

The 15th ifva Youth Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Adam Wong Sau Ping (WONG), Kwok Chi Kin (KWOK), Or Sing Pui (OR),
Bottle Shiu Ka Chun (SHIU), Chan Wing Chiu (CHAN)

Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG)

KWONG: The first work we will be discussing is ***Where***.

OR: I think the works in this category are different from that of previous years; perhaps times have changed. Nowadays many schools have media related courses. This has advantages and disadvantages. The good thing is that everybody knows how to make films, but that is different from having a passion for it.

KWOK: I see a lot of works that were made because the filmmakers had to.

OR: I've observed the same thing. Some filmmakers were encouraged by their seniors in school, which is an interesting phenomenon.

KWOK: A few of the works like ***Some Another Days*** and ***Story of Our Tuck Shop*** are school assignments.

KWONG: As far as I know, ***ANA*** was made as an entry into a workshop called Focus on Film.

OR: Compared to other works, this one pays a great deal of attention to production elements such as costumes and design.

KWONG: ***Where***.

KWOK: This work is closer in spirit to that of yesteryears when Or Sing Pui was a jury member. The director is definitely a film buff. There are many elements that were taken from other films, but the camera work and editing are superb, all the scenes are well thought out. It was made with little money, and all the actors were fellow classmates. The filmmaker is very talented, as evidenced in his use of repeated shots, actors and camera movements. He is obviously very much into film. I heard the film was made in two months, before he had to sit for A-levels exams. The director is very keen and hard working. It is clear that he has definite ideas and concepts, and is able to put his ideas into practice.

OR: In the past student films were mostly about love or friendship. Lately there have been more suspense films—perhaps that is more trendy nowadays. Even though this work is sometimes imitative, one can see that the director has made the effort to think through the genre.

SHIU: This director's ideas about life, death, murder and suicide is clearly different from other people. He is quite a unique individual. I imagine his life is probably very closed-in, and he lives in his own world, because he finds his world is rich enough. Even though there are places where the story does not make sense, it doesn't really matter.

CHAN: I think it's interesting that we chose three works with similar themes; they are all about exams and academic ranking, etc., which reflects the current situation that students face. It is almost as if they are protesting against the education system.

Many of them make films in fulfillment of academic obligations, but their subject matter has to do with academic pressure, which is very interesting.

KWOK: ***The 6th Step*** is also about grades.

CHAN: Because they cannot see a way out of it, they escape into another world. ***Where*** uses the suspense genre, ***Breath*** is supernatural, while ***The 6th Step*** is a religious film.

KWONG: Sau Ping, you have been on the jury team of other youth video festivals. Are their entries similar to this competition or are they different?

WONG: Very different. ***Exploration of Time*** was an award winning film in another competition. The film is very cliched in terms of its subject matter and style. I think many of the other competitions want to "borrow" the glamour of films. For example, the award presentation ceremony would employ the theme music from the Hong Kong Film Awards, and they would invite well known actors to present the awards. Their selection criteria follow the same vein. They prefer works that are nice and safe; you won't find any experimental or subversive films in these competitions.

KWONG: So you can see more unique films in ifva's Youth Category?

WONG: Recently I finally met the filmmakers behind the primary school entry *和你在一起*. I found out the production team was led by the school campus channel instructor.

KWONG: The entry is from Holy Family Canosian Primary School. The work is one in a series of music videos, the songs of which are obviously not chosen by the students. The production teams are led by teachers.

WONG: These works look smooth and professional, just like commercials. The technician told me they are under a lot of pressure from the school to produce these works. The last time they received an award with one of their videos, and so they wanted to produce more works like that. Many video competitions targeted at young people really like this type of works.

KWONG: The next one is ***We Sing We Sing***.

CHAN: If this one wins an award I will personally present them with it.

SHIU: I was not going to attend the ceremony, but if this one wins it, I will go. Even though there is a lack of main theme, its energy and sense of joy is rare to see. The girls are so crazy that watching them brings back the feeling of first love.

OR: As a film this work is not up to par, but it possesses a child-like silliness that captures youthful memories.

KWONG: Is this done for homework?

CHAN: It was done for ifva. They will be 18 next year, and wanted to qualify for this category this year.

KWOK: It is a very youthful work. It is rough on the edges and the sound is bad.

OR: The shots are out of focus. They just take the camera and film whatever comes

to mind.

KWOK: And it's too long. But I was touched by a few of the scenes. Like singing George Lam's songs on the ferry, that brought me goose bumps. The other scene that moved me was the one in which they sing on the MTR. The choice of song was good, and expresses the feeling of "just doing it." When I was young I once walked six hours from Tuen Mun to Tsuen Wan. When I saw this film it brought back the feeling of being in love for the first time. This film is representative in that people assume that young people of this generation only like to play electronic games and go online. In fact there are people like these girls in every generation, but they don't get the attention, just like there are things we noticed in the past that people ignore nowadays. There are still people who do silly things like playing guitar at the ferry terminal, then film the process and edit the footage together. This is what I find so special about this film.

WONG: It's an innocent, spontaneous work.

CHAN: I feel inspired by the film. I discovered that you shouldn't watch it on the TV screen. Seeing it on the big screen is a lot more powerful. Even though it is unpolished, you feel the work is trying to talk to you. I can't help but think that we have so many preconceived ideas about films made by young people. We should really humble ourselves and invite more of these works to enter the competition.

KWONG: The next work is ***Some Another Days***.

OR: I find it quite impressive. Even though it's a music video, it really communicates the feeling of indolence. However there are just feelings. The work lacks something else. The images are pretty, but lack depth.

WONG: It expresses the director's artistic sense in a simple way.

OR: Even without the music, the images still expresses certain feelings. Its editing technique is better than the other works.

WONG: It looks unpretentious and effortless.

OR: The director doesn't plan every shot, but tries to capture various things. The whole video consists simply of a girl at different locations—she wears the same clothes throughout and doesn't even change costumes.

KWOK: At the post-screening discussion just now, the director refused to explain the meaning behind the work. From her intuitive camera style, you can tell she is quite talented.

KWONG: The next work is ***Breath***.

WONG: The use of stop motion is very good and inspired.

OR: It ends with a shot of someone taking a breath, which is quite humorous. The work is short, like a commercial.

WONG: This film is short and sweet. There's not much one could criticize about. It is a complete and powerful work.

KWONG: The next one is ***The 6th Step***.

- KWOK: I think it's okay. The supernatural scenes are quite interesting. The technique is good. Did they use a smoke machine? Perhaps they received funding from the church.
- WONG: It's not just a gospel film. It doesn't let itself be dictated by those kinds of imagery. People like this aren't the type to make gospel films.
- KWONG: The next one is *我的回憶不是我的*.
- KWOK: I want to ask why this film was selected?
- SHIU: We had a long argument about this one. I think this work is clever and effective.
- CHAN: I agree with you on the cleverness. I find the work adheres closely with its subject matter, and it gave me a strong feeling when I watched it.
- KWOK: Watching old videos is the most clichéd way of recalling old memories. When I watched this I felt detached for some reason, even though it is somewhat interesting.
- CHAN: Nowadays many student works like to talk about the self. Both ***Some Another Days*** and this one emphasizes this aspect.
- OR: Usually the teachers urge them to make films about themselves.
- CHAN: ***Three of Us*** is like that too, although the results are quite different.
- WONG: My comment is: "a great deal of emotions but not a lot of creativity." This type of work is easy to overlook. It tries to experiment with something, and if it succeeds in doing what it suggests, it would be very successful. It is very economical, with only a little bit of creativity. If it falls short by just a little, I would have missed it altogether. What I see is a lot of self indulgence and emotions, but not a lot of creativity. I don't dislike the work, though.
- KWOK: I don't have very strong feelings about this film, perhaps because I've done too many similar works in the past.
- KWONG: ***Three of Us***.
- KWOK: It is a lot like *我的回憶不是我的*, but ***Three of Us*** is very successful in portraying the personal self, particularly in terms of technique and the objects the camera captures, like the sofa and cooking a meal, etc. I like the part where the director uses telephone-like voice, but you don't hear the grand father's reaction or reply, and also his use of self narration. As a piece of homework it is very high quality.
- SHIU: I can't believe that it is a piece of homework. He proudly lets you into his life, and I can really see what the director is like, and also his love of the work.
- KWOK: It has the rare quality of being intricate and humorous, which is not easy to do.
- WONG: It is very sincere work in which the director tells his own story in an unpretentious way. The technique merges seamlessly into the work. For example, in the scene where the grandfather laughs, the camera shakes along with his movements as if laughing along with him. He incorporates these things into the work in an honest way.

CHAN: This year there has been a lot of work from Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity. What you said is spot on. Many works from this school play with form, and the result is often vacant. Yet this work is also from Lee Shau Kee, which shows that their students are in fact quite varied. It does not matter if this is a piece of homework, as long as it comes from the heart.

KWONG: ***Destructive Love.***

KWOK: In what way is this work representative?

WONG: To a certain extent I am being charitable toward this work. I think the sense of solidarity and passion behind the making of this film ought to be applauded. This film is no worse than a lot of the other “disaster films”, but I like the fact that they had fun doing it. They express themselves wholeheartedly and unabashedly, which I think deserves to be encouraged.

CHAN: The rap at the end is important, because it is representative of this generation. Even when they do their homework they would work in a rap. I really got a kick out of watching this film, and I think it deserves to be among the finalists. It is a show piece that allows us a glimpse into how the new generation thinks. When watching this film you have to turn the sound down a notch, otherwise even the soothing parts would have the opposite effect.

KWOK: This work is quite special. Its intention is very serious, but it is clear that their ability falls short. It is precisely because they try so hard that it is funny. You feel you shouldn't laugh but you can't help it.

CHAN: I think their energy deserves encouragement. This school has produced a lot of works, which needs to be recognized. It's not just this year—every year there are films like this, so we need to show them. They have a lot of fun making it and the energy comes through in the work.

OR: The production value is high. They even have a car crash.

WONG: It talks about ugly girls in a way that is not clichéd, even though it is not original.

KWONG: ***Exploration of Time.***

KWOK: This is a strange work that is half way between being serious and playing around. All of a sudden there are spirits and time travel. The acting style is part Stephen Chow, part Ronald Cheng, but the voice-over uses a sentimental tone. The overall feeling is schizophrenic. The editing in the latter part is very precise, but the beginning part is all wrong.

CHAN: I think it is probably a collaboration between teachers and students. Perhaps we need to have a separate category for that next year. You sense that it is obviously done by two groups of people, and not by the students themselves. The thinking behind the work and the technique is very grown-up.

OR: I don't think it's a collaboration. Probably the teacher instructed them.

CHAN: The end credits states frankly that they thank the church for support and the teachers' guidance. The entrant is the main actor, but he is not the director.

WONG: It is hard to tell whether it is done by teachers or students. Getting guidance from

teachers is a good thing. Many of the “disaster films” would have benefited from some professional help. How can we judge whether a film is truly a student work?

CHAN: The most important consideration is that this is the Youth Category.

KWONG: ***Story of Our Tuck Shop.***

KWOK: A very good film. Very anti-establishment and full of humor. For example the line “super expensive” is funny, and so are the subtitles. Was this film guided by teachers?

CHAN: For sure it was, but it went beyond that guidance, which is wonderful.

KWONG: ***ANA.***

KWOK: This is a Hollywood production among Youth Category entries—there are Western actors and the production value is high. It is also a meaningful film. But there is nothing outstanding about it; the film has no personality. In terms of creativity there is nothing very exciting about it. It’s just like a big budget Hollywood film.

WONG: It is not clichéd, and is nice and safe.

OR: Well rounded. The lead actress is very pretty.

WONG: Her acting is good, too.

CHAN: A very professional work dealing with a very serious subject matter.

WONG: It is unpretentious; you don’t feel that it tries to be grown-up.

CHAN: It stresses that all the cast and crew are under the age of 18.

SHIU: It has no rough edges, obviously done by people who don’t have to worry about where their next meal is coming from.

KWONG: Now we can nominate award winners, or go straight to picking the Gold Award winner.

OR: We can pick 5 each.

WONG: I choose ***Where, The 6th Step, Three of Us, Exploration of Time*** and ***Story of Our Tuck Shop.***

SHIU: I choose ***Where, We Sing We Sing, Breath, Three of Us*** and ***Story of Our Tuck Shop.***

CHAN: I choose ***Where, We Sing We Sing, Breath, Three of Us*** and ***Story of Our Tuck Shop.***

KWOK: I choose ***Where, We Sing We Sing, Three of Us, Story of Our Tuck Shop*** and ***The 6th Step.***

OR: I choose ***Where, We Sing We Sing, Some Another Days, Three of Us*** and ***Story of Our Tuck Shop.***

- KWOK: **Where** should get the Gold Award.
- OR: I am torn between **Where** and **Three of Us**. One is about school pressure, while the other is about the director's family. They represent two different styles.
- SHIU: I'm more sentimental, and prefer **Three of Us**.
- CHAN: I also agree that **Three of Us** should either get Gold or Silver. **Where** is technically superior, but the director gets carried away. It wants to tell a story about someone who may have seen a ghost, then he sees his classmate commit suicide, but it turns out to be himself. In the process the story does not quite make sense.
- KWONG: Are these the only contenders for the Gold Award?
- CHAN: You can consider **We Sing We Sing**, but you might feel that it is not technically up to standard.
- SHIU: Giving it the Gold Award is a bit too much.
- WONG: As Youth Category jury members we have certain expectations about the work, and hope to see in them what young people are like and their youthful spirit. But for myself I don't emphasize this too much.
- KWOK: I agree. Before I saw **Dreams**, I gave **Three of Us** very high marks, but the former has more self awareness. I think young people are often too lackadaisical, and do not know what they want. Even though the director of **Dreams** is only 18, he really knows what he wants. Chan Wing Chiu thinks he got lost telling his story, but the director has a cohesive vision and really knows what he wants to express. Technically the film is stylish and possesses the innocence of youth at the same time. His first shot is repeated in the end, and very few teenagers would think like that. I think entries from the Youth Category should not only express young people's energy, but also their dreams. I am not sure if this work is homework, but I don't think it looks like the director is accountable to anyone.
- CHAN: From the beginning we use filmmaking technique and style to critique **Dreams**, because it aims at finding the very spirit of cinema, and the director tries his very best to make this film. It is also about youth problems and complaints against society. I applaud the director's persistence in making his film, in this day and age that's rare.
- WONG: To me the subject matter is not important, but I would pay attention to his use of film language and his mastery of the medium. Many Open Category entries are too much influenced by conventional film language, and therefore you see traces of other films in them. Even though this work is also influenced by other films, it also has elements of theatre. Its use of space is clever, and the story is coolly constructed without the use of dialogue, which requires a great deal of will power and passion. **We Sing We Sing** is also done with a lot of passion, but the directors are more casual in their approach. The director of **Dreams** does not express his passion through his film, but uses his passion to accomplish a complex goal, which in itself is a very youthful approach.
- OR: I don't expect Youth Category entries to have groundbreaking technique. For me the hard work the director of Dream put into his work to explore film language is a bonus. **Three of Us** does not need technique, because its sentiment overrides everything else. From **Dreams** I detect a passion towards film. I am torn—

sentimentally I prefer **Three of Us**, because I have never been affected by scary movies.

CHAN: Should we give out two Gold Awards?

SHIU: **Three of Us** moved me, whereas **Dreams** did not. However **Dreams** has a sort of sophistication in terms of its content, technique and use of film language. The director succeeds in mastering his subject, which is not easy.

WONG: Even if you take **Dreams** outside of the context of the Youth Category, it is still a remarkable work. **Three of Us** moved me too, but there is nothing innovative about it. Actually **Three of Us** has good technique as well, and it successfully blends emotions with technique. The feelings it explores are genuine, and the story is told well. The pictorial composition is well designed, for example in the scene where the grandfather appears on one side of the screen and the grandmother appears in another, which I really appreciate.

CHAN: I am leaning towards giving **Dreams** the Gold Award, because it is rare for Youth Category entrants to put art at the forefront of their works. In the past we have always been concerned whether young people have independent mindsets and if they care about society. This work should be lauded for being artistically distinguished, because after all this is a media competition. Since this work is such a rare achievement, it should get the award.

OR: I agree. This work does not only have youthful energy, but is also intelligent.

KWONG: So our Gold Award winner for the Youth Category this year is **Dreams**, and Silver Award winner is **Three of Us**. How about special mentions? **We Sing We Sing**, **Story of Our Tuck Shop**, **Breath** and **The 6th Step** all received high votes.

CHAN: I suggest giving four special mention awards.

KWONG: Please keep the results of the deliberations secret until the award presentation ceremony. Also I invite you to be award presenters at the ceremony. Thank you very much.

Youth Category

Gold Award

Where

Ho-nin MAK, Ko-nin MAK

Silver Award

Three of Us

Wing-yee WONG

Special Mention

We Sing We Sing

Hui-laam CHANG, Chor-man HO

Special Mention

Breath

Kwong-san TANG, Chun PANG

Special Mention

The 6th Step

Chun-ki CHEUNG, Yik-fung WONG

Special Mention

Story of Our Tuck Shop

Tin-yui PANG