

## 22nd ifva Open Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jury Members: Lee Yee (Lee), Yau Nai-hoi (Yau), Linda Chiu-han Lai (Lai), Patrick Suen (Suen),  
Lawrence Lau (Lau)

ifva representatives: Kattie Fan (Fan)

Fan: Today, we have to select the Gold, Silver and one Special Mention winners from the 10 finalists. We can first give simple comments on each of the works in order to let participants know what you think of their works. At the end, we can nominate award winners. If you agree, the first work is *And Afterwards*.

Yau: My opinion is that this is the best work. The script is very good and complete. In terms of production there are some flaws, but its editing manages to express what the author is trying to say. Even though the actors are not professional, every character is well defined. In terms of writing, directing and acting, this work is the most complete.

Lau: I think there are some good parts, but it is not focused, and I feel the work does not really express what the director is trying to say. However, I can gauge the creator's intentions. In terms of acting, the performance is okay. This film is smooth but not too focused.

Suen: I think the actors are good, and the contrast between the secondary school and adult period are distinct. The story is closely tied in with the theme of the work, which is about how one's experiences in secondary school influences one's subsequent life. I can appreciate the creator's intentions, and it is expressed clearly within a smooth story.

Lai: When I was watching the first few finalist works, this film was my first choice. However, having watched all the finalists, my feelings have changed, but I still like this film very much, precisely because it is "loose" and rough around the edges, yet detailed. The juxtaposition between the two different periods and two sets of characters are well thought-out. Even though there are some flaws, for me this is something different from what I watch normally, and gives me room for imagination. I also like this film for another old-fashioned reason, which is that few works reflect on the sense of confusion that recent graduates face when they enter society.

Suen: I think that some of the performance is spontaneous rather than in the script.

Lee: I don't think this is the best film, but at least it is second or third best. The main point is that for an old guy like me, this film lets me experience a young person's world, which I don't see with other works. As a film, it is passionate, and even though it is not the best film, it is among the top three.

Fan: Do you have anything else to add? The next work is *Palace*.

Lai: During the last jury round, I had supported this film. It is a complete work, and one can tell that it has a great deal of resources behind it, which is different from a lot of other local productions. However, I would not hold that against it, because for such a complicated

story, the production is economical, efficient and professional. In terms of story-telling, there is a sense of play that allows for different layers of reading. When discussing this work in the first round, we mentioned that it is well-funded, and that many of the scenes and actors are superior. Many Hong Kong films are like that, but that does not mean they are good. From an award-giving perspective, I tend to support works that have local flavor, whereas this work has high production value but not too much character. In terms of story and execution, this is quite a good work, but it leaves me cold, even though its subject matter is close to us.

Lee: From a “local” perspective, this work is far from us, but the incident is connected to Hong Kong. Even though the story does not take place in Hong Kong but in other places in the world, things are the same.

Suen: The work is complete, but the story looks familiar. There are not many problems with the film. In terms of story and production, it is too predictable. It is a tidy work, and audiences won’t feel there are any problems with it. However, it does not leave much of an impression.

Yau: This is an average work that did not impress me. It is not an original work. It’s a short story written by a Hollywood actor.

Lai: Many films take inspiration from elsewhere. I won’t let that influence me.

Lau: The most interesting aspect is that the victim in the film is not totally a victim, but the filmmaker does not take this idea further. Now it is just a neat work.

Fan: The next film is *310 Tung Chau Street*.

Lee: I don’t understand what the film is trying to say.

Lai: I think this is a clever film. It is close to a narrative documentary, but it plays overly with textbook theories about documentary and drama. Twenty or thirty years ago, this would have been an avant garde film, but now it’s a bit old fashioned. I like the people it is trying to explore, the Vietnamese in Shumshuipo. They do not get much voice in society. However, the part in the film where the male and female lead characters discuss what documentary is, I find that old fashioned, and does not address the core issues.

Lau: The contrast in the film and the Vietnamese people impressed me, but the part where they argue is a bit unnecessary. I’d rather see more about the Vietnamese people. This is not a successful film.

Lee: I don’t think this film has much to do with documentaries.

Lai: It’s a narrative film, not a documentary.

Yau: We have all heard about documentaries about the process of filming. However, this film relies too much on speech to make its point rather than storyline. If the story were told from

the point of view of the Vietnamese, it'd be better. Now the film is nothing new.

Suen: I also like the part about the Vietnamese, but the dialogue is too obvious and over-explains things. For a film about Vietnamese people, it's a good thing. Prior to watching this film, I knew little about the conditions of the Vietnamese, so it had an impact on me.

Fan: The next film is *A Long Ride*.

Lee: I like this film, and feel that it's the best work. The theme is outstanding and it is very independent and creative. It is the best film in terms of the actors and direction.

Lau: The director has very good control and knows what he wants. Of course there are some parts he can't handle, like the actors' performances. In terms of what he wants to say and how to say it, how to use the camera, the director is in full control. The story is simple, but carries emotional weight. His vision is wide and is not content with saying just one thing. He expresses what he wants to say very well.

Lee: The part about the watch and what the grandfather wants to hold on to moved me.

Lai: I also like this work, although it is not my favorite. The work is natural, which is a genre in itself. The real main character is the city, which is expressed through this meandering person. For me, the most valuable aspect is that it portrays certain disappearing aspects of the city. Comparatively, the characters are not as important to me. The structure of the work is clear, and takes us on a journey to see what we don't normally notice in everyday life.

Suen: I also like this work. The characters are naturalistic and the relationship between them quite distinct, and convey a sense of community. This is disappearing now, so it is valuable. The story takes place in To Kwa Wan, which is good. Due to the MTR works, the area is undergoing imminent changes. I appreciate many of the details, like the gold fish and lemon tea, which is well thought out.

Yau: I don't think the characters are very good, but the content is interesting. As a commercial filmmaker, I find parts of the film boring. However, I was touched by it. I like the fact that the film does not overtly advocate preservation. However, the story and characters are not that good.

Lai: From my perspective, I like seeing that middle aged women are not portrayed as abandoned or valueless. This point comes across naturally in the film.

Lee: The city is aging, but its value remains, including the shop and the woman. This theme is conveyed strongly in the film.

Fan: The next film is *Yau King*.

Lai: I think it deserves Special Mention. In terms of production, it's average. When Yau King leaves the world, it is foretold a long time ago. As an ordinary documentary sponsored by

an institution, the purpose of the film is obvious. It deserves a Special Mention because it is rare to see a 100 year-old woman on screen, not to mention taking up much screen time, even though her acting is not good. Many details such as how to choose the right clothes and certain religious taboos make her feel guilty. Such things happen in real life but rarely get written into a screenplay.

Yau: The characters are good.

Lau: The most interesting aspect is that the protagonist wants to die, but can't. I think the director does not capture the essence of the piece. It is not badly made, but as a documentary, it is not good enough.

Suen: As far as I know, the director has relevant background, as in working in the elderly care field. He is familiar with the daily workings of the old age home. Many details are well shot and come naturally. The character is well-chosen and distinctive. The protagonist is over 100 years-old and is still articulate and able to express herself. As an audience member, I like this granny. It also brings up some religious issues. On the whole, I feel like I'm watching a current affairs program.

Yau: I think it's like a promotion film.

Suen: When the title "Tung Wah Hospitals" appears, it affects how I view the arrangements in the film and the characters, and whether they are real or not.

Lai: That's right, that's the most difficult part about making documentaries.

Lee: It does not really address the issue of life and death, but only records this old lady. The director should have more autonomy to make his own decisions.

Lai: About whether he can dig deeper, there is a documentary aesthetics that just tries to stay on the surface, which this work tries to do, but it's not done well. This work has a grammar, and whatever it says, we listen, and what we can do, we remember. However, the director does not really explore the reasons behind it.

Fan: The next work is *Fish in Puddle*.

Lau: Let me talk about this film first, since I am the supervisor for this project. The work's greatest flaw is that the film does not address the background of the story, which is the fact that the three kids are placed with their grandmother.

Lai: I think it's very clear.

Lau: What I mean is the feelings are not clear, and the images and character treatment could be clearer. This is why the film fails to move me.

- Lai: I think this film is better than RTHK dramas. However, the point of view of the film can be sharper. If it was told from the little brother's perspective, he is witness to many things that he can't understand. The director should have made use of that. Secondly is the girl who doesn't talk. Not talking can also be dramatic, and the script neglects her. She doesn't need to have many lines, but the story does not pay a lot of attention to her. If all three characters were equally distinctive, the problems we mentioned would have been reduced.
- Suen: Not too many films talk about children being fostered, whether at ifva or other competitions. I appreciate the director for dealing with this topic. In a family, everyone face their own problems. In terms of narrative, it favors certain things. Perhaps because the granddaughter is a blood relative and is from a normal family, she gets less screen time and becomes a bystander. The relationship between the characters and what happens to them afterwards does not leave much of an impression with me, which is a pity.
- Yau: I think the topic of foster family is interesting, and talks about characters that are not related but live like brothers and sisters. But now the portrayal is too simple and not deep and touching enough. Many scenes are conveyed via montage, which is not moving. However, the director captures the acting well.
- Lee: basically agree. I have nothing to add.
- Fan: The next work is *No coincidence 2*.
- Lee: I don't know what it's trying to achieve.
- Suen: Obviously it tries to do plot twists for their own sake. Just as the script says, it is too much expected, and I feel it is too clichéd.
- Yau: I don't know what the artist is trying to say.
- Lau: The characters need to be designed better. Now it is too unimaginative.
- Lai: I know what the director is trying to do, but I don't think he achieved it. The twists are perfunctory. Secondly, the accusations against the audience and the film industry are a bit overboard.
- Lee: That does not matter, but the accusations have to be relevant.
- Yau: It tries to talk about a bit of everything. The twist at the end is purposeless, and I don't know what the director wants to say.
- Lai: I wonder if the entrant is a scriptwriter. He seems to be very negative about this trade.
- Lee: I don't think he knows how to write scripts. Scriptwriters won't come up with such things.
- Yau: He only writes in a superficial way.

- Fan: The next work is *Conditioned*.
- Lau: This is among my top three. After watching the film, I'm still not sure why the protagonist goes from male to female and back. It doesn't really explain this, but leaves room to the imagination. It is an atmospheric and quite a mature work.
- Suen: The lead actress is very good. The film talks about a local Hong Kong issue, which is the male chauvinism of New Territories villages. At first I wondered why the lead character has to dress up as a boy to go to school, but when the mother with mental problems appears, it all makes sense. In the end when the girl puts on a dress to tell her mother that the father won't come back, the film is complete. The character's self exploration and the emotional ties with the male student are all part of the character's journey of growing up, which is well-depicted.
- Yau: In terms of set-up, this film is the most interesting. Many things are tied in well with the theme. The mother is also a victim, and even boys are bound by the same rules. The acting is very good.
- Lee: The premise of the story, subject matter and acting are good, but the film is dull and not smooth. I have to guess the meaning of many scenes, and am not sure what they are trying to say.
- Yau: The incidents are interesting, but I have my doubts and questions.
- Lee: What is the story trying to convey?
- Lai: I think the ending reveals it. Why make a film like this? You have to face reality.
- Yau: Free yourself from bondage.
- Lai: I quite like this work. This is not a criticism, but just a point of discussion. In the script, if the mother was not mentally disturbed, the story would be more powerful.
- Lee: I agree.
- Lai: Now the problem is too easily solved.
- Yau: If this wasn't the case, the problem could not be solved.
- Lai: But people have different layers. In the real world, some people know but pretend they don't, or they can't face reality. There are many different explanations.
- Lee: This is a question for me too, but the work does not solve this problem.

- Lau: The work is interesting because of this ambiguity. If things are too concrete, the film would be clichéd.
- Lai: I don't want things to be concrete, and like leaving room for imagination. But the mom is too clearly crazy. Of all the characters, this one jumps out, while the rest are naturalistic.
- Fan: The next work is *This is the Man Fu*.
- Lai: This is my favorite work. Period.
- Lau: Even though it is chaotic, the subject matter is good. On the whole, it'd be better if the artist chose to use the documentary form to tell a story. Now I feel that it is too mixed up.
- Suen: I don't know the character before watching the film, and follow her through this work. I know about her, Hon Lo and Granny, and then she goes elsewhere. I thought the film is about a place, and only later realize it's about a person. This made me confused. The subject matter is good, but it didn't form a deep impression. I think the director wants to talk about their own family through this work, but does not quite succeed.
- Yau: I don't know what their focus is.
- Lee: I feel the same. I see a character that does a lot for other villagers, but what is the film about? I don't know.
- Lai: I think I am the only one who feels the film is good, so I ought to explain. When growing up, we are taught to think that a work has to have a clear message, and only consider a work using this one track mind. I don't want to be clichéd and say that this work gives me room for imagination. Rather, it gives me many fragments, within which there are many layers. It is a poetic film about the character and her living conditions and her everyday life. Secondly, through the character we learn about many incidents, like the Umbrella Movement and other social movements. The third layer is the conflict between a husband and wife. This work made me think about real people I have met. The filmmaker is part of this family. I like the fact that this film is like an essay, it takes us back into different events. I support this work because it is bold. It is not focused and unified, and does not have a main narrative line, which for me is not a problem. It is not poetry, essay or documentary. I like works that you cannot categorize, which is rare and surprised me.
- Lau: I cannot see the director's intentions. Is this a deliberate choice, or is it because they don't know how to make films? I don't see the intent.
- Lai: If the director is simply chaotic and achieved this result, that's quite something. The different layers are very clear. Every time, it goes back and talks about something that was mentioned before. I accept this work because it challenges our viewing habits.
- Suen: This is a personal film, like the part at the beginning about the hospital. This made it hard for me to get into the story or like it. I did not get to know the filmmaker's father through

this work as they expected me to. Some parts made me feel uncomfortable. I am okay with the part about social movement. However, the stuff about the hospital made me think that some people like to film everything they can. I am not saying this filmmaker is like that. But it made me think about what my limits are if I were making a film about a person. There are many trivial moments that made it difficult for me to get into the work.

Lai: I feel dethatched, which is a kind of point of view and technique. This film could have been very melodramatic and try to move the audience. This film is not just a documentary, but more like a visual diary. The filmmaker shoots every day and accumulates materials, and edits a work out of available footage. I don't think there is anything missing or incomplete about the work, or that it is inconsistent in its camera technique. Of all the 10 finalist works, this is the only one like that.

Yau: I think the filmmaker is accusing the mother and defending the father, which made me feel uncomfortable.

Fan: The last work is *Angela*.

Lau: The concept is good and production is fine. The acting is average. I don't have any other special feelings about it.

Lee: As a story, it is good and complete, and the meaning behind it is good. It is among my top three choices.

Suen: This film is relevant to the times, and talks about the Umbrella Movement. The story takes place in a launderette, and the abused daughter, bad step-father and crazy mother seems contrived. Acting-wise, the lead character has potential, but I don't have a lot of feelings for this work.

Yau: A more than 10 minute work filmed within one location is hard to do. As for the acting, I appreciate *Fish in Puddle* and *And Afterwards* more. Many elements are contrived, such as the cinematography, lighting and art direction. The director's skill and aesthetics are good, but the film is too contrived. Only on second viewing did I understand what the film is about.

Lee: In the story, many things are left unsaid, but that does not mean it didn't happen. This is the meaning behind the work.

Lai: I don't like films like this, as if the man is teaching the woman how to view the world. But at the end there are changes and twists. I like the artistic treatment, and even though it is contrived, it is forgivable. The director is good at using images to tell a story. I feel like I've watched films like this before. Can this film tone down on the artsy-ness, like the use of music, acting and dialogue? It could have been more casual and less contrived. Artsy has become a genre. The flaw of this film is its artistic posturing, which is unnecessary.



- Suen: The story with the Umbrella Movement background seems realistic, but the step father, the story happening in the middle of the night in a deserted place made it unrealistic.
- Lee: The filmmaker is trying to contrast social and domestic conflict.
- Yau: When watching it the second time, I noticed that the male protagonist is very conceited by admonishing the female character. Everyone has his own story.
- Lee: It is meaningful.
- Yau: The style is good, but seems to be unsuitable to the film. Is it necessary?
- Fan: Perhaps now you can start to nominate the Gold award winner?
- Lee: *A Long Ride*.
- Lau, Suen: I agree that it should go to *A Long Ride*.
- Yau: *And Afterwards*.
- Lai: Me too. My choice of Gold is a film none of you like, so I won't insist.
- Fan: Will you lobby for *And Afterwards*?
- Yau: There are several aspects. The writing, directing and acting are equally good. Within a ten to twenty minute time frame, all the characters are well represented and the theme is clearly expressed. It is well edited.
- Lai: Films involving large groups of people are hard to handle.
- Yau: I don't understand some of the shots in *A Long Ride*. Why use long take? It left me cold.
- Fan: There are three votes for *A Long Ride*. Shall we say it is the Gold award winner?
- Lau: We should discuss what award to give *And Afterwards*.
- Suen: The two films are on par with each other.
- Lee: I agree. *And Afterwards* should get Silver.
- Lau: I agree. I have no problems with that.
- Lai: Are there other works that you like?
- Lau: How about *Conditioned*? Are there anyone opposed to *And Afterwards* getting Silver?

- Yau: Because I am a commercial filmmaker, I feel that *A Long Ride* is a bit boring, so I feel *And Afterwards* is better.
- Suen: I prefer *A Long Ride* because it reflects its time. I also like *And Afterwards*, but I like *A Long Ride* more.
- Yau: Are there not a lot of films like this?
- Lau: The same can be said for *And Afterwards*.
- Lai: Are there examples? I can't come up with any.
- Yau: Many films deal with bullying and marginal youths, but *And Afterwards* takes it to another level, and talks about the reality for young people.
- Lee: I agree that is commendable, but I prefer the theme of old and new in *A Long Ride*.
- Yau: Many films talk about preservation and the changing cityscape.
- Lai: This is a new genre born in the 1990s.
- Lau: By comparison, *A Long Ride* is a more complete and slightly more superior work.
- Lai: Why should "completeness" be the criteria this year? Completeness is a debatable point.
- Lau: Because we are discussing their story-telling abilities, how capable they are at using images to tell stories, the director's ability to control different aspects, and the message of the screenplay. On these points, *A Long Ride* is slightly better.
- Lee: As a viewer, how I look at this film is a factor in my consideration.
- Lai: I have another perspective. Ifva is an interesting platform. It is not like the Fresh Wave or the Hong Kong Film Awards. We should look for films that are rarer and techniques that are seldom seen. I am not sure if *And Afterwards* should get Gold, but we should discuss it. Should we open doors for some works? I would be happy if *A Long Ride* gets Gold. What are we encouraging? This also affects the other awards. Simply because a work is strange should not be a reason for me not to like a work.
- Suen: Speaking personally, I choose *A Long Ride* because it has a certain character. But taking into consideration the spirit of ifva, I agree that *And Afterwards* is more innovative.
- Lau: So you are voting *And Afterwards* for Gold?
- Yau: Many works talk about the contrast between the new and the old, while films that talk about young people's plight move me more. Many films criticize young people, but this one reflects their situations.

- Lee: *And Afterwards* is fragmented. What kind of films would most people accept? Films that are clearer in form, or films that move them? *A Long Ride* talks about the old passing in favor of the new.
- Suen: Most people would like *A Long Ride*, but I don't agree that *And Afterwards* is fragmented. The story is clear, and the film may resonate with young people.
- Lee: It does not matter which film gets Gold or Silver.
- Lai: Who is the audience? We are part of the audience. Have these two films received other awards?
- Lee: This should not be part of the consideration. We should focus on the works. Would we be uncomfortable with the films? If not, then it's ok.
- Suen: I feel for *A Long Ride* more, but after considering the spirit of ifva, I think *And Afterwards* should get Gold.
- Fan: So *And Afterwards* gets Gold, and *A Long Ride* gets Silver. Any objections? How about Special Mention?
- Lai: Can it go to a documentary or similar work?
- Lee: *Angela*.
- Yau: The director deserves commendation. Are all the works from Fresh Wave?
- Lee: We should not be concerned about that.
- Lai: Should we follow the Fresh Wave?
- Fan: If a work is good, we should not be concerned whether it has won other awards. We should focus on the works themselves.
- Yau: Are there other works worthy of Special Mention?
- Lai: Yau King can be a contender. A film need not be complete and understandable.
- Lee: It is too much like a current affairs program.
- Lai: We can discuss that.
- Suen: *Fish in Puddle* talks about a foster family, which is rare in Hong Kong and deserves to be recognized. Not many people in Hong Kong care about this issue.

- Lai: For the record, I choose *This is the Man Fu*. The result does not matter.
- Lee: If the award goes to *Angela* and *Fish in Puddle*, would anyone object? *Angela* has a good story, and if it doesn't get an award, would it be a pity? The writing, acting and directing are exquisite and carefully handled.
- Lai: This is the reason I did not choose it. Even though I like *Angela*, it is too artsy, and that's why I didn't choose it.
- Suen: I am just so-so about this film, because I find it too contrived. I choose *Fish in Puddle* because I have not encountered this kind of subject matter.
- Yau: If we honoured *Angela*, it'd be because of its technique. There are too many works about the Umbrella Movement. We should recognize *Fish in Puddle* for its subject matter.
- Suen: The granny is like a bystander and is so natural. The theme is good and impressive.
- Lau: I like *Conditioned* better.
- Lai: Can we have more than one Special Mention? How about two?
- Fan: *Fish in Puddle* has two votes. *Conditioned*, *This is the Man Fu* and *Angela* each got one vote.
- Lee: Then let it be *Fish in Puddle*.
- Lau: I don't object.
- Lai: I don't like settling it this way. We should state the reason why we are recognizing the work. That's the most important thing.
- Lee: The reason for supporting *Fish in Puddle* had already been stated clearly.
- Lau: *Conditioned* talks about gender conditioning without being very explicit. The theme of traditional family influences can be expressed in many ways. I think the expression in this film is moving.
- Lai: I have more feelings for *Conditioned* than *Angela*. Can we have two Special Mentions to recognize two different qualities?
- Yau: What is different about them?
- Linda: The stories.
- Yau: That's right. I also like *Conditioned*.

Fan: So *Fish in Puddle* and *Conditioned* for Special Mention?

Lau: I agree.

Suen: I agree with having two Special Mentions.

Lai: I agree. Too bad there are no documentaries getting awards.

Lee: I agree.

### Open Category Award Winners

#### **Gold Award**

*And Afterwards*

Law Sin-yan

#### **Silver Award**

*A Long Ride*

Ng Chun

#### **Special Mention**

*Fish in Puddle*

Wong Suk-nga

#### *Conditioned*

Chan Kam-hei