

The 21st ifva Animation Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jury Members: Lo Che-ying (Lo), Lam Kee-to (Lam), Yu Ka-ho (Yu)

Absent: Denis Yeung, Welby Chung

ifva representative: Kattie Fan (Fan), Szeto Chung Yan (Szeto)

(Note: Chung had viewed all the finalist works on the day prior to the jury meeting.)

Fan: Today, our task is to select the Gold Award winner, who will get \$50,000 in cash, prizes and a trophy, one Silver Award winner, who will get \$30,000 in cash, prizes and a trophy, one Special Mention winner, who will get a certificate. We can discuss all the finalist works and then nominate the winners. Welby Chung has already seen the finalist works and chosen the award winner and left comments, which we will convey to you in due course. First of all, what is your view on *Shear Marks*?

Lo: We can make general comments about each of the works.

Lam: I agree.

Lo: *Shear Marks* is a relatively traditional animation. For a young artist, this presents a big challenge. We can see that he has a firm grasp of technique. This work is hard to do. It is about sentiments and focuses on two main characters. Acting is important. The visual technique is unusual, and not like the Japanese style we're used to, but the feelings are similar. The sense of nostalgia is there, but the characters lack a certain humanity. The artist wants to give the work a contemporary feel, but the number of scenes and characters are not enough, and the story just focuses on the two main characters. The treatment in certain scenes is good. There is a lot of dialogue, but in some scenes there is not enough while in others, there is too much. This is the fault of the director, but in fact, this is a difficult film to make. If it had live actors, perhaps they could convey the necessary feelings, but for an animation, the director needs to handle more aspects and their task is more difficult. Perhaps if they could find two talented young actors to play the role, this could be a touching film. For an animation, this is quite a challenge. Now it's not a complete success, but the artist had achieved something.

Lam: When watching these works a second time, three works stood out for me, and *Shear Marks* is one of them. This is a dramatic film, and the plot progression is important. I think they manage to convey the story. The sense of nostalgia is there and the story is complete. The pacing is good, although the ending is rushed. I was touched by the scene happening several years later. The work has many details that makes it more moving on the big screen. It uses dramatic means to talk about the end of an era. It is the collective memory of Hong Kong, with public housing estates, rain storms and mudslides. For Hong Kong audiences, the feeling is even stronger. However, the visuals are not strong, and younger audiences may not understand fully. There are not a lot of people working on this production, so this is quite an achievement. Nowadays most animation works are just viewed on the television or computer screen in the production stage, and artists neglect the big screen experience. If the creator of *Shear Marks* saw this work on the big screen, they may feel there is a lot of

room for improvement. One of the regrettable things is that even though the work emphasizes light and there is detailed lighting treatment of the characters, the characters have no shadows. I think this is because the artist only saw the work on the small screen and neglected this part. The story is solid and talks about the passing of an era, and is about sentiments and memories, which is attractive to me. The treatment of eyes is also problematic, at the beginning the black irises are pretty, but then it switched to green. I don't understand why they did that, I think it's a flaw. It stands out because some dramatic elements are treated well, like the use of lamp-posts to reflect the changing of times, which coincides with the characters' growing up. However the main character's childhood friend stops growing, which becomes a dramatic effect. For **ifva**, the technical competence is important, but the message behind it is even more crucial. The impact of *Shear Marks* is strong, and that's why it is one of my top three choices.

Yu: I agree with both Lo and Lam. The story is solid, but the artist is limited by their technical capabilities. Their 3D capabilities limit the characterization in this film. I have seen previous works by one of the films creators, Ng Kai Chung, and know that he has the ability to handle the rhythm and expression of characters. But in this 3D work, I see that he faces a lot of limitations. For example, when the mother apologizes, her hands are out of control. It is obvious that the creator wants to do something but has limitations.

Lo: In addition to acting, when the main character throws the soda to the old man, the action is strange. His arm joints are not coordinated. It's not that it is like this throughout. Some scenes are okay.

Lam: This is a matter of technical abilities and the time limitations.

Lo: This work is a challenge. This kind of 3D work is rare. Some parts are not realistic. It is difficult to do well. For example, the side view of characters is thick and heavy, the shape changes and the mouth is strange. From what I know, the artist knew about these problems and attempted to fix things. This version is the best one so far.

Lam: Some scenes that capture the children's mood are done well. For animators, one of their partners is computers. If they know about the problems, they could have done better. Even simple programming depends on how it is used. On the whole this work has flaws. The technology at their disposal can only take them so far within their time limitations, so these problems appear. When watching it, audiences know that this work has limitations, but they don't mind. **ifva** should emphasize what the artists want to express and emphasize.

Yu: The way I feel about technique is whatever tools you use, there are limitations, even with pencils. I look at how the artist adapts to these tools, and whether they can find a way out and not become limited by these tools. For this work, I feel that they have not transcended these limitations, but are bound by them.

Lam: You may deduct points for this.

Fan: The next work is *Bluebeard's Castle*.

- Lo: This work is visually attractive, and uses a lot of Japanese artistic images, and is obviously a collage. Even though it is something we've seen a lot before, the artist's treatment makes it attractive. The visual effects are good and the characters are simple and effective and the treatment is fine. However the length of the work makes it less detailed than I would like. It's only a few minutes long, and goes by in a flash. What the artist wants to say is there. There may be a lot of messages hidden behind the work, but for its short duration, it feels complete. The important thing is that it is effective. If it can be more detailed, then it'd be even better, especially for the climactic scene at the end where the character is afraid. Now the scene seems to be too brief.
- Lam: The artist knows what they want to express, and uses just three minutes to express what they think about the Bluebeard story. The good thing about it is the visual style. The topic is expressed well. But there are many elements in the Bluebeard story that the artist leaves out. For a three-minute short, the artist filters the Bluebeard story according to their own interpretation. For example, the three wives that are killed are shown through kimonos, and together with Bluebeard himself, they form the four seasons. I am not sure if this is their own concept or if they took it from other sources, because the story of Bluebeard had been retold many times. Even if they took the concept from other sources, it's okay. Now the characters' clothing becomes an important dramatic element, which is well expressed. The lead character's wife is blood red and the color of autumn. The wives are like collector's item for the castle owner, which is interesting. However, Bluebeard is too much like an image, and is just used as a tool by the artist, and his intentions should be the main point of the story. The artist simply presents this concept in 3 minutes without going more deeply into it. They have done well, and when I saw it in the first round, I immediately felt that it deserves to be among the finalist. But for awards, this work is too small in scale. The spatial treatment is strong, and the plot-point with the opening of the lock is meaningful. The death scene at the end is short and sweet. It takes the original story and adds dramatic elements, like the use of kimonos, which represents certain identity when worn by people. Among the ten works, this one is small in scale.
- Yu: I have not read the original Bluebeard story, and looks at this from someone who doesn't know the story, and I have a lot of questions. The ending seems abrupt to me. The main character discovers three dead wives in the room, but why does he become a demon? I don't understand the psychological transformation. Bluebeard appears too simple and weak, and I don't understand the princess' motivations.
- Lam: That is a key point.
- Fan: How about *Dancing Eye*?
- Lo: The concept of *Dancing Eye* is interesting, but I don't understand how the different elements are put together. The movements of the gymnast and the transparent glass are good, and the main theme is expressed well. However the film is fragmented. You can understand it as a story about a child who is lost in his own world, which can easily be destroyed, and only children can know about and understand this world. This is a lively world full of music. When the child gets a pair of glasses, this world is lost. This simple

concept is expressed well. For a 3D world, some of the details are distinctive and different from the usual works we see. Perhaps it is its treatment of light and shadow and texture. The whole film has a special look to it, but some parts are strange. It is unique and personal, and not everyone may understand it. For me, I am ambivalent, but I can see that the artist has put in a lot of effort.

Lam: A common thread among the works this year is that the artists want to express the themes of their works in a visual way. *Dancing Eye* is one such work. I think the artist does not want to be too orderly. If you try to figure out the logic behind it, you'd be lost in a maze. The artist does not want to explain too much and just express themselves clearly which I think is a good point. Within this 6-minute work, the artist expresses what they feel about visual memories in childhood, which may not be something you can understand. From the little girl's perspective, her vision is not three-dimensional and distances between objects are not distinguished. Her perception of space is not real, but has a fantastical texture. The artist emphasizes the sounds associated with touch, and this is especially apparent on the big screen. The sounds of cloth and metal are expressed in detail, and the artist tries to convey a new sense of texture. The little girl wants to create a pet, a visual teddy bear which comes out of her memory and delights her. This worries her family and the glass breaks, which seems to suggest that she has super-powers and her vision is advanced. You can interpret it this way, even though this may not be the artist's intentions. Then her family feels that there is some problem with her eyes and takes her to get glasses. When she puts on the glasses, the little girl feels that she has lost her special sense, and becomes sad. When she cries, you feel that the story is over, and she grows up. The details in the film are quite good, which gives the film flavor when you view it a second time. However, what it tries to express is too personal and individualistic. It is a good work, but not among my top three.

Yu: This is the third or fourth time I've seen it. Watching it on the big screen, I noticed things I hadn't before. For example, the scene where the glass breaks, I had not noticed the background sound, but this time, I heard the sound of the parents quarreling. Now the scene can be seen as the girl is having a temper tantrum. Interpreted this way, I feel that this work is not just nostalgic, but is on another level. It uses the child's perspective to criticize the adult world.

Lam: This is a fun work, and reminds me of two mainstream films, the Japanese cartoon *The Anthem of the Heart* and the surveillance in *The 5th Wave*. The artist expresses this theme, and it's clear that they have something to say, but doesn't know how to get it across, because they feel that once they said it, it would destroy everything. This is the way young people look at the world.

Yu: On a technical level, I agree with Lo's views. Some parts are strange. I'm not sure if it's a technical problem or art direction. Everything is pink, but that crystal figure does not match this pink world.

Lam: This work emphasizes that the child's perspective is crystal clear.

Szeto: Chung's view of this work is that it can be Special Mention. On the whole the story is

smooth, but the lines in the child's world are stiff. Also the gymnast doll is pretty, and its action and details are fine. But the work is too tidy in all respects, and lacks the independent spirit and creativity that **ifva** emphasizes. Among the ten works, this one impressed him the most, although it does not quite deserve the Gold and Silver awards, and he recommends it for Special Mention.

Fan: *Eye'm Free*.

Lo: *Eye'm Free* is quite interesting, and the art direction is unique, and so is the modeling, lines, color, action and storytelling. It is very personal and other people may not readily understand. The work is long and the content is rich, but reading its synopsis, I cannot get what it is trying to say at all. This film is worth re-visiting so as to appreciate its details. As an independent animation, this is quite a personal work, and has to do with the artist's thoughts on the telephone world and interaction. I think this is an interesting work, and is a modern view of the world. I would need to watch it a few more times to fully appreciate it. After the first viewing, I thought it is interesting and some scenes are inspired, though I was not really touched. The tone of the work is distant, and many parts are fragmented. Also there are many mis-written words, and even though this is a small problem, it affects my viewing experience, and makes me think the work is careless.

Lam: At the press conference, I talked to *Eye'm Free*'s director, and discovered that this is their first film, and they are unfamiliar with animation techniques, which shows up with this film. The technique of expression is simple and unrefined and there are a lot of inadequacies. On first viewing, I quite liked it. The story is simple and expressed in terms of psychology. It is about the future and ways of seeing things, and the layered message is expressed well. In common with *Shear Marks*, there are dramatic elements about childhood. The first part focuses on the boy, while the girl becomes more important later. In both works, the girl serves as the creative muse. The best part about this work is that it is expressed visually. People in the future rely on machines and glasses. At the beginning one of the main character's eyes are damaged, and he becomes disabled. The girl uses aerial camera to help him get a new eye. The new eye is capable of seeing many things, which takes the main character out of his usual world. There are two levels, one is a changed perspective that is not the same as his usual self, the other is the difference between looking and seeing. Look is just viewing, while seeing is understanding. The artist does not fully express their ideas, but attempts to use dramatic means of conveying their message. They have not found the answer, but for a first work, this is normal. The thing that attracts me to this work is that it uses a limited means to record the times as the artist sees it. It is fragmented, and just like *Shear Marks*, it is about friendship and innocent sentiments, a bit like puppy love. In this respect it is stronger than *Shear Marks*. The most valuable aspect of the work is that the artist uses contemporary perspectives to express their ideas. This is a very personal work, and is among my top three.

Yu: I think its storytelling is sloppy.

Lam: It has to do with ability.

- Yu: That's right. It's a matter of ability. For example, there is a scene where the boy is lying on the grass, and the girl suddenly produces an eye out of nowhere.
- Lo: Anything goes.
- Yu: Many scenes are forced. The artist puts in whatever idea comes to mind without considering how to set it up. The interesting thing is that they are sensitive in their observation of the relationship between the environment, human beings and technology, but they are a little bit naive. The modern view of the world is virtual and internal. The aerial shots suggest escaping from one's environment, but you have to rely on technology as means. Their artist statement sums up the work's central themes. Does the girl embody the message they want to convey? In one scene, the lens flies in and out. What is the meaning of that? The story is layered with meaning that can be decoded, but the storyline is sloppy.
- Fan: *eve*?
- Lo: The idea is good, and I don't know if the story is original. It is about a cicada and squirrel. From the synopsis the story is worth developing, but unfortunately, many elements are not actualized. First, there is no story and just two characters, and the drama comes only from the two characters and their actions, but the effect is not strong enough, and the audience does not understand what they are doing and why they do it. On the whole, the art direction is consistent and in the style of illustrations. Even though the drawing is simple, its mood is good. However the cicada looks like a frog. The art direction is interesting. If you don't delve into the story, you can see this is a children book illustration style of animation. The story could have been more touching, but right now it is not expressed well.
- Lam: What does the name *eve* refer to?
- Lo: It is used in the sense of thing that happens on the day before, but if you don't read the synopsis, the images are not constructed well. I really thought the cicada was a frog, and his voice is not that of a cicada. It is interesting in that it is a stylized treatment, but most people won't get that it is a cicada and therefore won't be able to understand the story. They just see several creatures.
- Lam: I think this work is suitable for viewing on a mobile phone, and is slightly inadequate for viewing on the big screen. When viewed on a mobile phone, the squirrel is quite cute, but on the big screen, the visual details are flat. Also I discovered on the big screen that the squirrel is the main character, while the cicada represents the memory of the forest in winter. The story is told from the squirrel's perspective and he feels he has to protect the cicada. Finding the warmth of friendship is the main theme of the film. After one minute, you feel that the film is short and condensed, but at six minutes in length, it lacks content. The relationship between the squirrel and cicada is interesting. The crow appears several times, and functions only as a villain. In winter, memories are reawakened, and they find warmth in friendship. However the final scene goes overboard. The film has worth-while concept, and if it can be developed at a later date, it would make a moving film. Now the film merely

scratches the surface of the main themes. The work uses animation well, but compared with other films, it is just a minor work.

Yu: If you freeze frame the film, each frame is pretty, but on the whole, the rhythm is too rushed. It seems that the artist had not considered the overall effect during the production stage. They focus their energies on certain shots, and then go on to the next one, until the whole film is completed and they splice the film together, without considering how to tell the story. I watched the film three times, and still did not understand what the role of the cicada is in different parts. Many works from animation masters are like this, but the overall impression is different. I feel the artist does not know what they are doing, and the overall result lacks cohesion. It is hard for the audience to get into it and discover things for themselves.

Szeto: This is one of Chung's favorite work. According to **ifva** criteria, he feels that this film displays a high sense of independent spirit. Technically the treatment is not complete and flawed, and there are jump-frames. However the treatment of animals is smooth. One of the most memorable part is the depiction of the crow looking down from its perspective, which is rarely seen. Even though the work is not mature, it displays independent spirit in accordance with **ifva**'s requirements. So this is his top choice.

Fan: ***Mur Mur?***

Lo: The film is too short. The concept is there, but that's it. It lacks a punch line that moves the audience. Perhaps because it chooses a detached perspective, the audience is not touched.

Lam: Compared with *eve*, this is better. This year there are many works about parting and death, which are mostly narrative films that uses dramatic means to express this theme. This work relies on atmosphere and depicts the emptiness and quietness after attending a funeral, and uses a fly to express this feeling. The work emphasizes the texture of oil painting, and the grayish white tones make the brush strokes apparent, which gives it a human touch. It accurately reflects the mood after attending a funeral. Even though the work is short, it manages to express this theme. As a work, the technique is good, although it is on a small scale. It shows that local artists are capable of having their own points of view and expressing them. This reflects a good creative atmosphere, and that's the reason why I selected it as one of the finalists. This can be a Special Mention. Not just longer works can win awards. As long as the concept and execution is good, the length is not important.

Yu: I like this work very much, perhaps because it moves me, on account of my personal experience. It's a personal thing. My feelings about funerals are deep, because my mother passed away several years ago. I think the work expresses the feeling of sadness and at the same time being unable to cry. It uses the sound of two mosquitoes buzzing to express this feeling, which is unique and rarely seen. From the perspective of traditional animation, the work does not have many techniques, but the artist uses interesting visual language to express themselves, which makes it out of the ordinary.

- Lo: The concept is good, and the combination of funeral and mosquitoes clearly expresses what the artist wants to say. But as an animation, the work is inadequate. If this was not an animation but simply two pictures, one of the funeral and one of mosquitoes, the concept could have been brought out. As an animation, the sound of mosquitoes is important, but this effect can also be done with a picture book. So I think the artist could have used the medium of animation in a more effective way.
- Yu: I agree. As just a visual work, it is outstanding. But how should we evaluate it as animation?
- Lam: The effect and atmosphere is good, and reminds me of Polanski's *Repulsion*, at the end of which the police enters the apartment, and the space is quiet except for the buzzing of flies and the dead rabbit behind the television. Of course, that film is a classic, and the impact is great. This work conveys a similar feeling. If he had seen this work, he may have copied this idea, but if he had not, then at least he should know that people before him had dealt with similar ideas. Artists could take from classic films and develop their ideas in a stronger way. I like this work too.
- Yu: You feel this work is clichéd?
- Lam: It is simplistic. The creator of *Eye'm Free* is not technically proficient, but is able to express their feelings directly without too many considerations. But that is also their flaw.
- Fan: The creator of *Mur Mur* is a visual artist. The creator of the next work, *Red Egg* is a performance artist.
- Lo: As sand painting, it is good, but as animation, it is inadequate. The artist fails to handle storytelling rhythm and means in a proper way. For sand animation, morphing is an interesting element, but here the morphing is not thorough. There are too many messages condensed within the frames, and there is no room for reflection, which is a waste. There are many pictures, but they pass by so quickly and the audience does not have time to fully appreciate the emotional content of each picture. It needs to be at least twice as long. Even though the messages are quite direct, the film is about life, so there should be some room for thought. Some parts could even be repeated so that the audience can see them more clearly and form a deeper impression.
- Lam: The visual effects of *Red Egg* are extraordinary, and watching it on the big screen, I am able to appreciate its many details. In the first round, this is one of my three favorites, but after seeing it again, I have changed my mind because the work cannot bear repeated viewing. At first I marveled at the technique and what the artist wants to express. I mentioned that the artist's view of Hong Kong is contemporary. When evaluating a work, I look at whether its elements are adequate, and timing is also important. Watching it a second time, I see that the concept of the red egg and the transition to red ribbons and memory of an era are expressed well. In addition to the visual expression, I also pay attention to the timing. This artist is good at visual expression, and the details convey strong feelings. The music helps a lot, but it does not quite match the visuals. I am still deliberating in my mind. Technically it is good, but whether it bears repeated viewing is also important.

- Yu: The nice thing about sand painting is the transition between images, which sets up the audience's expectation and anticipation. However, this work has not realized this, which is a waste. The pictures are pretty, but with morphing, it would be even better. It uses traditional animation techniques, but falls short of the standards of traditional animation such as pacing and rhythm.
- Lo: Because it is time-consuming to do. Undeniably, the work has many details and the lines are fine, but sand animation does not emphasize detailed treatment. Of course it's good that the artist is able to be detailed, but they should keep the lines and do morphing. Now it is no different from sand painting and merely captures such painting. The best sand painting used to have simple shapes because complicated shapes take too much time to do. However this is not important. The important thing is how to use this type of movement to create visual effects, which does not have to be complicated. Sometimes just changing the camera angles is interesting enough. The good thing about sand is that even if you drop it willy-nilly, it creates unexpected texture, and you don't need to be too refined. Sand does not require detailed treatment.
- Yu: It's a pity that the work fails to deliver the special quality of sand animation.
- Szeto: Chung thinks that the story is clichéd. He expects to see more transformations on the big screen, but failed to find any, so he deducted marks off it.
- Fan: *The Third Hand?*
- Lo: *The Third Hand* is a small, simple and compact work. Over 90% of the effort put into it is effective. Of course I question why it's like this, but purely as a short film, it offers an easy-to-understand story. The whole film is composed of action with no dialogue, but the story is clear. The action of the basketball is effective, and the treatment of the strange hand is fresh. There is a sense of speed that, when combined with music, is interesting. It leaves an impression upon initial viewing, and is easy on the eyes. It is not deep, but entertaining, and the art direction is unique.
- Yu: The best thing about it is not the content, but rather the imagination: if I had an extra hand, what would I do with it on the basketball court? This premise is fun. As Lo said, it communicates its idea well, and the treatment of action is strong. But my feeling is that it is promoting the use of drugs, which is problematic. I could see *The Third Hand* as an auteur work. When viewing it a second time, I feel that the action of basketball playing is detailed. The strength of this director is in their treatment of action, which they express well. They must have referenced a lot of other works. This film shows that independent animators are equipped with a high level of technical skills.
- Yu: I agree with what Chung said in his comments, which is that the work is very complete. In the last scene, everyone has a third hand, so is it promoting something immoral? I don't think so. The director is posing exactly this question in the work. It also made me think about society nowadays, and criticisms about cronyism. I felt I gained something after watching this film, even though I doubt whether this is intended by the artist. When they

introduced the work, they did not seem to have put too much thought into it. For them, it is simply a fun film.

Lam: What did Chung say?

Szeto: He likes the work, but feels that among the finalists, this one is more commercial and less independent. It is not that this is not a good work, but according to the criteria of this competition, it does not deserve an award.

Fan: *Fishy*.

Lo: I like its mood, which is good. On a technical level, the world of paper folds is beautiful. Unfortunately, the story-telling is not good, and should have been better. It is not a matter of the work's duration, but rather its overall treatment. Right now there is only a little bit of what the artist wants to say, and they need to digest the subject matter better. The most serious issue is that there is no dialogue, but the theme is complex and requires more detailed treatment. There is insufficient description of the main character's psychology. The time-lapse is half-baked and is not effective because only a few minutes had passed and we cannot see much change. There is nothing wrong with the subject matter, but the artist needs to develop the story with more details. The relationship between human beings and fish can be fleshed out more. I really like the art direction, which is beautiful and textured, and the modeling is interesting. However, it is easy to confuse the characters, and they do not leave much of an impression.

Lam: After watching it on the big screen, I raised the marks for this film. I looked at the storyboard when the film was still in production, and found the story lacking then. The texture of paper is interesting even on the TV screen. When paper gets in contact with water, it should break apart, but this treatment adds another visual imagining. The grayish white color matches that world, and upon second viewing this feeling is even stronger. Using the world of paper to depict fish is advantageous. Mainstream films would often mix in many different elements, but *Fishy* is simply about the head of a family of fish who becomes a human being and faces life as a laborer. Even though the film is simple, its ideas are well expressed. This is apparent on the storyboard, and now that the film is made, the message is even more interesting. Fish laborer and life has dramatic tension, which touches on life and responsibility. The visual treatment is clever.

Yu: This work's artistic style carries forward the artist's previous works, and theme is similar, which is about the helplessness of life. I agree with Lo that some parts are confusing and you don't know what the artist is trying to say. One of the problems is that the characters look too similar, and you can't tell which the main character is. The effect and texture of paper is pretty, and the art direction is good. But I can't tell what the significance of paper is.

Lo: That's right, I agree. Some parts are not expressed clearly enough because of the use of paper. For example, when the character is working at the sushi restaurant, there are shots of fish bones, but paper fails to adequately represent the shape of fish bones, which affects

the impact of the scene. There is a big contrast between fish and the eating of fish, and the use of paper cannot show things like blood, which is a waste. This is a matter of choice. Why use paper?

Yu: Is it because it is trendy?

Lam: I think that's probably the intention.

Lo: Many scenes fail to touch the audience and we don't know what the artist is trying to say. Even if we have the synopsis in front of us, we still don't know what each shot is about.

Szeto: Chung appreciates the creativity of the artists and admires their ways of expression, because it takes a lot of time and effort. However the story is too weak and it is hard to understand what it is about, so the entertainment value is low. He got lost in the middle and did not understand what the story is trying to say.

Lo: The middle part is a bit confused.

Szeto: But Chung appreciates their effort, and thinks that the work can be a Special Mention.

Fan: The last work is *Behind the Schoolbag*.

Lo: Among the ten finalists, there is a lot of variety, and in terms of animation production, this year has seen a good crop of films. To a certain extent, all the works succeed in part in what they set out to do, but on the whole they all lack something. Sometimes it is problems with the story, other times it is technical or other issues. *Behind the Schoolbag* is rare in that it strikes a balance. The subject matter is unique, and its director does their job and is effective. The use of dialogue is appropriate and the art direction is distinctive. On the whole this is a high level work.

Lam: Watching it a second time, I appreciate how the character forms the desire to kill after being bullied, which is chilling. The dramatic treatment is strong. The most attractive aspect of the film is that it talks about a current social phenomenon. The subject matter is good, but it stays within the confines of drama, and the solution is simply a kind of symbolism. "Being happy" does not really solve the problem. This work is contemporary, and we can discuss it, but is it the best? I think it lacks completeness. With regards to the one being bullied, the guy wearing glasses, the treatment of the schoolbag and the visual treatment has greater impact than what live action can achieve, and utilizes the power of animation. This is one of the works I highlighted, but I have not given it the top place.

Yu: This is my favorite film, and many aspects are well executed. For example in the scene where the character is being beaten by the buff guy on the MTR, the director uses the train door, which is brilliant. The dialogue is also good.

Lo: If it was live action, the scene would have been awkward. With this kind of dialogue and modeling, the scene is funny, and this is what animation is about. It uses animation's art

direction to express something in a conceptual way, thus sparking audience's imagination in a convincing way. Even though there is not a lot of dialogue, it works.

Yu: Dialogue helped this work a lot, and reduced the artist's effort.

Szeto: This is Chung's favorite. As a viewer, one feels for the main character, especially in the scene where he is being beaten on the MTR, he pulls out a plastic knife, which is anticlimactic because it is out of his expectation. However, there are too many static scenes, but for this kind of work, there should be more action, and there is insufficient psychological expression. Chung has high expectations of this director and thinks that he could have done more. So he recommends him for Silver Award rather than Gold.

Lo: I think the work is just right with the use of static scenes, which gives the audience room to breathe.

Fan: Many of the entrants in **ifva** this year are students or first timers, while some are more experienced. It is like Open Category and Youth Category, which you may wish to take into consideration.

Lo: My nomination for Gold is *Behind the Schoolbag*, Silver is *Shear Marks*, Special Mention is *Eye'm Free* or *Dancing Eye*.

Lam: Gold for *Shear Marks*, Silver for *Eye'm Free*, Special Mention for *Dancing Eye*.

Yu: Gold for *Behind the Schoolbag*, Silver for *Shear Marks* or *Fishy*, Special Mention for *Mur Mur*.

Fan: There are no nominations for *The Third Hand*, *Red Egg* and *Bluebeard's Castle*. Chung chose *eve*. Let's decide the Gold first. Lam chose *Shear Marks*, Lo and Yu chose *Behind the Schoolbag*, Chung chose *eve*.

Lo: All ten finalists achieved **ifva**'s requirements. We have different points of view, but they are not in conflict. I have high expectations for the Gold winner, which is that it bears repeated viewing and stands up after watching three or four times. With some works, watching once is enough. *Shear Marks* does not stand up as well as *Behind the Schoolbag*.

Lam: *Shear Marks* is an optimistic work, while *Behind the Schoolbag* is dark. I really like *Eye'm Free*, but it does not deserve Gold, but I hope it can get Silver, because it is strongly independent. *Shear Marks* is not just independent for independent's sake and its story is simple and easy to understand. But on the big screen, the character's lack of shadows takes away from its completeness. The director uses some simplified characters. They used simple resources to make this film and achieved their aims, so it deserves recognition.

Lo: *Shear Marks* is an ambitious work, and is a difficult animation to make. Yet it is limited by technology. Comparatively, *Behind the Schoolbag* uses simple lines and is effective.

- Lam: I should add that *Behind the Schoolbag* is more international. With *Shear Marks*, even if the audience is not from Hong Kong, they would still be interested in the Shek Kip Mei housing estate, which represents Hong Kong's visual memories. The Autumn Moon festival scene with the convenience store gives it an added layer of meaning. International audiences will appreciate its local Hong Kong flavor. As for completeness, *Behind the Schoolbag* is superior.
- Fan: For Silver award nomination, Lo and Yu chose *Shear Marks*, Lam chose *Eye'm Free*, Chung chose *Behind the Schoolbag*, and Yu also picked *Fishy*.
- Lo: So the Gold is a toss-up between *Shear Marks* and *Behind the Schoolbag*. *Shear Marks* lacks human touch, and the atmosphere is stagey. It just focuses on two kids, and they lack interaction with their environment. There ought to be more characters, but I heard because of technical issues, this was not achieved and they gave up. Comparatively speaking, *Behind the Schoolbag* is more minimal, clever and effective.
- Lam: I am not opposed to *Behind the Schoolbag* getting Gold. If so, I would like *Eye'm Free* to get Silver. The most important issue is that this is a work by a single artist and represents their expression, so I treasure it because it differs from mainstream values. It uses a subjective way of expression, and conveys its subject matter well. *Shear Marks* and *Behind the Schoolbag* are done by professional animators, while *Eye'm Free* starts with an idea and is more independent. Hong Kong has many such works, and Youth category entrants just tell simple stories using their limited knowledge of cinema.
- Yu: I am swayed by Lam. If we use subjective viewpoint, independent and experimental spirit, which is rare in animation, as criteria, then *Mur Mur* and *Eye'm Free* are superior.
- Fan: As far as **ifva** is concerned, we emphasize different qualities every year. In recent years, Animation category rarely mentions unique vision and experimental spirit, so you may wish to consider these.
- Lo: *Eye'm Free* is unique in terms of its color and modeling, but on the whole it is very personal and some parts don't work. For awards, simply having a deep subject matter is not sufficient. It just manages to convey the subject matter and is interesting. With *Mur Mur* I don't see how the work can be further developed. The production team is too small, and it's hard to say what they set out to do. The team is just made up of people who graduated from college two or three years ago and barely fulfill their requirement. One should just consider the quality of the work. *Shear Marks* can be seen as a commercial work, and the story is clichéd yet contains many new attempts by the artist, so it is very independent. The latest generation of artists all grew up watching commercial films, and are inevitably influenced by them. It's best to consider the quality of the works.
- Lam: Many works are left out. I also like *Mur Mur*, but I find it too short. What can we do in this situation? Take a vote?
- Yu: Lo, why did you not pick *Fishy*? You had praised it, so I'd like to know why.

- Lo: Among the three works (*Fishy*, *Shear Marks* and *Behind the Schoolbag*), *Fishy* lost the most marks because it doesn't tell its story well. It could have done better, which is a pity. *Fishy* only achieved 60% of what it set out to do, while with *Shear Marks* it's 80% and *Behind the Schoolbag*, 90%.
- Fan: So let's take a vote to determine the Gold Award. How many people vote for *Behind the Schoolbag*? (Yu and Lo raise their hands). So the Gold Award goes to *Behind the Schoolbag*. Nominations for Silver include *Fishy*, *Shear Marks* and *Eye'm Free*.
- Lam: My view is unchanged. I think Silver should go to *Eye'm Free*.
- Yu: *Shear Marks* is more highly praised.
- Lo: Awards can mean many things, *Shear Marks* takes a traditional subject matter and is ambitious in trying to achieve it. Compared with an experimental subject, this is more of a challenge, and deserves encouragement.
- Lam: So it's two against one? Are you still considering?
- Yu: I am leaning towards *Shear Marks*.
- Fan: So the Silver goes to *Shear Marks*. How about Special Mention?
- Yu: I agree with Lo. *Fishy* is technically accomplished, but *Shear Marks* is more passionate.
- Fan: How about Special Mention?
- Lo: I don't mind *Eye'm Free* getting it. I hope the artist does more in the future.
- Lam: *Eye'm Free* missed out on Silver, so I hope it gets Special Mention.
- Lo: Ka Ho? Can we have two Special Mentions?
- Lam: If there were two, I choose *Eye'm Free* and *Mur Mur*. *Dancing Eye* is hampered by technology. **ifva** should encourage independent spirit.
- Lo: I agree.
- Yu: Let's have two.
- Fan: Okay, so *Eye'm Free* and *Mur Mur* get Special Mention.

Animation Category

Gold Award

Behind the Schoolbag

Ho Chun-yu

Silver Award

Shear Marks

Lam Ho-tak, Kwok Man-ho, Ng Kai-chung

Special Mention

Eye'm Free

Pau Ching-yee Louise

Mur Mur

Lo Hin-kit