

**25th ifva Awards Open Category Jury Meeting Transcript**

Jury Members : Mary Wong (Wong), Ruby Yang (Yang), Ernest Chan Chi-wa (Chan), Eric Poon (Poon), Kwan Pun-leung (Kwan)

Organizer representative : Kattie Fan (Fan), Samantha Szeto (Szeto), Wong Ming Lok (Lok)

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Fan: This year, **ifva** received over 2000 works, of which the Open Category received more than one hundred. We went through pre-selection and the first-round jury meeting, and today is the award selection meeting. First round jury members include Eric Poon, Ernest Chan and Mary Wong, who selected the 10 finalists from more than 50 works<sup>1</sup>. Today's mission is to select the Gold, Silver and Special Mention from the 10 finalists. Let's hear your opinions and criticisms of each of the works before discussing the awards.

Yang: I have a question. Must there be only one Gold Award? Can there be more than one?

Fan: In principle, we encourage jury members to award one Gold, one Silver and one Special Mention, but in the past, we have had two Silvers and no Gold. The organizers respect the jury's decision. Eric Poon has a declaration of conflict of interest.

Poon: Among the 10 finalists, the directors of *ephwaipi* are my students, I am their supervising instructor.

Fan: If you don't have any further questions, let's discuss the first work, *Comrades*.

Chan: *Comrades* captures real-time conflicts within a close distance. The work is exceptionally skilful in terms of its uncluttered editing and lively-paced rhythm. It might be because of the fact that I have just watched *Inside the Red Brick Wall* at HKIndieFF, I find the problems of *Comrades* particularly obvious. However, I still appreciate the fact that it has promptly recorded certain aspects of the movement.

Poon: I agree with Ernest Chan that after watching *Inside the Red Brick Wall*, *Comrades* must be planned as part of a larger project. Of course, when they started filming, they may not have considered making a large-scale production but were only responding to the current social movements, and edited what the materials they had on hand as they went on shooting. This is mentioned in the director's statement. They were able to capture a lot of footage within a short period of time, and display attention to detail and familiarity with those on the frontlines.

Wong: I feel that when they were making *Comrades*, they had not anticipated how things would evolve. Their creative decisions, from concept to filming and editing are well

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<sup>1</sup> This year, the Open Category received a total of 164 works, from which the pre-selection jury members selected 50 works and then the first round jury members picked the 10 finalist works.

considered, and this kind of film can be seen as an interaction with social events. I feel we ought to encourage documentaries like *Comrades*.

Yang: The creators must understand the movement very well. The editing is very good and the filmmakers are familiar with the relationships between the participants so as to be able to edit a 14-minute work so quickly. Of the 10 finalists, this is the only documentary.

Poon: The good thing about *Comrades* is that its political stance is clear from the start, and the filmmakers are able to coolly observe the tensions on the frontline and reveal them without reservation. This shows that the filmmakers must have thought about certain issues and were involved with the situation during production, but at the same time are able to remain a detached documentarian, which is a rare achievement.

Yang: I agree. The filmmaker is like an observer to the events, particularly in the ending scene with the people leaving on the MTR and going back to the beginning, which is a smart way of handling it.

Kwan: I agree with you. Although I am not very clear about the background of this work or other related films, the theme of *Comrades* is very relevant to this movement and reflects its purpose. Even though they only shot for one night, the filmmaker accurately captures this theme. I also admire their detachment. Even when they were among the protestors, they still calmly continued shooting by raising up the camera. Some shots are very up close, then there are some wide shots that reveal the relative positions of the police and the protestors. With so many things happening at the same time, this is no easy task. The main theme echoes from beginning to end, as in the scene with "one, two, one, two", street lights, etc., which capture the total atmosphere.

Chan: I admire this film very much, because shooting must have been really difficult, no one knew on the scene what would happen next. The editing is very good, allowing the audience to understand clearly what is happening. I appreciate that the filmmaker is able to capture people's detailed expressions within a chaotic situation.

Poon: One thing they should think about is how to integrate *Comrades* within the whole social movement. The audience for this film is Hong Kong people, who have no problem understanding the context, but overseas audiences who do not know the context will have difficulty understanding the protest. This is part of narrative technique, and they may have to explain things in greater detail at the beginning or the end.

Chan: This may affect the structure of the film. When watching the film, I wondered how to let audiences who are not familiar with this social movement to enter the film's world as quickly as possible? If they added exposition or interviews, the structure of the entire film will be different, so this may not be something a short film can achieve, and the creative team needs to consider this.

Poon: I understand.

- Kwan: I quite agree with Eric Poon. Most of us know about the social movement, and understand that what happened on that day did not lead to greater conflict later, and that's why our feelings were strong when we watched it. The subtitles at the end says rioting carries a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment. If an outsider unfamiliar with the situation watched this film, they may not easily understand the situation and the meaning behind it, while we who are in its midst get more meaning out of it.
- Wong: If you have ever seen other works shot by this creative team, you'd realize they have an obvious structure, which is focused on particular events. As the movement is still in progress, they choose to present events within it. I agree that if foreign audiences were watching this film, they may not be able to understand the entire movement immediately. In the future, this team may combine several works together into a longer work, allowing people to see the face of the whole movement. I appreciate what they have presented here.
- Poon: I agree that they may be able to integrate other works into a longer film in the future, which may be one of the ways to go about it. But as a short film, I understand that I am being strict, but I refer to the titles at the beginning and end of the film. I understand that this is a big issue that is hard to explain with a few words, and the method they have chosen does solve the problem, but I wonder if there is a better way? I believe this is an issue worth considering by the filmmaker.
- Yang: They can give a little more explanation in the director's statement. This topic is difficult to express clearly in a few words. But as a ten-minute work, we should let it speak for itself. If the audience wants to learn more about the topic, they can do their own research.
- Chan: I understand that they didn't make the film for participating in competitions but because they want to respond to social events in a time of great social turmoil. They have chosen to shoot, edit and broadcast as events unfolded, and what we are criticizing now may not be their original intent.
- Poon: The title of *Comrades* is one of the themes of the whole movement and expresses the meaning behind it, and the fact that some participants may face ten years of imprisonment. This may be one of the ways we can interpretation this film.
- Yang: The value of this short film is that it captures what happened that day.
- Fan: The next work is *Paupera*.
- Yang: The shooting style of this work is more conventional and some of the actor's performances are lacking. The creative intent is very good, although the storytelling is plain. The director has a keen eye for observation but her skills are not so practiced.
- Chan: Overall, everyone's comments are quite consistent, in that we all agree that the character of the principal is weak, and because the focus of the film is the school,

this is a major flaw. The portrayal of new immigrants and taxi drivers is quite good because the director has an in-depth observation of this social class, which allows for a proper presentation of these two characters. The part about the school is clichéd, which is a pity.

Wong: The actors who play the new immigrants and drivers are very good. Because the story is focused on the school, this aspect is a big flaw relative to the other parts.

Kwan: I appreciate that the film presents a multi-faceted view of society and the difficulties and loneliness of different people in society. The characters come from four families, and the story starts and ends at the same point, which gives it a complete structure. I appreciate the film's ambition. What do the many blank spots at the school represent? They leave room for the audience's imagination, but what do they represent? The individual narrations only make sense towards the end, but this point is not made very clear.

Poon: The film relies on domestic violence as a common thread running through the whole story, but the stories don't really link up. Domestic violence doesn't tie the three storylines together, so that the film appears lose and the ending does not express the theme in a sufficiently powerful way. The director should have used the script or cinematography to help express the main theme. The radio is relegated to the background rather than being highlighted.

Fan: The next work is *Old Man And A Dog*.

Kwan: I watched the film twice, and noticed some more details. This is a challenging production. Everyone who makes films knows that it is very difficult to shoot children and animals, and the subject of old people is considered dull, but this work combines these elements. I enjoyed the treatment in many scenes. For example, the old man and the dog die, and it seems that the soul of the dog comes back to accompany the old man on his final journey. I also noticed that the two doctors are played by the same actor, which is very interesting. This looks like a realistic drama on the surface, but there are many non-realistic symbolisms. The veterinarian faces death with a positive attitude and brings them comfort, while the doctors takes a negative attitude in the face of the old man's impending death from cancer. Similarly, the appearance of the dog gives the old man some warmth during his last days, which is a deliberate metaphor.

Chan: I agree with Kwan's observations. This is not just a realist drama about an old man, and many elements are deliberately arranged, like the dog returning when the old man dies. The actors playing the mother and the child can be better, but fortunately the film is driven by the male lead and his naturalistic performance helps a lot.

Yang: I totally agree. The performance of the male lead is to the point.

Wong: Among the finalist narrative films, I favor this one. I agree with you in that the film is not too melodramatic nor intentionally plain, and the director reflects on the plight of old people. He does not gloss over these problems, but is able to grasp their bitter

conditions. The casting is appropriate and the lines on the actor's face adequately displays his harsh life.

Poon: I agree, the acting, appearance, character design and dialogue are strong and convincing. The casting is excellent.

Fan: The next work is *Spawning Migration*.

Chan: I was quite disturbed when watching this short film. At the beginning, the audience's emotions are agitated, and as the film progresses, you realize the director is using an institution as a metaphor. By the end of the film, the man and woman have to flee to a dreamy place. The final shot uses a wider aspect ratio, which is in contrast with the tight close-ups and tight aspect ratio used in the earlier part of the film up to that point, revealing a surreal environment, and the metaphor of the whole film is suddenly made clear. I admire the performance of the actors; since the mood of the entire film is tense, and their performance has to be maintained at a high state of tension.

Wong: This work is very challenging. The director sets up a confined space from which the characters must use their imagination to break out. The protagonist has to go through that road at night and figure out how to break through. The whole film is surreal. The director uses this environment to express the dire conditions of disabled people living in this situation. Under such circumstances, they want to create different possibilities for themselves. It is very important that they are able to escape in the end, and leaving this place represent is radical break.

Yang: Everyone in the film has no freedom. From the first scene, the protagonists are all trapped yet their imagination is free. The performances of the male and female leads are very good, and the male lead is especially powerful. He sacrifices everything in the end to protect his imagined "freedom". At the end of the film they come to the seaside, which is completely different from the beginning of the film. This arrangement is very good.

Poon: This work is challenging to watch, for it backs the audience into a corner. This is my second time watching, and it was equally hard going. I think this toughness was intended by the director. Its ending is very impressive; it is not a relief for me but is even more depressing.

Kwan: This film is very explosive. The story is takes place in a mental institution. All the design, including sets, lighting, art direction, etc. are very extreme. These are the film's main strength. I appreciate that the director combines all these elements with such gusto, but at the same time the effect is unnerving. When watching this film, I was attracted by the above elements and neglected the message of the film. It is easy to become too emotionally involved, which is its strength as well as a flaw.

Yang: The director uses camerawork to create a sense of oppression and pushes images to the extreme. Instead of feeling relieved at the end, we feel even more sad.

- Poon: He leads the audience into a very cruel world. This provides a very special viewing experience. As a viewer, I wonder what would happen when we enter this world? How can you escape?
- Fan: The next work is *Ladles*.
- Poon: This is a totally different viewing experience, completely opposite to the previous work.
- Yang: I appreciate this work because it leaves room for imagination and allows me to enter this serene world. This kind of film is rare these days, and with regards to the relationship between the two protagonists, you can let your imagination fill in the gaps.
- Poon: The director created a world that the audience can experience directly.
- Wong: As Ruby Yang said, the film gives the audience unlimited room for imagination. Lines play an important role in the film, reminding us of the relationship between nature and life, and the use of color, image and structure in it all take you into a seemingly "unfamiliar" world and let the audience reflect on what our urban life has become. What does it mean to return to basics? All the images are very beautiful and meaningful. The director makes use of technology to create an experimental and poetic work.
- Chan: It is regrettable thing is that the five jury members cannot watch this work in the theater<sup>2</sup>. This film would have been very beautiful on the big screen, particularly the scene on the beach, which is like an ink painting. The director is good at using color, composition and cinematography. The top shot of the beach shows people walking about, which is very poetic. However, the scenes after the beach, such as the mountains and caves. The interesting thing about the film is that it can be interpreted in different ways by the audience, but when I read the director's statement, it seems that what he wants to achieve is very simple and not as complex and poetic as I had assumed. Is the film a bit too mystifying?
- Yang: I don't understand the closing dialogue. It should be a bit more profound. The film seems too long and the director did not handle this aspect well.
- Wong: The director is good at dealing with images, and the dialogue or text pale in comparison. However, it's good that he is able to use images to express nature and a certain way of life.
- Kwan: I quite agree with Ernest Chan's view that the film falls short in the latter half, and the best part of the film is the opening scenes. When it got to the cave and the woods, the film falters. The use of drone shots is well done and the camera is able to keep pace with the old man and the child. He makes good use of the latest technologies, which he combines with cinematography to give audiences a new visual experience.

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<sup>2</sup> To prevent the spread of COVID-19, Open Category jury meeting of the 25<sup>th</sup> ifva was done via video conference.

- Fan: The next work is *ephwaipi*, which Eric Poon has made a declaration about.
- Chan: This work is divided into segments, which is very interesting. This type of narrative technique is unexpected. I admire this kind of creative effort and that they don't care whether the audience understands. Only directors at a certain stage of their careers do this. The overall feeling of this film is youthful and carefree. The directors appear in front of the camera to discuss and reflect, which is something only people their age would do.
- Yang: This film represents a very youthful and unrestrained kind of presentation, and the creators are not shy about expressing themselves this way. The art direction is very good, and even though their technique is not very mature, the filmmakers have great potential. Only young filmmakers would use this kind of technique.
- Wong: I didn't care for this work very much during the first round, but the fact that the film begins in French feels fresh and left an impression. It is obvious that the film is women-centered, and explores the role of women in society and in the creative realm. At the same time, the work references a large number of advertisements. On the one hand, the filmmakers want to be unconventional, yet have no choice but to rely on images from advertising, which is contradictory.
- Kwan: My views are similar, this film is very complex, containing many different genres. The directors want to go beyond certain narrative methods but makes use of very stylized images. Some parts are very straightforward, others are very precisely designed in which both the composition and dialogue are very accurate. Putting the two seemingly contradictory styles together is what makes the work interesting. This technique may reflect the conflicts of growing up for the younger generation or the contradiction between them and the society. This is their rebellion. It is their strength that they can do whatever they please, but how to judge the results depends on how we set the standards. If we favor a single, unified theme in films, this is something they lack.
- Fan: The next work is *Ward 11*.
- Chan: This is one of my favorite documentaries among the finalists. It is not just a documentary, but also includes the choreography of the two protagonists, so it is not a typical documentary based on interviews. The director also added a lot of aesthetic elements such as the use of atmospheric shots to augment the dancing sequences. With the addition of the theme of death, this is a very mature work.
- Yang: I agree. The director portrays the relationship between the two protagonists, using atmospheric shots and dancing to express their views on life and art, and the use of color is very good. I appreciate its whole artistic direction and expression.
- Poon: This is a very well-rounded and skillful documentary. In my mind, this is the best work out of the 10 finalists. Dance cannot be expressed as plainly as words, it needs to be conveyed with feelings. Having learnt about the relationship between the two

protagonists, I was most moved by the dance. In the first round, there were other dance video works as well, but the jury members all agreed that this one must be shortlisted as a finalist.

Wong: This work is poetic, and when the director shoots the interaction between the two, it feels like they are truly integrated. The two protagonists are not just partners in dance but also in life. The work also captures their views on society. This is a very emotionally expressive work.

Kwan: The director's skills are very good, and the work is very poetic. Through this work, the boundary between dance and life is erased, for the two are one and the same for both people. The boundary between dance video and documentary is also removed, and the protagonists' attitude on life are expressed through their lives. The film has no conventional structure or a message to convey. The director spends most of her effort on composition and images, but I would like to see more spiritual expressions and the director's own thoughts. Compared with other works such as *Old Man And A Dog*, which allows me to understand the director on a spiritual level, this work relies mostly on images, and I can't feel enough message to support the brilliant visuals.

Yang: Probably because dancing takes precedent, the spiritual expression is relatively weaker, and the voice-over fails to lift the work up to a higher level, so I agree with you about the lack of a spiritual dimension to this film.

Fan: The next work is *3 Generations 3 Days*.

Poon: The actors are very good and the story is smooth. The ending shot is especially memorable. Overall, this is a very high-quality work.

Wong: The cinematography and lighting all convey the relationship between the three generations. The biggest idea I got from this story is that the youngest woman is the most repressed; the granny can scold people while the mother can groan. The youngest woman is oppressed by the previous two generations; the granny is very traditional and favor the grandson, so the young woman finds herself shackled by tradition. Yet she does not struggle or try to free herself, and faces opposition when she wants to go on working holiday. The script presents these elements, both the good and the bad, as part of her destiny. Yet the character of the young woman is not very well-rounded so that after watching the film, even though I feel it is well made, the humanistic spirit could have been amplified.

Yang: The granny's performance is very good. I agree that the depiction of the young woman is not sufficient for us to understand the whole character, and we don't know whether she is an observer or a participant. In fact, people of the younger generation can control their fate the most, but she seems unable to. So, I find the script a bit lacking in this regard, but the filming and execution are very good.

Chan: I don't know if the director intended this, but if the young woman is more proactive or rebellious, the story would be different. The director sets up a patriarchal

background and mentions in the dialogue that women of all generations face the same issues. The youngest generation not only has to confront gender issues, but also age differences. She finds that even though they are all women, she cannot communicate with the previous generation or they do not understand her, and she is left in a vulnerable position. I think the director deliberately arranged this story about women from three generations from the point of view of the most vulnerable one. It's true that we don't know much about her inner thoughts, this may be a deliberate design of the screenplay.

Kwan: The characters are well-written and the dialogue is life-like; dealing with trivial things in the characters' daily lives, the dialogue feels natural. This is a seemingly ordinary story about three generations of women, and in the end, they have to leave each other. The whole story is very memorable and impressive. The mise-en-scene is appropriate and the story structure expresses the character's condition well, like the kitchen and stairway scenes in which two characters are framed. This is the cinematographic style of the film, and I appreciate its fresh imagery. However, there is something I don't understand. In one or two scenes, the dialogue overlaps or the ambient noise is very loud, is that deliberate or is there some problem with the sound recording? I am not quite sure.

Chan: The scenes and composition are outstanding throughout the film. The kitchen is very narrow and the composition is divided into many frames, showing that the character is trapped, highlighting the character's trapped state, which is quite outstanding.

Yang: The overlapping sounds in the nursing home reflects the environment., and shows various things happening outside the main story, which I think is good. At the end there are trains and different ambient sounds, reflecting real-life situations, so I believe this reflects the director's intention.

Fan: The next work is *Endless Chain of Lies*.

Chan: This film reminds me of *Chungking Express*, probably due to the Central Escalator! The dialogues and reactions of the characters are very interesting and a bit like comics; the acting is not life-like. The director has a unique world view, and the color, music, background and rhythm all reflect how the director views the city, the relationship between people, etc., and shows a special sensibility. I really like fade out on the two characters at the end and the cinematography of the seaside scene is beautiful.

Yang: The film is very much like Wong Kar Wai's films, and I am immediately reminded of *Chungking Express*. The director's technique, colors, etc. are youthful and shows the director's careful arrangement.

Wong: This work has a long-lost Hong Kong urban feeling, depicting the loneliness of the city, Central at night, random encounters, etc. It's a long-lost feeling of Hong Kong cinema. The ending at the seaside is special, so that in addition to the urban scenes, we see another side of the city. It is good for a short film to present this kind of feeling, and the handling of color is good.

Poon: This is a youth movie, and is very enjoyable to watch. The scenery and the dialogue between the two characters reflect what young people have to face and their mindset... The laundromat is a very interesting setting. In the past, Hong Kongers did not need laundromats and only recently have they become popular. Why the emergence of laundromats? Some people cite the cramped living conditions of Hong Kong. I think this is a meaningful setting, because as young people move out on their own, the places they live may not even have room for washing machines. Laundromats are very popular in foreign countries, and putting them in the context of Hong Kong provides a fresh experience. The director or screenwriter tries to tell a story about young people and accurately capture the young people's mindsets and how they confront society, the environment, their slash lives in which they handle many things at the same time, working at the lowest level in the cultural industry in which anyone can change the character design of the female lead... The director is very good at putting different elements into the work, using a satirical rather than complaining tone, which is very interesting.

Kwan: Both the actor's interpretation and the director's technique are very "cool". I was a little resistant during the first quarter, but I could see that her method and technique are skilled and the script is also very accurate. As the film develops towards the middle part, the director uses advertising to convey the themes of "true" and "false". At first, the interaction between the male and female protagonists are very fake, especially the part where she mixes her clothes with that of the guy, and the audience begins to understand why she seems to be dissatisfied with everything and tries to cover things up. Then in the running scene, she lets go of something and we learn that she and her boyfriend had separated, and she becomes more sincere. At the end, the two talk about their dreams, and the guy mentions that he wants to write a zombie story and thus reveal that he is a passionate person (as opposed how he appears on the outside). The film is filled with these contrasts between "true" and "false" from beginning to end, the outward appearance and what society sees, it's like the emperor's new clothes. In the end, the two part ways without incident, but the guy turns around to say something that reveals his feelings for her. This film about true and false uses the most fake and stylized means of expression like advertising, which are ways of hiding their true selves. The explicit treatment of cinematography matches the theme to some extent, and the world view is one where everything is fake but people are sincere on the inside if they dare to show it. In other words, both the storyline and the style being used speak the same message as the film delivers like a metaphor. This is my reading of it, so the film is not just a love story but contains other layers, which makes it more interesting.

Fan: The last work is *Confession*.

Chan: I want to hear your opinions first. Having seen Tsai Ming Liang's non narrative film *Your Face* and I have drawn some comparisons, but I want to hear from you first.

Yang: I have also seen *Your Face*, so when watching this I wonder if this is a documentary or drama? The end credits show a list of actors. If this was a documentary, I would

like it more. Watching the film, I have come to know these people and their faces, but when the credits reveal they are actors, I feel a bit cheated.

Chan: I felt confused when I saw the credits. Are they reenacting a real interview? Are the actors playing the part of interviewees? We don't know.

Wong: The director would not have made a mistake with the credits because it's important.

Kwan: The word "actor" is key.

Chan: This affects how I judge this film. If it was a documentary, I would look at it from a documentary point of view, and I would appreciate the silent parts, but if it was designed, then the way I view it would be different.

Poon: I agree, if they are reenacting, the silent parts would be fake and they would not be "confessions". My written comments are based on the assumptions that these are real interviews. From a directorial point of view, giving interviewees a silent stare is a brilliant technique because interviews are a psychological game, and sometimes we use the silent moments to anticipate what will happen next. Sometimes directors would deliberately slow down the pace to allow time to foment interviewees' emotions. This is a very particular technique, but if it was simply acting, then the whole thing is too simple.

Kwan: I want to know if he filled in documentary or narrative film on the application form?

Szeto: On the application form, he filled in "experimental".

Yang: What did he say in the Director's Statement?

Fan: He didn't say clearly one way or another.

Poon: It could have been based on real experiences and the reinterpreted through acting, which is another emotional state.

Yang: Another possibility is that the director knew the interviewees and asked them to play themselves.

Kwan: We will give the work benefit of the doubt and assume it is a documentary. If it was nominated for awards, we will judge it according to the production technique.

Poon: Because the film is based on interviews and confessions, a lot depends on how resistant you are to the idea of acting. Sometimes when we plan to interview people, we know ahead of time what we are going to ask and they know what they will say in response. Sometimes after an interview, we'd ask interviewees to recount their stories in one go rather than presenting things in a conventional question and answer manner. We would set up the camera and allow interviewees the time to organize thoughts in their own minds before the cameras start to roll. This method is different

from the usual interview but is equally valid. It gives interviewees a heads up and time to prepare their stories, and the interview itself is based on their real experience, it's just that we give them time to rehearse.

Wong: According to what you just said, you would view this work as a documentary?

Poon: Yes, as long as the content is not made up but based on real experiences. It's ok if the director chooses to film people in a studio. To me, a documentary is not limited to observational, direct cinema method, and can encompass many different techniques. Documentaries have the power to force you to find new forms and new ways of expression. This is my opinion.

Yang: Documentaries should reflect reality. If it was re-presenting reality and the interviewees are acting out their own confessions, that's no problem. But this means the work is halfway between experimental, narrative and documentary.

Fan: We are trying to get in touch with the director. In the past, we have encountered similar problems, like questioning whether a Youth Category work was directed by the entrant or have participation by teachers, etc. This affects how we view and interpret the work. According to the information provided, the entrant had listed the work as experimental. It depends on how jury members want to interpret this work, and judge it fairly according to objective standards. We have discussed all 10 works, and should move on to nominating works for awards. You can choose your favorite works and we will discuss them.

Chan: How many should we choose?

Fan: From one to three works according to the number of awards. You can pick four to five if you want, we can narrow down our choices for discussion.

Chan: I nominate *Ward 11*, *3 Generations 3 Days* and *Old Man And A Dog*.

Yang: *Old Man And A Dog*, *3 Generations 3 Days* and *Endless Chain of Lies*.

Poon: *Comrades*, *Ward 11* and *3 Generations 3 Days*.

Wong: *Comrades*, *Ladles* and *Old Man And A Dog*.

Kwan: *Comrades*, *Old Man And A Dog*, *Ward 11* and *Endless Chain of Lies*.

Fan: We have narrowed our choices. I will list some works that did not receive any nominations and we can eliminate them from our discussion. These include *Paupera*, *Spawning Migration*, *ephwaipi* and *Confession*. *Old Man And A Dog* has received the most nominations, but that does not mean it will automatically get Gold, and can just be the common denominator. Only Eric Poon did not choose this work. *Comrades*, *Ward 11* and *3 Generations 3 Days* each got three nominations, while *Endless Chain of Lies* received two votes and *Ladles* received one vote. Do you have works that you wish to nominate for Gold or Silver, or are you still undecided?

- Poon: I nominate *Ward 11* for Gold. The story and theme are profound and the two artists are important. Using a mixture of documentary techniques and dance as a medium, the production standard is high and is an excellent work.
- Chan: I also second *Ward 11* for Gold Award. This story is hard to film and is about a relationship. The two rely on dance to connect everything and the director has done a good job.
- Fan: Do you have other nominations for Gold or other awards?
- Yang: I nominate *Old Man And A Dog* for Silver. As I mentioned before, the director succeeds in conveying the bitter state of the protagonist, the desperation of the old man and the sense of hopelessness. The shots where he looks out of the window is well done, and his encounter with the dog is not overly melodramatic. The handling of the three characters is skillful and the editing technique is mature.
- Kwan: I nominate *Old Man And A Dog* for Gold. I like *Ward 11* too, but *Old Man And A Dog* is more difficult to make by comparison, and to me it is more profound. The director uses some surrealist techniques to tell the story. For example, in one scene, the camera films the old man's back, and the voice of the grandson is heard, saying, "Grandpa, should I have come earlier?"<sup>3</sup> Also, using the same actor to play two doctors with different attitudes, all these are deliberate choices and exceed most realist dramas. The script is also outstanding, especially the scenes where the old man is home alone. If there was no dialogue, it would be very boring, but the director handles these scenes very well.
- Wong: There are a few works that I really like, including *Comrades*, *Ward 11* and *3 Generations 3 Days*. But if I were to choose between *Ward 11* and *Old Man And A Dog* for Gold Award, I would choose *Old Man And A Dog* because I agree with Kwan that this work is more profound. *Ward 11* is a good-looking work, but in terms of humanistic spirit, *Old Man And A Dog* is superior.
- Chan: I also want to nominate *3 Generations 3 Days* for Gold or Silver award. It is adept at using cinematic language to tell its story, and that's why it is worth considering for Gold or Silver award.
- Fan: We have at least three works in the running for Gold Award, including *Old Man And A Dog*, *Ward 11* and *3 Generations 3 Days*. Are you ready to choose the Gold Award from these three?
- Yang: I can switch my vote for *Endless Chain of Lies* to *Ward 11*. The film expresses the relationship between the two protagonists and how they value dance very well.
- Wong: My pick for Silver Award is *Ward 11*.

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<sup>3</sup> In the film, the dog has died in the previous scene.

- Fan: You are now nominating this for Silver, whereas you didn't have any nominations, right?
- Wong: That's right, my decision is based on our previous discussion. For me, *Comrades* has special meaning, but of course it's up to all of you, but I hope that *Comrades* can get Special Mention.
- Poon: I am not at all opposed to *Comrades* getting Special Mention and it's a good thing if it won a higher award. Compared to other works, it deserves a Special Mention. As for choosing among *Old Man And A Dog*, *Ward 11* and *3 Generations 3 Days*, we should consider the nature of ifva. In addition to narrative films, should we allow films that record lives, that incorporate documentary and dance video to good effect? Making a film like this is no easier than making a narrative drama, especially if the script is not written by the director and came from the lives of the two dancers. The difficulty lies in conveying dance while at the same time conveying their lives, and the result is very good. By comparison, *Old Man And A Dog* has certain flaws, while the script, directing and acting of *3 Generations 3 Days* is alright. Considering the theme of ifva, I favor a work like *Ward 11*.
- Kwan: *Old Man And A Dog* is a narrative drama, but we should not simply treat it as a narrative film and neglect its independent spirit because it is both independent and innovative. I also like *Ward 11*, but it has some flaws, such as we could see more about Hock's death. The film emphasizes that the two are one and the same, so Hock's death is important. What happens at the end to the other half who still lives on? Now the film lacks one final touch for a feeling of completion. What would happen when lx is alone? The film does not say and there is a blank.
- Chan: *Old Man And A Dog* is a good work, but we are not talking about whether it is good or bad, but which work is better. Aside from the performance of the male lead, the other actors in *Old Man And A Dog* are lacking, so I hesitate whether it deserves the Gold Award. Of course, *Ward 11* has flaws too, but it is more complete and the expression is better than *Old Man And A Dog*. I guess we can discuss some more.
- Yang: Can I propose a giving two Gold awards? If we decide that *Comrades* is Special Mention, I think we can encourage artists to make different types of films that reflect the current situation and lead to greater diversity.
- Wong: If we give two Golds, does that mean we mut omit Silver?
- Fan: In principle, this is the case. But in the discussion just now, it seems that different jury members have different films that they like. process just now, each jury has different favorites for individual works. I would like to ask everyone whether you are making this suggestion because you cannot reach agreement? Or is it because you think both works are of similar quality and cannot come to a decision?
- Chan: Right now, the two works have similar number of votes, perhaps with one vote's difference. That's why Ruby Yang made this suggestion.

Fan: I understand, that's why we have five jury members. Are these two works equally important and you cannot rank one higher than the other? As a competition, we want to choose a work that stands for this moment in time, which will get the Gold Award this year. In the 17<sup>th</sup> ifva, we had two Gold Awards<sup>4</sup>. In the end, it depends on whether the two works are really evenly matched. If they are to share an award, it means that they are the two most outstanding works in ifva this year.

Yang: It seems it is down to *Old Man And A Dog* and *Ward 11* getting Gold or Silver.

Poon: Have we eliminated *3 Generations 3 Days*?

Fan: I think so. except for Ernest Chan, no one had suggested this work for the Gold Award.

Chan: If it didn't get Gold Award, I would nominate *3 Generations 3 Days* for Special Mention. I hope we can have one more slot for Special Mention.

Wong: Can we have more than one Special Mention?

Poon: If we have more than one slot, I'd like to nominate *Ladles*.

Chan: Between *Ladles* and *Endless Chain of Lies*, I would like to nominate the latter for Special Mention. It is a meaningful work.

Fan: You are thinking in the right direction, because Special Mention should carry some meaning. It is not a Bronze Award after Gold and Silver, but rather, the work should have something worth mentioning.

Wong: If Gold and Silver is a choice between *Old Man And A Dog* and *Ward 11*, I want to nominate *Comrades* and *Ladles* for Special Mention.

Yang: I nominate *Comrades* and *Endless Chain of Lies* for Special Mention.

Poon: So, *Comrades* is a shoo-in for Special Mention?

Chan: I agree with *Comrades* and *Endless Chain of Lies* getting Special Mention.

Kwan: I agree.

Fan: You all picked *Comrades* as Special Mention, while three jury members nominated *Endless Chain of Lies* and two nominated *Ladles*. Would you object if we awarded Special Mention to *Comrades* and *Endless Chain of Lies*?

All: No objections.

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<sup>4</sup> The Open Category of the 17<sup>th</sup> ifva had two Gold Award winners, *1+1* and *Meeting of the Half Moons*.

Fan: Let's return to the discussion about Gold and Silver awards. You have exchanged views on this matter, If you have just one vote for Gold Award, which work will you vote for?

Chan: I vote for *Ward 11*.

Poon: Me, too.

Wong: I vote for *Old Man And A Dog*.

Kwan/Yang: I agree.

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## 25th ifva Awards Open Category Award Winners

### Gold Award

*Old Man And A Dog*

(Chan Hon-yan)

### Silver Award

*Ward 11*

(Tsang Tsui-shan)

### Special Mention

*Comrades*

(Kanas Liu)

*Endless Chain of Lies*

(Liknifena)

## **25th ifva Awards Open Category Juror's Comment**

### *Comrades*

Mary Wong: The strength of *Comrades* lies in its abandonment of slogan-shouting approach. Through a series of short stories, the film makes up a bigger picture that reveals realistic details and inner state of every single being in a turbulent environment. The film has made immediate responses to social events, and its production method is of high significance. The film deserves recognition regarding its social and artistic values.

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: It is very challenging to film real-time conflicts within a close distance. Considering this, *Comrades* is exceptionally skillful in terms of its uncluttered editing and lively-paced rhythm. There is, however, a common limitation regarding documentaries about the Anti-ELAB movement we received this year. Generally there lacks the expression of different thoughts and feelings by individual beings in a social movement. Having their faces masked and their names hidden, protestors are portrayed as comrades or fellows. Concerning this, I find the problem of *Comrades* particularly obvious after watching *Inside the Red Brick Wall* at HKIndieFF. However, I still appreciate the fact that *Comrades* has promptly recorded certain aspects of the movement.

Eric Poon: From a close distance, *Comrades* captures frontline actions in the Anti-ELAB movement and records confrontations between hardcore protestors and police on the street. Viewing the tension and texture of these scenes, one can experience the coexisting courage and fear. The film is made with outstanding shooting and editing techniques.

Ruby Yang: Good observation style of documentary filmmaking. A chapter of Hong Kong history has to be recorded.

Kwan Pun-leung: While most documentaries about social movements favour a grand perspective, the film managed to converge on street protests during one single night. As protestors were fighting and retreating, the camera alternated between wide shots and close ups. The film captures the brotherhood, vulnerability and solidarity of these young people in a calm and precise style.

### *Pauper*

Mary Wong: The film depicts the interweave of people in our city. The tragedy lies between the seen and the unseen. Written with better details, Ah Hong the new immigrant is the most established character. The elementary school teacher, on the other hand, feels flats even he makes more presence.

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: The plot in the school shows some flaws. The dialogue, which is somewhat too straightforward, diminishes the power of the story. The scenes about the nursing home and the taxi driver are better. Personally I think Tai Bo's performance is particularly

admirable. The conversation between him and the woman passenger can easily become awkward, but his life-like acting makes the drama convincing.

Eric Poon: The story revolves around three different characters who do not come across each other: a young, inexperienced teacher, a single mother who has to support her family and a taxi driver who has seen it all. They were connected by a child abuse tragedy on screen, while the audience were feeling the hopelessness and guilt when stepped into their shoes.

Ruby Yang: The theme is well expressed and with good intention. The script is slightly conventional but the direction is competent, the acting of the driver and the new immigrant are good.

Kwan Pun-leung: Like a multi-faceted mirror, the film reflects the living situation of several socially vulnerable groups. Although each character walks the path of life alone, their journeys lead to latent social crisis and tragedy. The creator demonstrates acute observation and immense compassion towards the society.

### ***Old Man And A Dog***

Mary Wong: Revolving around old people and death, the film unfolds its plot in a sober tone without pretentious warmth. This is what I appreciate. While the old man is quite aloof towards life, the doctor and his colleagues bear the same mindset as well. The appearance of the dog only bring a faint sense of purpose to this apathetic world. There is no intense joy or sadness. Perhaps that's all we need.

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: The acting of the mother and grandson could be more natural. However, Paul Che's performance brightens up everything. Whenever he appears, the scene becomes captivating. This holds true even for a shot in which he is simply watching through the window with his back facing the camera. I suppose the filmmaker has the experience of owning dogs, which explains his sophisticated execution of details. The dog serves as an allegory to the old man. When he passes away, he is accompanied by the dog's spirit who returns. The significance lies in it is particularly immense.

Eric Poon: Paul Che's excellent acting performance gives substance to the whole picture, and contributes to the theme about life and death. The side-story about the pet dog and grandson also enriches the motif of life.

Ruby Yang: The story is told fluidly and with details to production details. The actor who plays the man is very convincing as a dying person. The bond between the dog and the man is well told. Using the death of the dog to parallel the man's predicament is well told.

Kwan Pun-leung: Children, dog, old people and death, all these pose enormous challenges for filmmaker, who braced them head on with a narrative that goes beyond merely realistic approach. In a mellow and gifted style, *Old Man And A Dog* is a calm and substantial work that cherishes humanism.

### *Spawning Migration*

Mary Wong: The film probes into the life of psychopaths. The most significant aspect is its attempt to understand their imagination and aspiration. In the end, they advance from an incarcerating indoor space to the seaside, creating a remarkable scene. However, I'm not able to understand the relationship between Hong Kong and Taiwan depicted in the film.

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: Very provocative and intentionally disturbing. The leading actor has amazing level of energy, which could almost be misjudged as a mentally handicapped person. The story could be understood as a metaphor for liberation from an imprisoned world and pursuit for freedom. There is an odd but romantic feeling created by the imitated punting. At the end, the two walk out nude from a structure that resembles a turned over boat. The scene is made with sudden wide shots and the effect is astonishing.

Eric Poon: Emotionally challenging, the film pushes audience to extreme states with its characters, images and narrative. The surrealistic moment in the ending scene seems to offer an exit path. But I guess even the narrator cannot tell where it leads to.

Ruby Yang: Full of tension and camerawork captures the internal struggle of the characters. Excellent casting. The cinematic use of squareness for confinement vs the freedom of space at the end is a good direction.

Kwan Pun-leung: Blending brutal, romantic and magical elements, the work is vigorous and laden with raw power.

### *Ladles*

Mary Wong: In an experimental fashion, it is a work that inspires imagination. With plain but elegant visual languages, it explores nature and life, and connects thoughts around the world.

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: The aerial shots of beaches are strikingly beautiful and resemble ink wash paintings. The overall sound design is of high quality as well. However, leaving the beach, the scenes about mountains and woods feel sluggish. The conversation between Ricky Yeung and the child about oceans and books seem to compare the ceaseless movement of sea water to the endless pursuit of book or knowledge. Eventually the camera takes us to a cave and communicates a sense of returning to the primal state. While the ending leaves room for interpretation, it still feels deliberately mystifying.

Eric Poon: The aerial view shots are peaceful and offers meditative gazes.

Ruby Yang: Simple & poetic in execution. Connections between nature and between two people. The sound design was meditative as well as showing the force of nature.

Kwan Pun-leung: Combining possibilities of new technology, the film develops its narrative and aesthetics. A truly original work.

### *ephwaipi*

Mary Wong: The film describes the authors' pursuit for purposes in the society from an apparent feminine perspective. What amuses us is their attempt to break loose from the formal constrain of mainstream movies. Nonetheless, the overall visual style bears a resemblance to that of genre films. Are the filmmakers trying to tell us that there are always limitation when one seeks meanings in such a society?

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: A youthful and interesting short film. Disjointed and casual, *ephwaipi* gives off a playful air with eccentric rhythm. There is a sense of seemingly intended incompleteness. It's like a bunch of broken pieces collaged together, or a few pages randomly torn from a journal. In its most amusing scene, the two directors show themselves and discuss their work. It's not a prize-winning title, but its candidness and nativity are something we should treasure.

Eric Poon: (Declare Conflicts of Interest)

Ruby Yang: Conception is good but fragmented. Good content but the execution is superficial but of course youth is about exploration. So why not try to fantasize!

Kwan Pun-leung: Forthright and unrestrained, the film is precisely conceived as well. It intends to challenge regulations and pursue goals within a self-defined contest. Consisting of multiple styles, experiments and explorations, *ephwaipi* reflects the rebellious and contradictory spirit one bears during the coming-of-age process.

### *Ward 11*

Mary Wong: Addressing the theme of dance, the film transcends its subject matter by exploring the connection of two people concerning art, society and life. It also features poetic images merging the two characters into one.

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: Mature and gentle, the film consists of interviews and dance performances. The relationship between the two leads is moving. Moreover, the effective scenery shots illustrate poetic beauty and appropriate rhythms.

Eric Poon: It is usually the real-life story that intrigues us, and that explains the enjoyment of viewing documentaries. With precise cinematography and editing that show the right amount of everything, the film allows characters to naturally express themselves in the picture. What moves us most is the dance of life performed by the two leads.

Ruby Yang: Beautifully executed piece between love, dance and partnership.

Kwan Pun-leung: With an alternative and poetic approach, the film dissolves the boundary between dance and life and realises the blending of art and documenting. With mature techniques, the film is about surpassing social constraints wife existence.

### ***3 Generations 3 Days***

Mary Wong: Personally I feel the work demonstrates how women of the lower strata adhere to the tradition and confined themselves with it. The young female lead of the film is particularly repressive. While the old lady can express herself loudly, the younger one is always putting other people – women of the two older generations and men of her age group - first. This is something exceptionally successful about this film. The personality of the main actress, however, should be better developed.

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: The fix framed long shots are well devised. Depicting the gender-biased situation confronting women of three generations, the film narrates a life-like story in a sensitive and delicate style.

Eric Poon: Good script-writing, directing and acting. The long take of the ending scene is incredibly impressive.

Ruby Yang: Good script and direction. Natural performances by three generations of actress. The generational differences and challenges they face were told with simple elegance.

Kwan Pun-leung: Excellent and original mis-en-scene, cinematography and creation of atmosphere. Subtle performance. The portrayal of characters leave a lingering aftertaste.

### ***Endless Chain of Lies***

Mary Wong: The key ideas are likely to be urban nights and loneliness. The film narrates the unusual encounter between a man and a woman who are living a mundane life in Hong Kong. While the picture delivers the mood of urban sentimentally, its characters could be written with better richness.

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: The film carries a personal style regarding its colour tone, music and rhythm. There is a touch of comic approach. And it slightly feels like a younger version of Chungking Express. The sea in the ending scene is gracefully filmed.

Eric Poon: Revolving around a pair of young man and woman who come across each other in a laundry shop, the film employs a lively-paced narrative with enduring lines. Their short-lived encounter is portrayed with scenes that blur reality and capture the fleeting intimacy between them.

Ruby Yang: Good art direction and cinematography. Nice choices of actor & actress. The theme was expressed in playful and artistic ways.

Kwan Pun-leung: With sophisticated skills as well as fashionable design and narrative, the film deconstructs the hypocritical nature of our society. An eye-catching piece.

### *Confession*

Mary Wong: The “silent” moments are meaningful. It exerts a force and an alienating effect of mundane life. However I think there is an incongruity between the interviews and the overall atmosphere.

Ernest Chan Chi-wa: The three confessions are powerfully filmed. However, they remind me of *Your Face* by Tsai Ming-liang, which also features close ups of human faces and allows intimate observation of facial expressions. There are moments of silence in Tsai’s project as well. Therefore, I do not find *Confession* surprising. And I wonder if these interviews are pre-conceived and rehearsed.

Eric Poon: The power of these interviews do not only originate from their succinct content but also those silent gazes towards the camera during which the interviewers and interviewees are holding their breath. These thought-provoking moments, which display the power of silence, can be deemed as a form of confession as well.

Ruby Yang: Interesting concept, the viewers are forced to confront these people’s faces and study them. One begins to form perception about these people but the filmmakers slowing revealing their inner thoughts, fear and vulnerabilities. I wonder why the filmmaker only chooses these stories.

Kwan Pun-leung: Unveiling the process of filmmaking, the work returns to the basic of media and penetrates life with the simplest and most direct force.