



5,6: 第十九屆 ifva 比賽公開組得獎作品《美好生活》The 19th ifva Awards Gold Award-winning title (Open Category) – *Beautiful Life*
7, 8: 導演陳浩倫與一眾演員 Director Fredie Chan with his actor and actress

I have been sponsored as an audience in the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), November 2014. It truly was an eye opener worthy of a detailed notes of observation.

14 Years in Production: *Something Better to Come*

Polish documentary *Something Better to come* has become an instant sensation at the IDFA. Director Hanna Polak lingered around landfill sites in Russia for 14 years, documenting the life of garbage picker Yula since she was a 10-year-old girl. As time progressed, Yula got pregnant in a tent in the landfill, and gave birth to her son in the city at the age of 22. The film captured scenes of young garbage pickers awaiting the entrance of landfill trucks, searching for life's necessities when garbage is poured. From hamburgers, sausages, vodka, shampoo, footballs to socks and shoes, the youth danced happily in front of cameras upon the discovery of their favourite items. As the director noted, "The past decades meant more than just video shooting. I always brought children in and out of the hospital when they were sick, and sometimes it was the crew who had to save their lives."

The landfill sites in Russia are the homes and life sources of many. These families make a living by picking out metals and plastic bottles to sell to recyclers, who then collect the assorted materials in trucks on a daily basis. But with the extremely small income, how well could the people live? Both of Yula's parents are alcoholics, so she also lived a "live first, think later" attitude in her youth. However, the film rarely touches the topic on why they live in the landfill as communities. Another short-listed film *The Riders* depicted the dark times after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, when gangsters and capitalists overtook the country. Gangsters occupied the residential

buildings managed by ex-soviet government officials, and their power struggles even took its toll on the lives of ordinary citizens. Homes of the peoples have become luxury shopping malls, and the residents were left with no choice but to live on streets and landfill sites.

Numerous Eastern Europe films has been chosen in this year's IDFA, with the majority of works covering political dictatorship, environmental pollution, wars and extreme poverty.

Reflecting on Scandinavian Issues on-site: *Pekka*

Finnish documentary *Pekka* is based on a secondary school shooting in a local small town Jokela. Director Alexander Oey quoted a visual diary of the shooter Pekka. From the Youtube video by the shooter, Oey attempted to bring audiences into the world of the protagonist. The director did not take on an authoritative voice in analysing the tragedy, instead, he interviewed people who knew Pekka. People from his classmates, teachers, church friends, parents and the gun shop staff, who all failed to understand the event. A priest mentioned that memorial ceremonies have been held in the church in Jokela before, with villagers writing messages in memory of the deceased students. For instance, such kind of memorial has been held following a car crash in 2007. However, it puzzled the priest that people who joined the memorial for this school shooting incident did not say much about the incident. Even the messages on paper slips continued to be about the car accident. He felt that the whole town does not know how to discuss and open up about the tragedy.

The post-screening discussions in Europe allowed a view of Scandinavia outside of the Hong Kong framework. Asia media

and art sectors have always taken immense interest in the social welfare, educational systems and creative industries in Northern Europe. Hongkongers long to live there, seeing the region as best suited for human inhabitation. And as brought up by the director of *Pekka*, outsiders may feel that people's lives there are reaching near-perfection with left-wing governments dominating the countries and political figures who seem open and liberal. In their eyes, social justice and humanitarianism are successfully achieved in Scandinavia. However, with the occurrence of the school shooting, none of the political figures were able to answer why. How could such a tragedy happen in peaceful, liberal Scandinavia? A few years ago, Norway also witnessed a student shooting at a Socialist Party youth camp. These incidents might be lesser known to outsiders, and sparked much less discussions. The speech by the director dawned on us that Hong Kong film festivals should also try to inspire with the social context of where the films were made.

From local agriculture to international film festivals

When attending the film festival in 2014, I had an ongoing full-length documentary project - *Open Road After Harvest* - which is about local agriculture in Hong Kong. After its premiere in January 2015, the film has been sent to the jury panel of 2015 for screening and selection processes. According to my observations at the festival in 2014, European juries have a continuing interest for stories of the third world. But Hong Kong productions does not relate to the disasters in the civilized world like the shortlisted Eastern European work in 2014, nor could they compare with the technical support, production scale and humanistic spirit in Western film production industries. Therefore, to submit *Open Road After Harvest* to the IDFA 2015 was merely to draw attention from the international community,

highlighting the problem that lives of Hongkongers were under heavy influence of China. It is hoped that the film could run outside local soils and help local filmmakers seek greater freedom and space for their work.

Organised by Hong Kong Arts Centre, **ifva** is an Incubator for Film and Visual media in Asia (formerly the Hong Kong Independent Short Film and Video Awards). Founded in 1995, **ifva** serves as a platform that actively promotes and encourages creative talents in Asia, making short films, videos, animation and media arts. With a cutting-edge vision and highlight independent spirit, **ifva** has evolved to promote different visual cultures while exploring the boundless potential of creative media. In addition to the annual competition and festival, **ifva** curates a host of programmes under two initiatives, "Cultivation" and "Engagement". By connecting creative communities all over the world, **ifva** aims to engage everyone in the art of creation. **ifva** is also a core event of Entertainment Expo Hong Kong.

The 21st **ifva** Awards is now calling for entry: www.ifva.com/awards

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