

17th ifva Open Category Jury Meeting Minutes

Jurors in attendance: Lorna Tee (TEE), Esther Cheung (CHEUNG), Peter Wong (WONG), Teddy Robin (TEDDY), Anthony Wong (ANTHONY)

Representatives from ifva: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Kattie Fan (FAN)

KWONG: Today we are going to discuss the award recipients for the open category. This category only accepts works from Hong Kong residents that are over the age of 18 and this year we have received 200 entries. We have no specific requirement on the work's genre but it can not be longer than 30 minutes. 3 members of our pre-selection jurors watched all 200 entries and selected 50 entries for the 2nd round. Last December, Ann Hui, Peter Wong and Lorna Tee watched all 50 works and selected the 10 finalists that you watched today. Our emphasis for this festival is independent spirit and creativity. Today we would need you to pick the 3 award winners for this category. The recipient of the Gold award will receive cash prize of \$100,000 and a trophy, the recipient of the Silver award will receive cash prize of \$30,000 and a trophy while the recipient of Special Mention will receive a SONY HD recorder and a certificate. We will now proceed to discuss ***The True Story of Ah Poon***.

TEE: After seeing it the second time, I find it somewhat preachy.

CHEUNG: My impression of this work is that its messages are laid out clearly. The father has a complete collection of works by Lu Xun and is a man of principal. One can see that the director is very thoughtful in setting up the story but artistically it is a bit weak. I appreciate the story's open ending as the father reflects on whether or not his behavior is appropriate.

WONG: I suppose the artistic weakness that you mentioned has something to with the nature of the script. The directors show excellent aesthetics with their camera shot and they display great consistent with their editing as well.

CHEUNG: I agree. The part that was shot in Tseung Kwan O presents a strong sense of the city. However, I have some doubts with the part in which the primary school student submits her writing to the government official for review. I have never heard of such a thing. I believe the title of the film "**The True Story of Ah Poon**" is derived from Lu Xun's "The True Story of Ah-Q" so this is not a true story.

TEDDY: I find this work professional to some extent; he is able to express his message even though the technique of storytelling is a bit raw. As a juror, I genuinely hope to discover the next generation of talent for the film industry and never intend to be too picky. Technically the directors did an excellent job especially in editing but I agree with all of the criticisms that you have made towards this film.

TEE: I find it a bit too long.

ANTHONY: I agree with Teddy that this is a complete piece of work with a clear message. The storytelling, however, is a bit too literal and too straightforward. It is not a spectacular work; for instance, the casting does not make the work more appealing. It might not be the most creative finalist but it is certainly a very complete work. It expresses some messages that are not dealt with in mainstream films but the pace of the story seems a bit rushed.

- KWONG: We will now proceed to discuss **JUSTMAN**.
- CHEUNG: This work carries a clear left-wing agenda and it is full of interesting left-wing symbols, yet this is not my favorite work. Technically the director makes some decent moves but this work is not as strong as some of the other finalists in terms of its depth and impact.
- ANTHONY: I think this work is the exact opposite of **The True Story of Ah Poon**. It is apparent that the director places strong emphasis on artistic direction and the combination of colors in the opening scene. Yet it is not as clear-cut as **The True Story of Ah Poon** and is almost a bit fancy. The exclusive use of distorted camera shot seems a bit dull.
- CHEUNG: I appreciate the sense of humor that is created by the self-important Justman but the technique is rather crude. I can see the director tries to leave some clues and implications with the use of editing but the outcome is not convincing.
- TEDDY: My issue is that I know where the film is heading very quickly, however I could sense he is a passionate young filmmaker.
- TEE: I think he could have tried a little harder if he is trying to making a statement.
- WONG: I can see he is trying to create an interesting story.
- CHEUNG: I appreciate the use of inter-media elements in this work, as well as the use of dramatization and defamiliarization to address young people's critique on society. It is a great idea.
- WONG: When I saw it in the big screen, I had the impression of seeing a cult film.
- ANTHONY: The acting of the main actor is rather weak.
- CHEUNG: I think that is precisely what the main actor tries to portray, a weak anti-hero. And that can be seen as a ridicule to the empty concept of Justman. Unfortunately the ridicule is not strong enough.
- TEDDY: I believe the director has a future in filmmaking but at the moment he is a bit raw.
- KWONG: We will now proceed to discuss **Queen's Encounter**.
- TEE: The leading actor and actress in the film show great chemistry.
- CHEUNG: The style of this film reminds me of **Before Sunrise** featuring Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy.
- TEDDY: I am big fan of the area where the film was shot; some of its dialogues are quite good but as a whole it does not really stand out.
- ANTHONY: I feel it relies too heavily on the characters' dialogue and that's too much.
- CHEUNG: Some of the dialogues are a bit dull. A documentary on Wanchai that relies solely on dialogue inevitably loses some of its emotional appeal.
- TEDDY: This is a thoughtful piece of work. The idea is good with the use of first love to package the story but it lacks that special touch.

WONG: I find this work similar to **1+1** in many respect but it is less convincing.

TEE: I really love the part of Wanchai that was shot in the film.

ANTHONY: But it seems like the film just captures images of the area and talks about it. It does not leave a strong impression.

KWONG: We will now proceed to discuss **1+1**.

WONG: The relationship between the grandfather and the granddaughter has made this film that deals with environment conservation so much convincing since the granddaughter represents the future. The dialogues in general are well-written.

TEDDY: I agree that the dialogues in general are well written and feel comfortable watching this film even though it is a bit too long.

ANTHONY: I appreciate its acting and the chemistry between the two protagonists.

CHEUNG: This work has a distinct artistic touch; it addresses many different images and highlights the poetic nature of the disappearing city. My personal favorite is the turtle. When everyone is walking so fast in the city and someone leaves a turtle unattended on the street, it has significant symbolic meaning. The planting of the tree also carries symbolic meaning whereas the coins represent the lingering memories. The story is told in an attentive and sincere manner without being old-fashioned. The scene in which the grandfather takes the granddaughter to watch street performance in Mong Kok has the look of a documentary and adds another artistic layer into the film.

KWONG: We will now proceed to discuss ***Meeting of the Half Moons***.

CHEUNG: I find this work very special; it stands out amongst the 10 finalists and I feel refreshed after watching it. The storytelling is unique as it does not have a linear narrative. The story is based on true events; the depiction of each character's inner thoughts presents the various facets of a particular incident. This work is trying to present different angles of an incident through its narrative.

ANTHONY: The shooting style is professional but I am not entirely convinced by its casting; apart from Carrie Lam, the rest of the cast is rather amateurish and I suspect if Carrie Lam's role really needs to be played by a professional actress.

WONG: I think she does bring out a certain aura in the film.

CHEUNG: The length of the film (20 minutes) and its pace are appropriate; I was captivated by the film.

TEE: I agree with Esther that the film captivates me but it seems somewhat manipulative and tries to manipulate the audience's reaction. I suppose it is not so in line with the independent spirit that we try to promote with this festival.

WONG: I have this concern as well. How do we evaluate professionalism and independent spirit? Should we value one quality over the other?

TEDDY: Technically this is a very professional film with special effect and the use of camera shot shows great technique. Since I know the director personally, I might be biased; I hope you will be not influenced by my opinion.

TEE: I think this is a quality work except that it is not really in line with independent spirit.

ANTHONY: I believe the independent spirit is an abstract concept. The images and execution of this film might be very conventional, but its message and the way it depicts each character's innermost thoughts are not very conventional.

CHEUNG: I see eye-to-eye with Anthony. This film creates a certain expectation for its audience in the beginning and it appears to be a gangster film. Yet the development of the story catches everyone by surprise. Even though it is not a masterpiece, I still think that the director does a great job of execution.

TEE: I really appreciate some of the small scenes in the film and find the director very thoughtful.

KWONG: We will now proceed to discuss *here, here*.

WONG: I really enjoy seeing this work at the big screen.

TEE: It does not leave a strong impression on me.

CHEUNG: I can see the director tries to be creative with the style and by being poetic, such as the broken fridge and the human relationship. He definitely puts a lot of efforts into his script but the story is a bit hard to follow.

TEDDY: I can sense the message that he tries to deliver but it is not easy to grasp.

KWONG: We will now proceed to discuss *Intimacy*.

CHEUNG: The film is pleasant and reminds me of another finalist, *The True Story of Ah Poon*. The story is clear with beautiful images and colors. The main actress is very beautiful as well; the film is thoughtful but as a whole it does not leave a strong impression.

TEDDY: If I have to compare the two films, I would prefer *The True Story of Ah Poon*.

TEE: I concur.

KWONG: We will now proceed to discuss *The Way Back Home*.

TEDDY: This work is very different from other finalists. It has the look of a documentary but the director is able to deliver his message.

ANTHONY: Even judging it as a documentary, this is not an outstanding piece of work.

CHEUNG: The narrative seems rather plain and straightforward; all the interviews are done with the interviewees facing the camera. I appreciate how the director records the sound of the wind from Pengjia Islet and it creates a resonance with the protagonist saying the days are long and the sound of the wind is almost like a refrain. As a documentary, however, it fails to surprise me.

ANTHONY: I suppose this is not an impressive piece of work as a documentary. However, I do feel refreshed while watching it and enjoy seeing the scenery in this film.

TEE: That is because this is not a film about city; that is its main difference with other finalists.

KWONG: We will now proceed to discuss "Wrong Dial".

TEDDY: Since I am a close friend of this director, I do not think it is fair for me to comment on her work.

CHEUNG: The idea is great; but it is hard to compare this work with other finalists since it is only 4 minutes long. I like the idea of using misunderstanding and dialing the wrong number to discuss intimacy in an implicit manner.

WONG: It seems rather short and fragmented.

TEE: I do not think the length of the film is an issue since it depicts a complete story. The director does not try to over-stretch the story and that actually allows the viewers to reflect on the protagonist's background.

TEDDY: Well-made.

WONG: It is impressive even though it can also be a bit quirky. I do remember all the dialogues after watching it.

CHEUNG: I agree with Teddy that this is a well-made film.

KWONG: We will now proceed to discuss ***the day after a man gone***.

WONG: I actually prefer seeing this film on an iPad over seeing it on the big screen.

CHEUNG: It does not have a strong sense of being a film.

TEDDY: There are some positives but there are also many weaknesses as well. It is still rather raw. I think the 10 finalists are all decent but of course some are better than others.

TEE: But none of them really stands out.

KWONG: Could each of you nominate 3 works for award consideration?

WONG: I would nominate ***1+1, Meeting of the Half Moons*** and ***Wrong Dial***.

TEDDY: I would nominate ***Meeting of the Half Moons, 1+1*** and ***Queen's Encounter***.

CHEUNG: I would nominate ***Meeting of the Half Moons, 1+1*** and ***The True Story of Ah Poon***.

ANTHONY: I would nominate ***1+1, Meeting of the Half Moons*** and ***The True Story of Ah Poon***.

TEE: I would nominate ***1+1, Meeting of the Half Moons*** and ***Wrong Dial***.

KWONG: Let's discuss whether we should have the Gold award this year and if yes, the recipients of the Gold award and the Silver Award.

TEE: I do not think we should have the Gold award this year. Having been a juror before, I have to say while the overall qualities of the finalists are decent; I do not see a clear winner for the Gold Award.

TEDDY: My experience is that shooting a film is incredibly difficult and therefore we should encourage the young people to produce first and foremost. If there is no clear winner for the Gold Award, I would suggest having two winners to share the Gold Award and the cash prize. I believe even some professional filmmakers can not produce films that match the quality of some of these finalists.
If we offer them encouragement and recognition, they will continue their artistic endeavor and continue to improve.

CHEUNG: I agree with Teddy's view on offering encouragement. I think we all agree that **1+1** and **Meeting of the Half Moons** are superior to the other finalists. Their genres are different; the ways they embrace independent spirit and try to tackle social issues are different as well. The former tries to discuss the change of society through a heartwarming story whereas the latter is a genre film that explores the negotiation process between the film and the audience's expectation.

KWONG: First we will decide whether we should have the Gold Award this year.

TEE: I believe there is no clear winner for the Gold Award this year.

TEDDY: I believe we should have the Gold Award this year.

CHEUNG: I would like to have the Gold Award this year.

ANTHONY: I think we can have the Gold Award.

WONG: I think we can have the Gold Award.

KWONG: That is 4 against 1. Could each of you nominate the recipient of the Gold Award?

WONG: I would nominate **1+1** since I like the issue of conservation that it tackles.

CHEUNG: I would pick both **1+1** and **Meeting of the Half Moons** since I can not tell which is a better film and both of them satisfy my different expectations.

TEDDY: I would pick both **1+1** and **Meeting of the Half Moons** as well.

ANTHONY: I would pick **Meeting of the Half Moons** since it is more complete in many respects; its shooting style, its storytelling and the many angles of the story that it is able to present make this the most interesting work amongst the finalists. The reason why I do not pick **1+1** is that there have been many other works that deal with the issue of conservation. In that regard, **Meeting of the Half Moons** really stands out.

CHEUNG: Emotionally I prefer **1+1** because its genre and idea really touch me. Rationally, however, I would pick **Meeting of the Half Moons**, for the structure of the story and the discussions of social issues manage to bring me surprises.

KWONG: Since we do not have a clear consensus, I would like us to have a vote on this issue. Please raise your hand if you think we should not have the Gold award.

TEE: I believe we should not have the Gold Award and have 4 recipients for the Silver Award. We should only have the Gold Award when there is a clear winner.

KWONG: So there is 1 vote for no Gold Award. How about **1+1** for Gold Award? No one supports this idea. How about **Meeting of the Half Moons** for Gold Award?

ANTHONY: I believe **Meeting of the Half Moons** deserves to win the Gold Award alone.

KWONG: 1 vote for **Meeting of the Half Moons** to win the Gold Award. What about double Gold Award?

CHEUNG, TEDDY, WONG: We agree to have to 2 recipients to share the Gold Award.

KWONG: We have 3 votes supporting this option, so that means we will have 2 recipients for the Gold Award this year: **1+1** and **Meeting of the Half Moons**. Could each of you nominate a film for the Silver Award?

TEE: I would nominate **Wrong Dial**.

ANTHONY: I would pick **The True Story of Ah Poon**.

WONG: I would pick **Wrong Dial**.

CHEUNG: I think **Wrong Dial** should receive Special Mention and **The True Story of Ah Poon** is not my cup of tea so I do not have a pick for the Silver Award.

TEDDY: I would pick both **The True Story of Ah Poon** and **Wrong Dial**.

KWONG: There are 2 votes for **Wrong Dial** and it will receive the Silver Award. Now please nominate a film for Special Mention.

TEDDY: I would pick **The True Story of Ah Poon** since it is very complete and professional; I think it is better than the rest of the finalists.

ANTHONY: I would pick **The True Story of Ah Poon** as well.

CHEUNG: I originally pick **Wrong Dial** for Special Mention but since it has already received the Silver Award. I do not have a pick for Special Mention.

WONG: I would pick **The True Story of Ah Poon** for its distinct aesthetics.

KWONG: There are 3 votes for **The True Story of Ah Poon** and it will receive the Special Mention. To recap the Gold Award will be shared by **1+1** and **Meeting of the Half Moons**, the Silver Award goes to **Wrong Dial** and the Special Mention goes to **The True Story of Ah Poon**.

Open Category

Gold Award

1+1

LAI Yan-chi, Mo

Meeting of the Half Moons

NG Ho-yin

Silver Award

Wrong Dial

CHEUK Wan-chi

Special Mention

The True Story of Ah Poon

TSIM Ho-tat, SUEN Ching, LAM Hon-fung, CHAK Hoi-ling