilege, yet discarded by his own colonial peers. True to its title (Hanyut / Adrift), the narrative serves as a devastating climax to the theme of displacement, depicting a world where the dreams, identities, and souls of its characters are swept away and drowned in the unrelenting currents of greed, obsession, and systemic racism.

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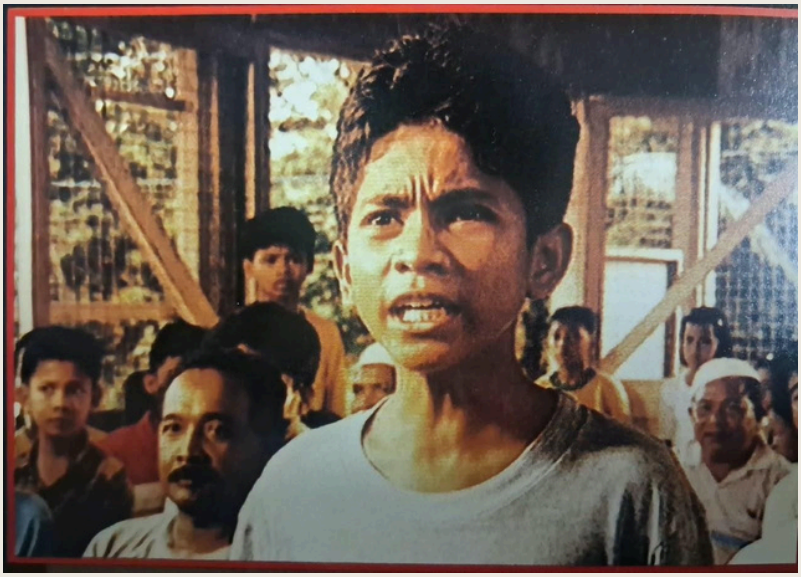
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The Arsonist

1995 | 70 min | Director: U-Wei Haji Saari



Alternate title:
Kaki Bakar

Synopsis

Adapted from William Faulkner's acclaimed short story Barn Burning, The Arsonist centers on Kakang, a fiercely proud Javanese immigrant who relocates his family to a traditional Malay village. Marked by deep social alienation, Kakang refuses to submit to the oppressive class hierarchy and local power structures that surround him. As his pride collides with marginalization, he chooses a radical path of rebellion—setting barns ablaze in a desperate, destructive act to reclaim his wounded dignity.

Filmmaker biography

Back from New School of Social Research New York for film studies U-Wei directed 16 tv dramas before doing my first film 'Perempuan Isteri dan Jalang (Woman Wife and Whore)' in 1993 and also did radio programmes on Jazz at Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM). He wrote and directed stage plays and had a weekly column in 'Watan' newspaper.

His films been invited to film festivals in Singapore, Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Kalkutta, New Delhi, Da Naang, Phenom Phemn, Pyongyang, Busan, Manila, Taipei, Tokyo, Dubai, Brisbane, Cannes, Nantes, Berlin, Frlbough, New York, Telluride, Rotterdam, Poland, Brussels and others.

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Love Conquers All

2006 | 90 min | Director: Tan Chui Mui



Cast: Coral Ong Li Whei (Ah Peng); Leong Jiun Jiun (Mei); Stephen Chua Jyh Shyan (John)

Synopsis

Small town girl Ah Ping moves to Kuala Lumpur to work in her aunt's chicken rice stall. She encounters John at the public phone booth while making her ritual calls to her family and boyfriend back home. John follows her everywhere pursuing her fervently until she finally succumbs to him.

First it transpires that he is involved in some shady deals. Then he casually reveals his familiarity with the tricks pimps use to lure girls into prostitution. When he does a disappearing act we watch helplessly as Ah Ping's fate is sealed.

Ah Ping is nineteen and moves from Bukit Mertajam to Brickfields in Kuala Lumpur, where she lives with her aunt.

She calls her mother and boyfriend each night and meets John at a telephone booth. Her aunt's nine-year-old daughter, Mei, often receives letters from a mysterious sender.

Director Tan Chui Mui calls it an old-fashioned love story. “All love stories are old-fashioned, but when they happen to you, they leave an indelible mark,” she says.

Filmmaker biography

Tan Chui Mui recently received the Tiger Award from the 36th International Film Festival Rotterdam with her debut feature film, "Love Conquers All". The film had previously picked up New Currents Awards and Fipresci Award at the 11th Pusan International Film Festival. She had been actively involved in the Malaysia independent film scene, working as producer, editor, script writer and occasionally actress. In 2004, she set up Da Huang Pictures with Amir Muhammad and James Lee.
She was born 1978 in Malaysia, in a small fishing village called Sungai Ular.

Barbarian Invasion

2021 | 106 min | Director: Tan Chui Mui



Synopsis

Moon Lee, a celebrated award-winning actress, has become a full-time mom and divorcée since retiring. Desperate to regain her sense of self, she jumps at the chance to work with her long-time collaborator, director Roger Woo, again. Only this time, he casts her as the lead in a do-your-own stunts martial arts film.

The role requires extensive training and though Moon is at first uncertain, she leaves her young son in the care of Roger's assistant and commits herself to back-breaking training. As soon as she starts to gain some confidence, Roger breaks the news to her: the only way the film can move ahead is to cast her ex-husband, Julliard, as the male lead.

Roger Woo invites Moon Lee to a seaside town for a Southeast Asian version of The Bourne Identity. The role requires a month of martial-arts training without a stunt double. Having retired from acting ten years earlier, she arrives with her six-year-old son.

Filmmaker biography

Tan Chui Mui (Director, Writer & Main Actress)

Born in year 1978, she directed a number of short films, before making her feature film debut Love Conquers All in 2006, which brought her internationally acclaimed. Her work is characterised by a poetic style, which she uses to depict stories about personal growth.

A leading figure in Malaysian New Wave cinema, Tan Chui Mui won the New Currents Award at the 11th Busan International Film Festival with Love Conquers All. She directed Year Without a Summer in 2010. In 2021, she directed and starred in her third feature, Barbarian Invasion, which won the Jury Grand Prix at the 24th Shanghai International Film Festival.

06 Special Retrospective: Ogawa Shinsuke

Summer in Narita

1968 | 108 min | Director: Ogawa Shinsuke



Synopsis

In 1968, Shinsuke Ogawa established the Ogawa Productions collective in Sanrizuka to film the movement protesting the construction of Narita International Airport. The protest movement garnered support from across Japan, and demonstrators engaged in fierce clashes with construction workers and riot police.

Filmmaker biography

Shinsuke Ogawa (June 25, 1935 – February 7, 1992) was a Japanese documentary filmmaker. Early in his career, he worked for New Century Film (Shinseiki Eiga) and Iwanami Film, where he collaborated with figures such as Noriaki Tsuchimoto on the production of promotional short films. Disillusioned by corporate and political propaganda, he resigned to pursue independent filmmaking. His early work focused on the radical student movements of the 1960s and 1970s—most notably in the film Sea of Youth (Seinen no Umi)—and he also established a nationwide network for the screening of independent films. In 1968, he and his team relocated to Sanrizuka, where they actively supported and participated in the farmers' struggle against land expropriation for the construction of Narita Airport; this period yielded his renowned Sanrizuka series. Later, he moved to the village of Makino in Yamagata Prefecture, where he lived and worked alongside local farmers for decades, documenting their history and daily lives. He was a profound influence on the founding of the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, which named its Asian film prize in his honor.

Colour: Black & white | Format: 16mm | Production company: Ogawa Productions | Alternate titles: The Battle Front for the Liberation of Japan–Summer in Sanrizuka; Japan Liberation Front: Summer in Sanrizuka; Summer at Sanrizuka | Credited print source: Athénée Français Cultural Center | Original title: Nihon kaiho sensen–Sanrizuka no natsu | Production: Kobayashi Hideko, Fuseya Hiro (Hiroo), Ichiyama Ryuji | Direction: Ogawa Shinsuke | Assistant Director: Jin Kohei, Matsumoto Takeaki, Yoshida Tsukasa | Photography: Otsu Koshiro, Tamura (Tamra) Masaki | Camera Assistant: Otsuka Noboru | Sound: Kubota Yukio | Transcription: Kuribayashi Toyohiko | Narration: Wada Shu | Negative Cutter: Sekizawa Takako | Music: Beethoven's "9th Symphony," Hayashi Hikaru's "The Good Woman of Szechuan," "Kamigami to Zennintachi no Mubobi Jotai no Uta" | Production Manager: Nosaka Haruo| Laboratory: Kinuta Laboratory | Sound Recording: Tokyo Studio Center

Narita: Heta Village

1973 | 146 min | Director: Ogawa Shinsuke



Synopsis

Sanrizuka: Heta Village is the sixth installment in the Sanrizuka series by Japanese documentary filmmaker Shinsuke Ogawa. The film chronicles the sustained struggle of farmers in the Sanrizuka region between 1967 and 1972 against the government's expropriation of their farmland for the construction of Narita Airport. It captures the profound impact this struggle had on the lives of the local residents.

Colour: Black & white | Format: 16mm | Production company: Ogawa Productions | Alternate titles: Sanrizuka–Heta Village | Credited print source: Athénée Français Cultural Center | Original title: Sanrizuka–Heta Buraku | Production Staff: Iizuka Toshio, Tadokoro Naoki, Nosaka Haruo, Fuseya Hiro (Hiroo), Honma Shusuke, Mikado Sadatoshi | Photography Staff: Ogawa Shinsuke, Fukuda Katsuhiko, Yumoto Mareo, Iwasaki Seiji, Shiraishi Yoko, Nakano Chihiro | Photograph: Tamura (Tamra) Masaki | Assistant Cameramen: Kawakami Koichi, Hara Tadashi | Sound: Kubota Yukio | Sound Editing: Asanuma Yukikazu | Negative Cutter: Takahashi Tatsuo | Sound Studio: Nihon Hoso Rokuon Kyokai | Laboratory: Movie Center | Support: Kagaku Eiga Seisakujo

Keynote by Li Sipan

In the Untamed South: Ai Xiaoming and the Beginnings of Guangzhou's Feminist Community



About the talk

As a journalist who covered the Huang Jing case, our guest witnessed firsthand the struggles surrounding it and the debates about gender that the case sparked in the media.

She also witnessed Ai Xiaoming's early feminist activism and the emergence of Guangzhou's feminist community alongside the case. Ai was the mentor who guided her toward feminism and has remained a touchstone for her intellectual life in the years since.

This talk weaves together personal memories and recollections of a community. Drawing on her overlapping identities as a journalist, feminist, and scholar, she turns to embodied ethnography to reflect anew on a movement in which she herself took part. In doing so, she revisits the unruly vitality of grassroots life in southern China and the feminist community that took root within it.

Speaker biography

Li Sipan holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Macau and is a veteran journalist, scholar, and feminist advocate. She previously worked as an investigative reporter at Southern Metropolis Daily and as an editor at Southern Weekly, and served as an associate professor at the School of Journalism and Communication at Shantou University. She has also been a visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, and Stanford University.

Li is one of the most prominent journalists and commentators in China covering women's issues. She was also among the earliest investigative journalists in China to make sexual harassment and sexual violence in the workplace and educational institutions a sustained focus of reporting. In 2004, she co-founded Women Awakening Network, a feminist media organization established with a group of journalists in Guangzhou. The organization has played an important role in advancing mechanisms to address sexual harassment, advocating for domestic violence legislation, and supporting the development of the #MeToo movement in China.

Panel discussion: Rupture and Reconciliation: Chinese Documentaries of the Early 1990s