

## The 14<sup>th</sup> ifva Open Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Oxide Pang (PANG), Wong Yan Kwai (WONG), Fung Ka Ming (FUNG), Eric Ma (MA), Wong Sau Ping (PING)

Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Rachel Wan (WAN)

### **Let' s Take a Shower**

WONG : Its strength is also its weakness. It ends right at the moment when the theme is revealed, without considering if that will make the work looks incomplete. I like how the director depicts melancholy in a light-hearted way. It is a work of genuine and rich sentiments, and full of the spirit of independent making.

PING: Personally it is my choice of the Gold Prize. I like it the most, firstly because of its social awareness, and secondly, its documentary style of being both realistic and poetic.

In the beginning, it gives a plain illustration of things. And then, when the two people talk about it was a leprosy-stricken place, I can sense the forcefulness of the film, which is a stark contrast of the previous spare depictions. The images after the conversation, such as the two dogs, begin to produce different meanings...

MA: I watched it without any expectation or preparation. It turns out that I find the work very intact; I am entranced by with some of the moments. I try to compare it with **Genesis**, the work about street market. Both works remind me of ethnography which is a common Anthropology research method of getting into the field of research. They remind me also of how people begin to allow more rooms (of interpretation) in academic writing, and also multi-vocality. I like **Let' s Take a Shower** for it is poetic but at the same time highly social-oriented. In **Genesis**, we can see a lot of efforts spent in doing research. It is funny to watch at the start; in the middle, with music then being introduced, it becomes too contrived. **Let' s Take a Shower** is relatively the better one.

If we compare it with the documentaries nowadays, it is at most the relatively more outstanding work among all the entrants, but definitely not an exceptional one. If we compare it with other feature films, it is not particularly of a high standard.

### **The Story of Sun**

MA: It seems that *The Story of Sun* is the most popular work during the screening just now. To me, however, I find some parts very disturbing.

FUNG: It disturbs me when at the very beginning the mother speaks in such crafted pronunciations and voice.

PANG: Speaking of acting, if the skill makes up an important part of a work, many of the entrants fail to pass muster.

PING: The role of the mother is well written, but its delivery is flawed. I comment this film as a “quirky film”. It has a high standard in terms of directing, perhaps due to an unconscious expression of the director’s dispositions.

MA: Sometimes its delivery is too heavy—capturing the lines of desolate tress...the scene where the mother holding her son’s hand is overdone.

PING: The son is indeed overacting. But the overall performance of the film is convincing and delivers the drama successfully.

There is one scene where the son accidentally steps onto the pirate CDs. The mother asks the son to apologize to and compensate for the CD vendor. Saying sorry to a “criminal” is an interesting misplacement. There is another scene where the son wants to stay in the bower as his own home, which gives an aura of surrealism as compared to the realistic style in the first part. Is the oddness intended by the director or simply a compromise due to budget limitation? Competing in an independent short film festival, I believe the entrants must make more bold moves. And, *Three Boys* surprised me; the good things about it are all about its craft.

FUNG : I think the relationship between the three people in *Three Boys* is extremely touching.

PING: Not for me.

WONG: What a big difference. It is not about the craft that makes the three people willing to be filmed; it is about trust. With trust, the three interact with each other without being always conscious of the existence of the director. The director has good maneuver of both the active movements and stillness of the camera.

PANG : The intervals are done meticulously. In the opening scene, we see very precise editing of the expressions of the actors inside the car, showing great skills.

PING: Good combination. After one dies, one of the remaining two becomes more reserved while the other is talkative. The relationship between them is captivating. However, the story framework is cliché, like all the struggles of live of the band members after the band breaks up...

MA: I think we should pick those works rebellious against all the rules, since so many resources have been pouring into the competition. In this regard, we have different concerns in the panel.

PING: Professionals, too, can create surprising and shocking work. Both professional or green artists can make an impact with one's work. Perhaps we could consider more about the production quality of a work. For me, the spirit of independent movie making matters.

PANG : I am thinking if the director of *Three Boys* has made anything before it. Perhaps something like ***The Story of Sun*** during which he passed the stage of immaturity? So, which kind of work should we choose?

WONG: This year we see just a small number of works willing to break the rules. Take ***My One Last Miracle*** as an example. It is very furnished, but not adventurous and creative.

FUNG : ***The Story of Sun*** is an ethical drama about family, with some special treatment. It is not odd. It tells the mother-and-son relation in a straightforward way. The two are not very close. The son dares not to tell her mom about his being expelled from school. His mother keeps nagging him till he admits everything and brings her to the outdoor place where he stays. At last, because of her mother, he puts up a "V" sign which he really hates to do in the past. The story flows from one point to another in a course.

MA: Eccentricities could perhaps be seen only in the character setting and some parts of the plot; the mother-son tie is not, however, particularly new. When I was watching it, I thought, why such a need to follow mama all the time? I don't really like that.

WONG: This is a light comedy, an approach different from local directors. Local directors tend to tell the story heavily and in a contrived way.

FUNG: Among all the family ethical film, this one is the most interesting.

MA: But the ethics in the movie suffocate me.

FUNG: Most of the works by young people nowadays are about melancholy of youth. The schools support them with resources such as facilities and equipments. They are asked to make something out of it but due to the school assessment system, the work cannot be too edgy and they have to play it really safe. They just conform. In real life, they enjoy their spending spree and karaoke; when it comes to making film, they behave by telling serious stories about parents, Alzheimer.....Most of the graduation projects I have come across are under this category of ethical film. Given the limited budget and film rolls, these topics are the "most guaranteed"

### **Forget Me Not**

PING: *The Story of Sun* is sincere. *Forget Me Not*, also talking about a mother and a son, is not touching me at all.

WONG : The biggest problem of *Forget Me Not* is the ending scene where the mother dies. It would still be okay if the mother hadn't jump down, allowing room for the viewers' own contemplation. But then it shows us a pair of shoes, indicating she is dead. What a fatal flaw.

PING: Its story is a also cliché. Banality is not a problem; the importance is whether you give a special viewpoint and speak to people's heart. *Forget Me Not* is special only because of the shooting locations; others are simply functional and not thoughtful enough.

As it is a stereotype, it is not touching enough. It reminds me of Ann Hui's *Summer Snow*, which is also about Alzheimer, telling stories in a subtle and moving way.

### **Dust Off**

PANG: *Dust Off* and *The Story of Sun* belong to the same kind of ethical film. *Dust Off* successfully performs as a melodrama. In terms of creativity, the two scenes about

"Ultraman" are indeed very bold. I try to strike a balance when picking this work. It has some of the things that you all appreciate. Good performance by the male lead. The scene where he calls people to visit him is very touching. It is a very intact work of ten minutes. The audience knows very well what it tries to say. The director has successfully delivered what he tries to say. No particular flaws were found in the filming.

PING: I find its technique full of flaws. There are problems in the editing, making people believe that he has not made enough shots and that's why the editing always jumps.

The stylish editing in the introduction is very well done and effective--One shot holds, then flashes in a word. But the language used in filming the narrative is not precise. Still, I appreciate the working being very interesting. The scene on the road is well designed.

MA: Some of the images make an impact; Ultraman walking on the street, the rooftop and the scenes about To Gwa Wan are all very enjoyable. The editing in the latter part is very ordinary, such as the scene where the beggar is being beaten up. Personally I think this work takes a quite conservative standpoint.

FUNG: And I suspect it oversimplifies social problems.

### **Genesis**

PING: An attempt to depict a place with just image and sensibility. Some parts in the music, close-ups and patterns of food are however very mainstream.

MA: The beginning scene at the fish stall is quite good, but it gets more typical as it develops. Using background music in the ending two parts is bizarre.

PING: It seems it starts to burn out in the middle. Some camera movements are quite good.

### **Break Borders 2**

MA: With human touch, but very typical story.

PING: Break Borders is quite well executed but not in a creative way and without profound discussion on the hip hop culture.

FUNG: They could have done more. For example, they could have approached the performance in the mall from other perspectives. They could also have compared the performance with what the gang did in the US. Now it just tells something about a local mall. With my understanding of the local street culture, I believe the director is very sincere. However, the work does not give enough messages about how street culture is not well accepted and lacks space to develop in Hong Kong. But the interview subjects are very interesting.

### **6 Fragments of the Endless Journey Called Life**

PING: It is intact, an experimental type of film but not pioneering.

WONG: It is just an experiment on genre, which is to say, rather traditional. It is not an all-out experiment.

### **The Monk**

MA: The best part is its last five second.

PING: The end part is exactly the part I hate most. Undeniably that is the pivotal part of the film. He has got a lot to say, probing about “real” and “unreal”.

WONG: The truth in film and the truth in reality.

PING: A difficult subject matter indeed—whether humans have true self. The director concludes the film with a laugh and his own value. He tries to say “it’s not a must to differentiate between the real and the unreal; the most important thing is to live happily.” I think he fails to notice the seriousness of the question. They are young people, and it is a topic often discussed among students. I can understand their approach. It seems an old-school kind of topic; still it could have carried in-depth discussion. The work seems superficial and making a lot of fuss. Good cinematography, however, makes it a pleasure to watch and thought provoking.

### **Bicycle**

FUNG : Among all the entrants, I am less into ***Bicycle*** because of the ethical talking in the beginning, the three actors who are not convincing and also the brother's performance being very fluctuated. Among the works about family, it is not particularly a good one.

PING: The female lead performs quite well.

MA: Overall speaking it is not impressive.

FUNG : There are shots without much meaning. For example, in the beginning, it suggests flash back with the child turning his head--something really unnecessary.

### **Move Out**

PING: It feels quite good. It is youthful and rebellious, but tends to be too sentimental, without any substantial discussion. The ending is puzzling. I am not sure if it relates to his techniques or is something intentional.

PANG: If such move threads through the whole film would probably make it a good work; but now, it is odd when only the ending uses this method.

PING: The performance of actors is quite good.

### **Distance**

FUNG : Very weak performance of the father. Sometimes the shots are too long, especially in the scenes of the father and the son, who speak to one another standing in a line. Perhaps the director wants to learn from Hou Hsiao-hsien.

PING: Contrived, and confined by the form.

### **My One Last Miracle**

WONG: This work is irresistible. Very well done. And this is exactly its problem. It gives no surprises at all. It is professionally executed but without any experimental attempt.

PING: There are surprises, but under much calculation. It tries to carry something like magical realism...It is well executed, with a very sincere and moving depiction of the children's world. The part about how the mother can recover after one has

accomplished something is a very interesting idea.

### **Symphony for Mr. Deaf**

MA: Good performance. I like the chubby actor a lot, who is very convincing. This work has good narrative framework and the way it uses factory as the story's background is a good idea. The part about the sister is subtle but clearly conveyed. The situations, the acting have cultural implications, such as factory and the people in the factory. But I was a bit disappointed at the ending where the protagonist gets ill, reminisces about the sibling bond, etc. That's the flaw of this work--despite a very good execution in the first part of the film.

FUNG : I like the interesting things happen between the character,阿龔,and his able colleagues. The chubby boy performs quite well. To my surprise he is a first-time actor. The part about the sister I find it too dramatic. At last she falls ill without being noticed by the lead cast. As for the music, using Bach in a story about the lower class creates a very interesting contrast.

### **Road Home**

FUNG : I like **Road Home** quite a lot; sadly again it is a very neat work.

PING: In terms of neatness, **My One Last Miracle** is more outstanding. I do not like **Road Home** very much, despite there is something nice about it; for example, the performance of Joman Chiang.

It is a very refined work, but weak in terms of its creativity.

KWONG: I suggest each one of you pick the works that you believe are qualified for being the final three, before deciding on the prizes.

MA: **Let' s Take a Shower, Three Boys**

PING: **Let' s Take a Shower, The Story of Sun**

PANG: **The Story of Sun, Three Boys**

FUNG : **Three Boys, , Let' s Take a Shower**



WONG: ***Let's Take a Shower, Symphony for Mr. Deaf, The Monk, Three Boys***

KWONG: ***Let's Take a Shower*** and ***Three Boys*** have the highest score. Let's first decide on the Gold Prize.

PING: I support ***Let's Take a Shower*** for the Gold Prize but I prefer to give the Silver Prize to ***The Story of Sun*** but not ***Three Boys***.

PANG: Frankly I am into commercial work. If we want to choose a work with the most independent spirit and can be commercially successful at the same time, let's pick a work that can strike this balance.

PING: I appreciate the candour of the director of ***The Story of Sun*** in telling his own emotions. Undeniably there are a lot calculations in the film. But in a way, the over-acting reflects how naked it is to tell the sentiments (such as between the mother and the son). I am moved by it.

WONG: ***Let's Take a Shower*** is not only a documentary. The inclusion of the scenes about the dog is intentional and with drama.

KWONG: WONG Yan Kwai, may I ask why you pick ***Symphony for Mr. Deaf*** and ***The Monk***?

WONG: It is a very subjective and personal decision. And I am not going to convince others to side with me.

FUNG : ***Road Home*** is a very neat work, not particularly distinctive or creative. Some of its visual designs are stunning: a long shot showing Joman passing by on a bicycle and with some very dramatic music. I think as an independent film this is really something. Joman's performance is enjoyable. The work is very comfortable to watch. The relationship between the two protagonists is captivating, and so is the montage sequence in the middle part when the two become much closer to one another. The story is definitely a cliché. Dancing in London will bring about the reminiscence of a lost friend. As a story about a teenager, it is well directed.

MA: I am sure for those experienced ifva panelists, the works this year are not at all creative; rather, they are conventional and typical. Giving two Silver Awards will have an implication. As it is my first time on the panel, I am not sure whether there

should be any implication.

KWONG: In recent years, the works have been getting conventional.

PANG: We should communicate to the young artists the importance of being creative. The designation of the Gold and Silver Awards will be giving out this kind of message.

FUNG : To communicate the message by awarding particular works may not as effective as writing a review or speech about it. Simply telling people how good is **Let' s Take a Shower** will not make people understand our consideration (of its being a non-feature film). Even if we explain it to others, we could not anticipate people's response. This however does not mean we should not talk about it. The problem is that the overall environment is now getting more conforming. The schools are not bold enough.

If genre is not a concern, **Let' s Take a Shower** is unquestionably a good film. But in terms of the overall performance, **Three Boys** outstrips **Let' s Take a Shower**.

PANG: Agree.

PING: The only work I would like to pick for the Gold Award is **Let' s Take a Shower**. I object to awarding **Three Boys** the Gold Prize.

FUNG : I object to sacrifice **Three Boys** for the sake of **Let' s Take a Shower**.

MA: Me too. We seldom come across documentary in the competition. **Let' s Take a Shower** is not good enough to get the Gold Award.

PING: Anyone object to giving the Gold Award to **The Story of Sun**?

FUNG : I object. It is neither creative nor idiosyncratic. It is just an outstanding film among a large group of family drama. There are many flaws in the film, especially the cast of the mother. Also, it has boring shots.

### **Three Boys**

PANG: For me, having seen **Three Boys** is very critical. Before that I tend to choose works with fewer commercial elements, those that can move me deeply in just five to ten

minutes. Then the more I see the more I realize there is no such work. **Three Boys**, in the end, is the work with good script, good directing and good acting.

PING: I have seen ifva works in the past few years. And I was an ifva-awardee. But I would feel sad if **Three Boys** is awarded the Gold Prize. I have nothing against the director. I also agree with what you said about its good techniques.

MA: I suggest giving two Silver Awards, **Let' s Take a Shower** and **Three Boys**.

PING: I would have no objection.

FUNG : It would be a pity if not awarding the Gold Prize. **Three Boys** not only displays good techniques but it also has excellent actors, script and director. A very well-balanced execution. It tells clearly, and skilfully, the characters of the three protagonists in 19 minutes. The cast gives natural and poised performances. Even though the director has not been to the Philippines and has to manage a foreign language in the filming, it turns out that the three characters are very convincing. It is different from the other conforming, family drama feature films. Despite being a cliché to talk about dreams, the story moves me, a thirty-something guy, very deeply. Life itself has bring one's true self into oblivion; being able to pick up once again one's thoughts and ideas is very touching. He surely has conveyed the message.

WONG: In terms of the techniques of the director, I believe the director of Three Boys is someone currently working in the industry.

PING: I don't think he can fully deliver the themes about struggles in life, the alienation, and the reminiscence of past dreams. I cannot feel the passion in music. I cannot feel the passion of the director in handling this subject matter.

PANG: But he has done a great job in the 19 minutes.

KWONG: Four plans have been mentioned :

1. Two Gold Awards to **Three Boys** and **Let' s Take a Shower**; no Silver Award
2. Two Silver Awards to **Three Boys** and **Let' s Take a Shower**; no Gold Award
3. Gold Award, **Three Boys**; Silver Award, **Let' s Take a Shower**
4. Gold Award, **Let' s Take a Shower**; Silver Award, **The Story of Sun**

WONG: If we do have good works here, let's try not to give up too easily on awarding the Gold Prize.

PING: Even if there are only average works competing for the Oscar's Best Picture, the relatively better work will be chosen. Being awarded the Gold Prize means something. Personally I opt for giving no Gold Prize but two Silver Awards to **Three Boys** and **Let's Take a Shower**. I agree what you said about the weakness of **Let's Take a Shower**. I wish it could be awarded the Gold Prize. Relatively it is not up to a particular standard but it deserves to come first, and it is also representative of something. But no one agrees with me, right?

PANG: If we really have to award the Gold Prize, I would go for **Three Boys**.

Both PANG and FUNG go for Plan 3: Gold Award, **Three Boys**; Silver Award, **Let's Take a Shower**.

MA, PING: Plan 2: Two Silver Awards for **Three Boys** and **Let's Take a Shower**. No Gold Award.

PANG: Please pick one among 2 or 3.

WONG: I won't consider Plan 2. I would pick up either 3 or 4.

PANG: Plan 3 has 2.5 votes, and half vote for Plan 4.

KWONG: The Gold Prize goes to **Three Boys**; Silver Prize, **Let's Take a Shower**;

MA: One Special Mention is enough for this year's works are very conventional indeed.

KWONG: I hereby announce the Gold Prize goes to **Three Boys**; Silver Prize, **Let's Take a Shower** and Special Mention goes to **The Story of Sun**.

### Open Category

#### Gold Award

*Three Boys*

Ming-kai LEUNG

**Silver Award**

*Let's Take a Shower*

Chung-yee YU

**Special Mention**

*The Story of Sun*

Fei LONG