

The 14th ifva Asian New Force Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Linda Lai (LAI), Park Kiyong (PARK)

Absent Jurors: Lou Ye (LOU)

Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Mickey Choi (CHOI)

PARK: I notice that the filmmakers who attend tonight's screening are elder, like the Chinese director. What is the average age of the directors this year?

LAI: Do you think age factors should be brought into consideration?

PARK: The reason I asked because the mixture of age and experience of life, fresh graduation from college and people who already have experience. In that case, who should we support? The newcomers or?

LAI: But I think it's not their age but how experienced they are. But since this question is brought up, may I ask - is promoting young film maker a key objective?

IFVA: No.

LAI: It's more about promoting short film, is that the case? Is this platform encouraging short film as a special genre or encouraging young people to make works?

IFVA: I think we go for the first point for the creativity.

LAI: Some thoughts in my mind in the whole process were: how many of these works we have seen today are actually ground-breaking in the sense of opening up what short film may mean? Short film is a unique category; it has its own norms that don't apply to feature films or feature-length documentaries. Short film has its own kind of grammar. If this is the case, there is a set of priority in my mind: which film proved itself to be an innovative short film, not just film. Also, I found that a lot of these works are short, but they need not be considered just a work of a smaller scale; but they are something else. Often they are actually poetry or painting. In a sense, that is also one way of looking at how these works open up the category, the idea of short film. Before we jump into individual films, I wrote some notes during the first screening. I found there are some possibilities for us to define how to pick the final award winner in case we disagree. I think there is a direction to set to look for a film that best suggests the future of cinema. The second possibility is to award a film

that is most enhancing cultural understanding -- if this is important enough. The third is that a film should be awarded for its aesthetic achievement and craftsmanship. I just found it very unsafe jumping into a discussion, just to disagree or agree with each other without any shared values. Maybe we can add more to the list or should we arrange them in order of priority.

PARK: I disagree to look at these three. I think the difference is that this is supporting the independent film making, there should be no argument. It's not what you want to push or what you believe. It's supporting the new talent of independent film making.

LAI: Then maybe we can talk about each work.

The Soliloquist

PARK: ***The Soliloquist*** is an animation. It is OK. For me, nothing is wrong but the concept is not fresh.

LAI: I more or less agree when only one work is going to win, this would not be the film. Although I feel very intrigued by this film, thinking about the subject matter, it's so old and yet I'm still interested in it. At least it still caught my interest for the loss of love. My appreciation of the film is the use of space because he has a very unique way of approaching the screen. The screen is no longer the usual three dimensional perspective space, but you never know when the next shot is, and when something may fall outside of the frame space. Sometimes the space on screen is a well; sometimes it's a wall. In terms of use of space, I find it very interesting. My critique will go to the text. I think the text is too much, telling us everything. I don't object to the use of language but it can be used more skillfully, and more integrated into the entire work. The filmmaker's drawing skill is very strong.

Film of the sea

PARK: ***Film of the sea*** is an experimental film. To be honest, I don't like experimental films. The reason is that I don't understand. It's very difficult for me to understand. Besides, you don't need to understand, you have to feel it. I could see what this film is trying to do. But I don't really get it through the projector, the sea and the images of the water.

LAI: Because of how it was made and how it was presented to me, I noticed that I am not going to look at it as a normal film. The film immediately demands me to approach it not for comprehension, not to get the point but to be more face to face with the work, more perceptual. I am finally fascinated with the employment of painting styles because it seems there is a lot of painting styles mixed into the reference of cinema, of what is the frame, of what is the limit of cinema. In my original comments in the first round, I did mention that one thing the film has not done enough – which is the idea of ocean. The idea of ocean in the beginning is very strong, but towards the end, as the work moves on, it became more and more an accessory. The main narrative trajectory is more towards playing with all the tricks of 2D and 3D. There's a bit of repetition there but still I love this film. There's a point to defend is this festival for opening up new categories and be daring, I will still keep my vote for this one.

4 Kilometers

PARK: ***4 Kilometers*** in the beginning I thought it was quite naive and started amorous. But as it moved on, I liked the film. It became quite sincere, especially the last shot. It's more than adequate.

LAI: I will defend the film for its precision in the deployment of film language. I found the film very dark and it's not an easy story to tell, nor is it an easy task to sustain the visual narrative for such a single-directional plot. Certain things remained unexplained, or maybe actually explained but I didn't get it. Nonetheless I like the fact that certain things are unexplained – in particular the reason why she actually turned back. It seems she is giving up on a chance to change her life, and yet it seems she is making a very powerful decision not to go along a certain kind of romanticism for a woman. I don't know which way it was. I like works that are more open but do not draw a straight conclusion. Acting is adequate.

The Old Fool Who Moved the Mountains

PARK: I don't like ***The Old Fool Who Moved the Mountains***. She didn't match with the three generations.

LAI: It seems that we have two very different senses and directions for what cinema we want to promote. I don't know if this is a case or not. But I like to promote this type of cinema myself because it has created a lot of gaps for viewers to fill in, or for them

to make sense of the unsaid. I am often doubtful especially in the case of documentary when the director is too certain about what he wants to say and it will become propagandist. In this case, I think there're three elements and actually we have more than three generations there. I like collage because collage itself is a progressive form in the sense that it doesn't just want to draw a conclusion from the old meanings – and this is the opposite of the main stream cinema. Not that I don't like main stream cinema – I mean I enjoy main stream cinema too. My only query when watching the work was, especially knowing who the director was, what this work was for. I found that if it is a work by a Chinese person, I would have to look at the film very differently. But knowing the background suddenly, I found the whole thing is about one person trying to make sense of other people's culture. I am not negative but it makes me think more what the film is.

PARK: When I watched the film, I think I like it more than after I realize it was made by this Philippine film maker. As I told you, I saw her previous films that was seven years ago. She has been living in Beijing for last six to seven years. I was quite surprised that she is still there making this kind of documentary. The reason I dislike the film is because she wasn't like what you said.

LAI: I don't want to be misunderstood here. When I mentioned that the knowledge of the film maker has is that of an outsider, I did not mean it to discredit the film. Rather, it raises another set of viewing criteria for me to understand the film. It's a good attempt for an outsider to make a work to try to understand the culture. My little disappointment was that if this is the case, if she has this very unique outsider's view, then the work should have been much shaper and stronger.

PARK: She lacks of outsider's point of view.

LAI: She's a bit too afraid to assert a little bit more. But still I like to see more people stepping into this kind of muddy water. I don't even think I would call this a documentary, maybe she thinks so, but I would rather call it a film essay in which she is aligning her ideas to try to make sense of things and try to form some kind of a position of what she has experienced.

The Dream of Cortazar

PARK: ***The Dream of Cortazar***, because it's Korean film and I'll become too critical.

LAI: I like the film because I come from a much broader pretext in which I'm very tired of story telling – not because I don't like stories but I just find filmmakers are running out of techniques too to tell fresh stories. So I'm often a bit skeptical when a film is going to tell a story. But this one won my sympathy because it's not trying too hard and yet it set up a very simple mechanism in which a very simple story could multiple its own value. The work is actually a metaphysical detective story which is about space and I like the illusion. The whole film is turning us into an active agent. It is more than cinema – it's itself a game. And why not? Haven't we been watching films so passively for over a century? Let's turn ourselves into an active agent. The story is very difficult to tell. The story-teller attempts to manipulate and is also being manipulated and forced into a passive position. So I think there's a lot of charm to this and the director could have pushed further.

PARK: In terms of the story, I thought it was quite interesting. The film construction was very concise; the direction especially the acting was not very good. The acting was not natural.

Tremble

LAI: The theme of ***Tremble*** is politically correct, is a type of story we should talk. I found it should be more and longer. The film could be more interesting if he kept developing.

Go to School

PARK: ***Go to School*** is not bad. It had everything. The theme started quite well but the end was trying a little bit too much. I think probably this is the best way to end the story. I would have had a stronger feeling if the ending was focused on the mother situation.

LAI: If I have to choose a work to show my students to illustrate a typical good short film, I will pick this one because it was very neat. For the same reason, I felt that it's too neat. It's too much knowing the rules to set the formula of beginning, the middle and the end. I don't like the ending as well. I think the film was very strong and effective, very efficiently catching you into the world of the mother. But something is a bit lacking in acuteness and I don't know how to put it. It doesn't hit me more than giving me a tidy story unlike some of the other works. It seems that some kind of humanistic concern which make this film very charming as a motive end up

becoming a heard of, because it's total humanistic. I agree that I don't like the postcard but I told myself that maybe the postcard is what happened in the real life. I found that on a narrative closure level, there're three claims: the mother getting the birthday card, the appointment she missed was re-arranged, and finally the little girl was willing to take her brother back to school. Everything opens up very beautiful and suddenly everything becomes the full circle and it rounds up with a punctuation mark like that. It's a bit of waste of the night process of leaving the story to finally just ending up in a very simplicity and realistic comment.

Family Script

LAI: About ***Family Script***, still the comments I made about the film in the program notes I would maintain that. I still feel the middle window is not content played enough for how it can actually work to bring together the left and the right.

Actually two families are trying to communicate through her. That's why I thought the middle window could have something very different. I don't want to say as there is a norm or tradition in documentary in which the film maker should appear at one point to make the work reflexive. It's an easy solution to say that the middle window should be replaced; the journey maker should reveal herself. And yet I found that even without that, there could be a little bit more, stronger role than just someone is carrying the message to the right and left. But I like those two sides when they suddenly look at each other.

PARK: I like the film but this kind of technique using multiple windows is not used anymore. Also, if she was going to use multiple windows, she should be more daring from the beginning to the end. I am a bit disappointed about this. The stories of two families, one group in Tibet and one group in India, I fully understood what is talking about but I think she should give more information to understand these families when they separated, what is the reason behind.

Fading

PARK: I did agree with the filmmaker of ***Fading*** talking about the memories. But it was not enough. It's not about the number of interviewers but the memories to make up for the audience to feel what the village is about.

LAI: If it has another 15 minutes, the work would be very different. I find that the circle of

things should repeat more and more to bring out the dynamics; it does not attempt to turn the dynamics even at this length. Yes, it could be longer. Maybe I am over worry, whichever film we pick as the Award winner, it stands for something, it speaks about a certain standard of excellence. For me, this is one type of excellence, not everything. That's why I came up with three aspects. It's very easy these days to see young people trying to do lawful things, to make a film not special than a normal work. But then the basic craftsmanship and aesthetic achievement, is something I always found, could not be compromised. This work among the three criteria that I set for myself, it may not suggest anything for the future of cinema, and yet it may, it does, because it reduces the sophisticated continuity editing norm which has been ruling our cinema for a century. Now it brings back to the purist aesthetics of cinematography which is a photograph itself. I felt sympathetic in this one, it is very economical and yet it suggests reducing than adding onto the current film language. Also, it has a very strong cultural concern about the loss of a place. Definitely we should award for works that want to do more than just achieving craftsmanship. I understand and I think I will agree with you that I wish the film much longer. The circle of things and those still images are very nicely done. I am dared to believe that doing so little would make a film last and I think it does last.

Disconnection

PARK: ***Disconnection*** has four ways of communication including mobile phone, telephone, computer with Internet, email and fax but nothing works. He was certainly pushing too much.

LAI: I will most likely to give up this one even from the very beginning. I am not sure whether this work is trying to illustrate a point too much about technology and pushing a bit too harsh on the metaphoric, the symbolic meaning of communication.

IFVA: Shall we go to the second part nominating two to three films that could be considered to give awards?

LAI: I pick ***Fading, The Dream of Cortazar, 4 Kilometers*** and ***Film of the sea.***

PARK: I pick ***The Soliloquist, 4 Kilometers*** and ***Go to School.***

LAI: Actually I put *The Old Fool* as the fifth one which I didn't mention. You can take that into consideration. I want to keep that.

- IFVA: We still have 7 films.
- LAI: We can cross out more. *Fading* seems get no support except from Linda. This is my favourite, keep it and remove *The Dream of Cortazar*.
- IFVA: So we have 6 films. Do you want to talk about the grand award or nomination again?
- PARK: I will recommend *4 Kilometers* is the grand award. Special mention will be doesn't matter, *Fading* or *Film of the sea*.
- LAI: I like *4 Kilometers* too but I actually immersive with *The Soliloquist*. Either one of them get it, I am fine.
- IFVA: For grand award? But you didn't vote it.
- LAI: I didn't vote *Go to School* as well but these are the works I like. I didn't vote many of them. I don't know what to do. Should I try to facilitate?
- PARK: But in this case, as LOU Ye voted *The Soliloquist* for grand prize, if you agree, we should give the grand prize to *The Soliloquist*.
- LAI: I'm a bit hesitating. For some reasons, either *Go to School* or *Fading* should be included either for grand award or special mention. They are both very strong. Maybe *Go to School* or *Fading* can actually be nominated for special mention in my view.
- IFVA: To conclude, there are 2 works being considered to give the grand award. *The Soliloquist* and *4 Kilometers*. For special mention, *Go to School*, *Family Script* and *Fading*.
- LAI: Let me put it in this way. I would not want to see *Go to School* get the final grand award. For me, that would not happen. But it can go for the special mention because I like its simplicity and its observation of the saddest of woman which not enough people are really paying attention to. I am just not 100% happy because in my view there is other more than in the film. I definitely want to defend *Film of the sea*. But it seems I am the only person, so how should the game carry on?

PARK: But the question is we still have 6 films. We can give 1 or 2 films for the grand prize. For special mention, I think not more than 2 because otherwise it's too much. So maximum it's 4.

Which film do you think should get the grand prize?

LAI: Not ***Go to School***. Maybe not the ***Film of the sea***. Maybe not ***The Soliloquist***.

PARK: We should vote for a grand prize, we could eliminate ***Fading*** because it has only one vote. That means ***Family Script*** and ***4 Kilometers*** is left.

LAI: Do you want to give 2 grand awards?

PARK: Not necessary.

LAI: I want to encourage the filmmaker of ***Family Script*** but then I want to encourage everyone.

PARK: I would like to give special mention to ***Go to School***. You've already given and so did LOU Ye.

LAI: It depends. For example, if the grand prize goes to ***4 Kilometers***, I would want the special mention to be something not so much telling a proper story. But if the grand prize goes to ***Family Script***, then I don't mind having a story film to perceive the special mention. How are we cooperating with LOU Ye's? How are we going to weight LOU Ye's choice? It seems it's up to us. We are likely to end up with ***4 Kilometers*** and ***Family Script*** as the grand prize. I do want to encourage something more special. Let me make up my mind. I will go for an unusual one and vote for ***Family Script***.

PARK: How about ***4 Kilometers***? For special mention or not?

LAI: Yes, keep it on the list. I like that work a lot. Well, my bias is if I have a choice and I am blind, I always go for something more experimental. That's not bad of course. Based on our discussion, these films still last in the list and they are not bad to be removed. But I shocked myself too. I never thought of including ***Family Script*** as the final winner.

PARK: It's not a compromise. It's always an agreement. You want to vote up what you want. Actually this is the smallest jury panel I joined, usually more than 5. You say what you like and what you don't like but at the end you've to agree with others. It's all about agreement. I don't agree to give the grand prize to **Go to School**. I totally agree if we give it the grand prize, it's a safe choice. I am not against giving a special mention to **Family Script** but against giving it the grand prize. As I said, it's not really new. She could be more dared with the spilt windows and find a new way to use this method. I always said no grand prize to **Fading** but I am ok with special mention. I didn't choose **Film of the sea**. If I have to choose between **4 Kilometers** and **The Soliloquist**, I will choose **4 Kilometers** because it would have been more difficult to make.

IFVA: Can we say **4 Kilometers** is the grand award?

LAI: I have no reservation for **4 Kilometers**.

IFVA: How about the special mention?

LAI: Then I would like to choose something more off the beat. So I pick up **The Soliloquist**, **Fading**, and **Film of the sea**.

PARK: The problem is *Yet in Exile*-**Family Script** is picked up by LOU Ye. I agree **The Soliloquist** and **Fading**.

IFVA: As I said, the final say is between you two. So the result for this year is **4 Kilometers** is the grand award. **The Soliloquist** and **Fading** are special mention.

Comments by LOU Ye:

The Soliloquist

The film abounds in an inherent emotion towards life, towards human being and towards to everything that surrounds him. From his soliloquies reveals apperceptions on human being and life. Perceptual, mild, calm yet relaxing.

Film of the sea

This is a very beautiful visual poem. The visual transitions are excellent and very beautiful. The composition of images is complicated and diversified. The changes of the shape of screen is very good. The excise of point-line-plane-cube and time is very successful. The projector is

kind of interfering.

4 Kilometers

Some details in this film are very impressive, the reading Hulud, the worms in the book, schoolbags and the walking. This documentary itself reveals quite a few unexpected special sights. Details of life themselves are for ever fascinating, especially those details and people that have been neglected.

THE OLD FOOL WHO MOVED THE MOUNTAINS

The clue of the interviews with the Old Fool and Gouzi is well-done. Hope to see more on this clue, however, the clues of "the old man" and "the kid" interfere with our watching. Even though he clearly expresses a viewpoint of the author, many details of the Old Fool and Gouzi, which have been documented in this film, are much more interesting and valuable than the author's pov, for instance, the mother's comments on her kid, the chatting of the guys on the rooftop, the demolishing itself, the ending and etc.

The Dream of Cortazar

Interesting. It constitutes an inter-narrative story which reproduces a saying that as you are telling a story, the story is telling something about you at the same time. The film successfully establishes and manages the connection between reality and the story.

Tremble

Very creative. The split of images and trembling VFX achieve very good result. But the film is lack in efforts and considerations of the strong and powerful visual effects that it has gained already.

Go to School

Fluent in narration. The unadorned documentation involves fun, humour, suspense and tension and it shows clearly the conditions and dilemma of the characters. An ordinary morning, an ordinary car, three ordinary characters, the crossroad and the lonely people who are waiting to be rescued in the broken-down car at the crossroad and etc., all of these effectively comprise this film and as well comprise our living conditions of today.

Yet in Exile - "Family Script"

The film shows us that the meaning of images lies in the behaviour of passing-on the images. Here, to those who are in the images, the images are more important and more significant than those watching the images. This is the most outstanding aspect of this film.

Fading

Excellent exhibition and organization of spaces, very good documentary passages of conversation. Almost fascinating but profound background story. However, subtitles alone would never be able to convey the profound meaning of them. The shot at the end is very good. Very impressive.

Disconnection

Loneliness. The opening shot is very beautiful. The abstract human conditions makes this film almost a science fiction on individual's life in the future. It conveys the possible feature for everyone of us.

Asian New Force Category**Grand Prize**

4 Kilometers

Shapiro MIRI

Special Mention

Fading

Ko-shang SHEN

Special Mention

The Soliloquist

Kuang-pei MA