

The 27th ifva Awards
Animation Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jury Members: Lo Che Ying (Lo), Wong Ping (Wong), Kong Kee (Kong),
Chiu Li-wei (Chiu), Mandy Tsang (Tsang)

Organizer representative: Kattie Fan (Fan), Sandy Lai, Sammy Wong, Jessica Law

Fan: Today, our goal is to select awards from these ten works. We can discuss each work first, and finally choose a Gold award, the winner of which will receive a cash prize of HK\$30,000, a Silver award, the winner of which will receive a cash prize of HK\$20,000, and a Special Mention. The winner of the top award from Hong Kong will also receive an Apple MacBook Pro. If there are no questions, we will start to discuss each work one by one. The first work is *Once Upon a Time in Tuen Mun*.

Kong: We often see a lot of local-style works in Hong Kong. *Once Upon a Time in Tuen Mun* has a special approach for a Hong Kong-style work. For example, the story spans 10,000 years. I understand that it's not entirely made in Hong Kong, which gives it a special chemistry. That's why I chose this work as a finalist.

Wong: I agree. Compared with many works with local themes in recent years, this work transforms a flat story into a more interesting one. In terms of traversing time and space, it is handled quite naturally and smoothly, and not in a conventional way.

Chiu: I am not very familiar with Hong Kong. When I read this work, I feel that it is somewhat similar to *Nyala*, which is a cautionary tale, a work that tries to issue warnings or provide prophecies. Comparatively speaking, the theme of *Once Upon a Time in Tuen Mun* is a bit unstable. At the beginning, it talks about the issue of change, and then it's about the fulfillment of promises, interspersed with themes of countryside and global warming, and finally back to time. It's not very focused. The quality of the visuals is inconsistent, the beginning is great but the middle part doesn't hold up. The visuals at the beginning are interesting. In terms of the visual and expressive intentions of the work, the narrative is not very clear, and the theme is a bit wobbly.

Let me talk about *Nyala*, it is a cautionary tale. it is also a story about going

on a journey and coming back. The visuals of this work are interesting and full of tension. But both works have some points that are not very clear to me.

- Tsang: It's not easy to write a story. Although there are many works on the theme of time, *Once Upon a Time in Tuen Mun* is complete and I don't feel lost when watching it, so the work deserves praise. However, the director did not make good use of the subject matter, nor did he improve the quality of the visuals and make the work more artistic. Of course, I understand that artistic style is very personal. The storytelling of this work is interesting keeps developing, it captured my attention.
- Lo: I have always encouraged works with local themes, especially by young people who express their feelings, doubts and expectations about the current situation in Hong Kong, which is difficult to do. But there are too many metaphors in the work and too many things he wants to say, including commitment, time, change and determination. The treatment is superficial and not fully expressed. I also think that the art direction is the biggest problem. The style of the visuals is not unique and fresh, and the handling of animation actions is not refined, which affects the look and feel of the work.
- Fan: The next work is *Nyala*.
- Kong: The style, images and techniques of the works are attractive. Compared with *Once Upon a Time in Tuen Mun*, even though it does not have dynamic expressions, the style and movements of the visuals in *Nyala* are very complete, and the storytelling aspect is also in line with the visual style, creating an intriguing effect.
- Wong: As a Hong Kong work, this one is very amazing. As you mentioned, the expression may be a bit ambiguous, but I like works with this quality, which leaves room for imagination. Short films do not need to be too detailed and can be more free and experimental. The work at least allows me to see the director's personal style or distinctiveness. It is a difficult work to make, but it is unique. This is my favorite work. I wrote the word "superb" in my comments.
- Chiu: The protagonist turns into a human in the middle, but then regrets becoming human. He forgets his own language when he goes back to his own kind. But in the part about regretting becoming a human being, the explanation is too simple. He just used some projections and conveys the information in a stylized way, which makes people unable to understand the state of the

character's mind. The visuals are really interesting, but in fact, all the finalist works are visually great, so I think such visual standards has become a benchmark. I place more emphasis on the mastery of the storytelling.

Tsang: I agree with Wong very much. The spirit of independent films is to let directors create their own worlds, and the value of *Nyala* is exactly that the filmmaker does not care whether people can understand the story but simply expresses what he wants. It has a strong artistic style, and this is a visual competition after all. *Once Upon a Time in Tuen Mun* is relatively less successful, while *Nyala* fully expresses itself and brings visual enjoyment to the audience at the same time. Therefore, I think the work fully embodies ifva's independent creative spirit.

Lo: The personal style of the whole work is very obvious, whether it is the visual setting or the choice of animation style, including the use of real and detailed movements. It has a good grasp of the subject matter, expressing people's choices and affirmation of identity. The message is very clear, the handling of music is simple, and only one type of music is used, but the placement is appropriate. The only thing is that, as Chiu said, when the protagonist returns to the animal world, it would be better if the film provides more motivations. Of course, now the use of visuals of the countryside outside the car window and the character seeing photos of nyala on the phone is valid. The five-minute duration is just right. I quite like this work.

Wong: The sense of humor in the film is also good. For example, one cannot help but laugh during the scene when the protagonist finds his partner in a bar. This kind of handling is not easy to master, and if not done well, the results can be embarrassing. The director creates this effect with one or two sudden cuts, and then brings the audience back to the original storyline so that the work doesn't appear bland.

Lo: There are not many visuals, but they are very effective. The protagonist becomes human, encounters an object of love in a bar, and performing plastic surgery on an operating table. The length of the work is short but everything is to the point and interesting.

Fan: The next work is *The Visit* from Singapore.

Chiu: *The Visit* is my favorite work. It's full of love. The filmmaker must have done lot of research before making it. The editing is also outstanding, mainly because it includes a lot of incredible details. The subject matter of the work is that the protagonist's father is in prison, but the protagonist wonders if it is

the father or herself who is trapped. This kind of theme can be very melodramatic, Taiwanese call this spilling dog blood, but the creator is very restrained and controlled and uses a matter-of-fact tone. Many small details, such as the ring on the hand, the light and shadow, the transition from foreground to background, color and even rhythm, are all excellent.

I would compare *The Visit* with *Depths of Night* from Hong Kong, their themes are a little bit similar, both are about parents and finding oneself. The expression of *Depths of Night* is very gorgeous and emotional, while *The Visit* is very restrained. The creator could have added many crying scenes, but instead uses simple still shots, light and shadow as well as her own voice-over to express emotions. Her narration is sometimes emotional and sometimes objective. The artistic technique of the wool blanket blowing in the wind feels airy to a certain extent, and avoids the typical clumpy feeling of clay or puppet animation characters, which is why I like this work very much. The subject matter it portrays is both very large and very small. The director must have done a lot of research about prison visits, so that we almost believe it is the director's own story, which makes the work very persuasive. In the video call scene, the daughter asks her father if he could hear. I find it very moving. The detail about connection problems is linked to the relationship between father and daughter. They can't connect with one another and are moving apart.

Tsang: Some parts of the work move me. There is a scene where the video communication between the daughter and the father suddenly breaks off, and I can feel the helplessness of the character. The story expresses the traditional Chinese spirit of filial piety and the sense of responsibility it entails, which leads to the helplessness of the protagonist in this situation. With many stop-motion animations, you will feel that the characters are lifeless, but in the scene of the daughter in the car with tears in her eyes, you feel that she is alive. Therefore, the director is very successful with the material selection of the character. She must have worked very hard on this film. The craftsmanship and effort required to shoot stop-motion animation is definitely substantial, and there are many details to be taken care of. Every character feels alive and the story is complete. The challenge of making stop motion animation, the lifelike characters, and the resonant father-daughter bond all make me consider this to be an award-winning work. There are many scenes of the daughter facing the challenges of life alone, which causes people to identify with the character's feelings and shows the director's skills in conveying emotions.

Wong: I also like this work very much. I like its frankness the most, although it is a

bit melodramatic. Generally, works on this subject use sensational techniques to talk about "love", but this film adds the element of a daughter blaming her father. This emotion is very real, expressing the problem of getting along with one's family. The daughter hopes to get her father's love while blaming him at the same time. I think this unadulterated frankness is invaluable. The emotion of the character is connected to the inextricable relationship between father and daughter. The work is highly finished and the props are meticulous, with many details such as the cracks on the leather chair. The scene of the video chat is outstanding. Stop-motion animation can sometimes be gorgeous and dynamic, but the director chooses to capture this moment with a tranquil scene. When the daughter asks her father if he can hear her voice, the sudden increase in the volume and the subtle emotions displayed by the characters, such as irritability and impatience, all affected me. This work moved me more than others.

Kong: Even if the film was live action with real actors, it will not be better than this stop-motion animation, because it will lack the sense of distance and poetry. The work is richly emotional, and using stop-motion animation with the characters not displaying too many expressions make gives the story a sense of tension.

Lo: This is the only stop-motion animation this year, and it is also a very high-quality animation. The overall art direction, way of expression, the cinematic structure and editing, and the use of shots such as close-up and wide-angle shots, all these elements create tension in the film. I believe that few people have the experience of visiting prisoners, and the director must have worked very hard in creating this work. A regular prison visit can make people experience a lot of emotional ups and downs, so the choice of subject matter is wise. I wish the director could have explained the background of the story more, such as why the protagonist's mother never appears, why the father is in prison, etc., which may make people more involved in the story. It's still a very powerful work, without being too melodramatic, and the visuals are good even though the characters don't have too many expressions. The dubbing is a little too emotional, it would be better if it was toned down a bit.

Wong: I agree.

Kong: Perhaps due to budget constraints. She cannot use the same style of dubbing. Obviously, the dubbing of father and daughter belong to two different methods, which alienate the audience.

Wong: On the contrary, I feel that the part in which the daughter reads a letter to her

father in prison is like a confession, due to the fact that they feel an emotional distance from each other. During the preliminary round, I also thought that my daughter's monologue would be better if the tone of the dubbing could be less wooden, especially in the beginning, but towards the end, it becomes more natural, like pouring out her feelings.

Fan: The next one is *Butterfly Jam* from Taiwan.

Lo: This one is also about a father and daughter relationship.

Tsang: The only thing I appreciate about this work is that he uses the same technique to constantly change the visuals. I sometimes feel that these technology-driven animations may not be able to adequately convey messages. Of course, the works also put a lot of thought into the technique, but I find the story development not very involving. It may be better to watch it in a theater. The approach is not very stunning, so the work did not evoke very strong feelings in me.

Kong: It is like an illustration with time elements that is stretched out. Compared with other story-driven works, it appears flat.

Tsang: I cannot see any strengths in this work. I see the director using the same technique over and over again, which is also a technique.

Kong: It would be better to show the work in an exhibition instead of a cinema environment. The work expresses the intimacy of the father-daughter relationship, but when compared with the previous work, *The Visit*, which introduces surprising elements to the story, *Butterfly Jam* lacks this kind of design.

Chiu: I'd compare this work with the Japanese film *A Bite of Bone*, both of which share the theme of memory. *Butterfly Jam* tells a story about one's own home, the past, etc., its theme is in line with the format of the film, because memories are sometimes far and near, sometimes clear and vague, just like fragments of our past lives, and the filmmaker puts these fragments together in this way. *A Bite of Bone* uses a realistic way to express both clarity and ambiguity visually. *Butterfly Jam* is smooth for me, and I really like it. Its sense of experimentation is very solid, and you cannot find many flaws. You say that it is like a series of illustrations, but comparatively, *Moon Monsoon* is even more like illustration in terms of its form. I think the director has considered the story development, form and rhythm of the work, and has decided to inject a stronger poetic feeling and a novel interpretation of

memory. Regarding memory, pastiche is a common technique, or like *A Bite of Bone*, which uses a description of the past followed by visuals. But *Butterfly Jam* has a sense of distance, which is expressed with telephoto shots, and zooms in when the memories are clear before disappearing again. The transition is also very strong. Within independent productions, this kind of method is not easy to achieve, but very experimental.

Wong: I also like this work and agree that it can be compared with *The Visit* and *A Bite of Bone*. Like *The Visit*, the daughter of *Butterfly Jam* has a vague sense of hatred and dissatisfaction with her father, but I prefer the latter. *The Visit* really touched me. The development of the story is genuine and has popular appeal. *Butterfly Jam* is a little more individualistic. The character has been observing her father since she was a child, shaping him according to an established image. The story focuses on her growth within the family. Although constantly changing the mode of expression and dynamic elements are not new, it is handled meticulously, for example, with the small objects that echo the father's fish tank and plants. The daughter has a frank hatred for her father, and when the father comes to her house to clean up at the end, she assumes he is just cleaning the fish tank. It seems that the daughter observes her father objectively, but in the end the image of her father also affects her.

Lo: The design of the work is very thoughtful, and also deal with the subject of father and daughter relationship. There are different ways to evoke emotions with the audience. The creators chose a more abstract expression method rather than a traditional narrative method. The visuals are artistic and meticulous. The repeated elements are also related to the memories of the protagonist. At first, the objects recall what happened to the family in Taiwan, and later they were about life in France. Every detail has hidden meanings, and the film allows the audience to slowly appreciate these meanings and re-organize the whole story in their minds. The text is very good, but since it is in French, I found it a bit difficult to follow the subtitles and look at the visuals at the same time, so I was not able to get too deeply into the work the first time. I wasn't able to understand the message right away. I don't really like films that you need to watch several times before you can understand its meaning, so this is a trade-off.

Kong: This question reflects the difficulty facing jurors. In many cases, the artistic direction affects the treatment, but it is difficult to compare different artistic directions.

Lo: Yes, so this is very subjective.

Fan: It has always been our tradition to watch the finalist works in the theater. This is the way we hope to present the films. Of course, each film will only be shown once, but at least the jury members can compare works shown in the same environment.

Tsang: Yes, it may be possible to see more details in a theater setting, but so far, I haven't seen much information in *Butterfly Jam*.

Lo: When you are paying attention to the subtitles, you will naturally miss some visuals.

Tsang: Compared with *The Visit*, this work makes me feel alienated and not able to connect emotionally. As for whether the approach of *The Visit* is too traditional and direct, sometimes it is difficult for a story to resonate with people, so when it accidentally touches my emotions, it is evidence that it is very powerful.

Fan: The next one is the Japanese work *Takano Intersection*.

Kong: The reason it was included in the list of finalists is somewhat similar to *Once Upon a Time in Tuen Mun*. It is a work from Japan, but it is slightly different from the usual Japanese animations in terms of technique. The story captures small things in life, but the director's point of view and expression are just right.

Wong: It has a very Japanese style. When I watched it, I wondered why the director chooses to focus on these small things. It is not easy for him to capture something meaningful or important to him at this moment. The whole work tells a story in a focused and matter-of-fact way and doesn't show off. It creates an intersecting effect with cinematic shots and transitions.

Tsang: What do you mean by not showing off?

Wong: The work does not make certain things clear, like why the three protagonists are intertwined, what everyone has learned, what happens after the boy returns home, etc. By taking away these elements, it shows the director's self-consciousness.

Kong: The male protagonist is the narrator of the story, and at first he seems like a bad boy, which makes people want to follow the story, but it turns out that it is just a small matter in the end. This contrast establishes the flatness of the story.

Tsang: I think the visuals of the work is stronger than the story. Its style is not standard Japanese animation style, and the visuals are very strong, which makes people look forward to the development of the story at first, but it doesn't move me. Sometimes a story conveys a message to the audience, but this story makes it hard for me to understand its meaning.

Kong: I think the director used this method of expression due to resource restrictions, but it's not as serious as *Once Upon a Time in Tuen Mun*.

Tsang: He uses a tranquil tone, similar to the French animation style.

Chiu: The best thing about short films is that they can be innovative and experimental. Instead, this work chooses a style that is easiest for everyone to appreciate, and the production and storytelling are very professional. This kind of work is not necessarily pleasing, but the screenwriter and director are very strong, telling the story of the three protagonists who develop a relationship in the crossroads of life. Usually, this kind of theme is not outstanding in short film competitions in which many works are visually strong or experimental. The director presents this film in a very commercial and professional way, and his handling is very good and restrained, and simply depicts what may happen in our lives in an afternoon. I like this work. I just said that it is hard to compare different artistic styles, so I tend to compare films based on themes. The film describes what happens in an afternoon, using some focused and some relaxed shots, ellipsis and environment shots to hold things together. Certain films may not seem that strong in competitions because there are not many unique artistic elements in them, but this film uses a professional style that people can easily accept and does it very well. I look forward to seeing the director's feature-length work.

Lo: I agree with what you said, that the art and animation are very professional. The script is really difficult to write. There are only a few lines of dialogue in this six-minute film. The editing and distribution of shots affects how involved we are with the plot. I feel that it has no punchline and is relatively flat. The scene where the hat is dropped at the end is very important, but it failed to impress me. I don't know if you have noticed that there are three short shots, such as a girl running in place, which feels abrupt. But the whole is full of style.

Fan: The next work is *Love Delivery*.

- Kong: This is a graduation film from Hong Kong. I was mainly attracted by its youthful vigor. The artistic style mixes styles from different countries. Compared with the more consistent style of the previous work, this one has more youthful energy. There are many flaws in the film, but it is a work worth noting. It is not perfect.
- Tsang: You know immediately that this is a student work, mainly because the expression is very immature. In terms of visual design, the female lead character looks relatively wild, but the artistic skills and modeling are not well executed. There are many metaphors in the work, which also reflect the general sentiments at the moment. In terms of visual design, many students like to add Hong Kong elements to their works intentionally or unintentionally, such as distinctive balconies, ceramic tiles, etc., which are good aesthetic expressions, but there is room for improvement in terms of execution. As far as the story is concerned, the protagonist has a regular job delivering food, but meeting the heroine makes him more motivated at work, and the plot expresses this point. The work mixes different elements, but the student directors are not really capable of handling it, and it common for students to construct their own world this way.
- Kong: Many Hong Kong graduation films are bad at time management. *Love Delivery* is an example of this, some of the visuals are complete and beautiful, but there are also many unfinished ones. Work can be elevated to a higher level if it is well controlled and focused. In the past one or two years, I have serving on various jury panels and have seen many Taiwanese works that integrate local culture and traditions using different expression methods, which are worthy of reference by Hong Kong students. In recent years, the local styles in Hong Kong are very similar, but there is not enough diversity.
- Wong: This work is a bit too youthful, the story and expression are weak, and there are flaws or inconsistencies in the visuals. For example, you can see computer fonts on the sketch lines, which may be due to improper time management.
- Chiu: I don't have much to say about this work. It is quite lovely, but the music is quite a failure. It wants to use music to indicate the direction of the story, but it overuses music and feels too deliberate. However, its tone is consistent.
- Lo: There are a lot of things missing in the script and execution. It uses many Hong Kong background and elements, which makes the film more interesting. The work is just about the love between the two protagonists, which seems to be not profound enough and feels perfunctory. The rooftop is important in

expressing how the protagonists establish their relationship, but now the development is too fast, making the dialogue on the rooftop meaningless. The dialogue is not about their relationship but their feelings about Hong Kong, I think it would be better to focus on the former. In addition, the biggest problem is the artistic style. For example, the styles of characters and lines are not consistent, which is a bit confusing and strange. It may be due to skill, and this affects the overall look and feel of the film. The female protagonist's style is more Japanese, which is completely different from the male protagonist's style.

Fan: The next work is *A Bite of Bone*.

Tsang: This work is beautiful. The nine-minute film kept my attention the whole time. Using dots is a difficult technique, but the whole animation is very smooth. The scenes with the character recalling the fragments of his childhood with his father at the funeral shows the advantage of using this technique in an independent short film. Compared with *The Visit*, it is apparent that the director spent a lot of time making this work. This is one of my favorite works. I personally appreciate its animation. The art style is a bit like a children's picture book. The pointillist technique is not easy to achieve. The director must have come up with a method for doing it.

Kong: I was also drawn to the pointillist technique. Later, I began to focus on the story. The visuals and camera movement work well together. In the use of shots, the director used more than one method. In terms of dubbing, it's better than *The Visit*, in which there were two different styles. The child's dubbing clearly conveys the emotions of the characters, which shows the director is good at guiding the dubbing performance. In fact, all the finalist works are sincere, so it is difficult to make comparisons. This is what make the selection process difficult for me. I tend to select works that have the least flaws and allow me to grasp the emotions in the stories. *A Bite of Bone* does the best job in this regard, and I was able to watch it without being distracted by other things.

Wong: It has a childlike painting style, but it creates a dark feeling. Maybe it is because of the handling of sound. The visuals run through the whole story, tying everything together. I try to ignore the pointillist technique, and feel that the use of shot is very professional, but visually it is experimental and not limited by the camera movement, which is different from the professionalism of *Takano Intersection*. Among all the finalist works, this one has the strongest independent spirit and the same techniques runs through the whole work. That gloomy feeling may be due to some hazy effects the

director put on the visuals, and the scene of the funeral in the opening scene sets the tone for the film's atmosphere. The bone-eating part at the end adds to the intriguing feeling. The whole work looks consistent.

Chiu: It's quite long, at about ten minutes, and it's very consistent in the way of expression. I found it interesting at first, but in the middle and later parts, I was distracted by the form, so the work may not be suitable for the big screen. The pointillist technique appears constantly. If the film could have paced it out within the nine and a half minutes, it will be easier for viewers. Now I feel that the picture frame is constantly moving, which may be uncomfortable to watch on the big screen. The story is good, it blurs reality a bit, and it should feature some of the cultural background of the time. With the same technique repeating itself, the work is wearisome to watch.

Wong: That's possible, but I think short films are capable and need to withstand the impact of experimentation.

Lo: Yes, there may be problems with this kind of visuals. Perhaps it is best to view it on the small screen. The dots appear constantly, so it can be said that it is not sloppy, and it is very consistent in style, but we do not know how the dots look on the big screen. But apart from this, it is undeniable that the work is really professional, from the writing of the script to the director's technique, there are not too many editing points and the handling is very natural. The choice of subject matter is also very pleasing. There are many works from the perspective of children looking at death, but the director manages to master all the elements and is worthy of praise. The artistic experimentation is difficult to achieve, it is very detailed and without flaws, and the visuals are layered, it must have taken a lot of time to do.

Tsang: Actually, I am very attracted to those dots. When the visuals change, the dots are transformed like a sand painting, and there are many layers mixed together and the color intensity also changes, creating a flowing artwork.

Kong: In the latter part of the work, I unconsciously follow the dots, but since the theme is the ashes of bones, I think it is reasonable.

Lo: Even if you look at the picture composition in a freeze-frame, you will find it beautiful. The colors are mainly primary colors, but does not look jarring when put together. These elements have been planned and tested by the director.

Fan: The next work is *Depths of Night*.

Chiu: *Depths of Night* is the longest work among the finalists at 12 and a half minutes long, which means that it has more chances to have mistakes. The shorter the film, the easier it is to handle. I will first consider the overall structure of the story, the technical aspect and the rhythm, the smoothness of the transition between scenes. Her control of the entire rhythm was a bit messy, and the rhythm is inconsistent, going suddenly from fast to slow. It expresses a story about characters who miss parts of themselves and tries to find them. This type of treatment is common. I can sense the hard work that went into the work and the director has ambitions to make a great work. In terms of execution, the story has many detours and repetitions, which may be the result of the script structure or editing. By the end of the work, there are scenes of wild beasts and the sky falling down, which contrasts with the family scenes at the beginning. The jump in tone is a bit jarring, making the film seem like it was edited together from different films. However, it is good that Hong Kong has managed to produce such an ambitious work, but the development of the script is not complete.

Wong: I agree. I sense the film's ambition, and some parts of the work are really professional. The technique of Hong Kong animation is very mature, but the story development of this work is not great. It is a bit repetitive, and it'd be better cut down its length. On the whole, the film is mature, and I feel that the director wants to achieve a certain artistic level. Nowadays, many works like to use metaphors. For example, the monsters in the film represent desire, psychological or physical failings, etc., which is typical. If the director is so ambitious, she should consider these aspects in greater detail.

Lo: Absolutely. The theme of the work is not complicated, it may have originated from the director's own life experiences and regrets. Of course she is greedy, and presents different problems she had faced at three different stages of life, but there is no change in the technique, only the environment and modeling is changed, so the work feels repetitive. The characters' fears are actually similar. They don't all need to be outlined and thus make the duration of the film so long. Using three characters also distracts people. The last part deliberately creates a climax, but because the build-up before and after is too long, the emotional impact is reduced, which is a structural problem.

Tsang: I would use the word sophistication to describe the aesthetics of this work. The brush painting style showcases the director's skill. The work is clever and the visuals are powerful. It expresses the defects of the character's body through visual expression, and uses visual art to convey its message. A good story resonates, like *The Visit*. Does this work resonate with women? I think

it is about personal feelings. It does not have a conventional storyline, and the message only be expressed through artistic techniques. The storytelling is a bit weak, and the main focus is on the visuals. For an independent film, the director is capable of doing anything and express herself visually. I really think every frame of the film is beautiful. Brush painting is a challenging technique, and her handling is very youthful and contemporary.

Wong: The big scenes in the film feels like a stretched rubber band from beginning to the end. Usually, films may have some big scenes and a few calm ones, but this work has many big scenes, which makes people unable to focus.

Kong: My view is very similar to everyone else's. I don't know where is the climax. It should be the part where the characters find their missing parts and learn something about solving their own problems from the process, like growing up. But the work fails to convey this point. The only scene that approximates this is the one in which the character is at the edge of the cliff, which signifies that he has to believe in himself, but it is difficult for the audience to draw this conclusion. This is the weakness of the work. Strictly speaking, it is also visually inconsistent, with the stone statues at the end being drawn too realistically, but the dynamics is loose. The drawing style and design of the works are actually convenient for production, but this is my opinion. The visuals are pleasing to the eye on their own, but they cannot solve the problem of storytelling.

Fan: The next work is *Moon Monsoon*.

Tsang: Is this also a graduation film?

Lo: It is from The Taipei National University of the Arts.

Tsang: It suffers from the same problem as many student works, which is inconsistency. I feel they are not skilled at handling different media and failed to meet the standard. With *Depths of Night*, even if the technique is inconsistent, the effect is acceptable to a certain extent, but student works cannot achieve this. In terms of the story, it didn't resonate with me, it's more of a sketch. The author expresses a wish to live with the object of his desire, but I don't really feel it.

Lo: Actually, the work is competent. It is about a conversation between two girls on the bed, but the visuals are a bit detached.

Tsang: There are not many scenes that impress me deeply, but the work manages to

convey the sense of intimate conversation.

Kong: The work contains some life-like scenes, the abstract style is well done and the atmosphere is not bad. Of course, compared to other finalists, this one is not outstanding.

Chiu: Animations can convey a lot of information from the dialogue, but this work has a little too much dialogue. I think it's too long, and the story doesn't need to be nine minutes long. The information of the story is presented through dialogue and there are not many visual elements, although some visuals are quite clever. I would hope the director express his ideas visually. For example, *The Visit* uses a lot of cut away shots. *Takano Intersection* has very little dialogue, but it conveys the relationship between the characters. By comparison, *Moon Monsoon* explains everything through dialogue.

Kong: Some animations have no dialogue, but use background music to tell the story. But sometimes I find that the music has no power, it is just there. The dialogue in *Moon Monsoon* doesn't have such a serious problem, but it still makes me feel the same way. The dialogue just keeps going on and it's hard to pay attention to the story.

Lo: It has a lot of little things happening, and the abstract images is alienating, preventing people from getting into the film. What I dislike the most is the use of an old song "If I Don't Have You" by Bai Guang. The song is very good, but the meaning is too direct.

Wong: I like this work very much, maybe because I like the dialogue. It's easy to use monologues in animations, while the dialogue between people is several times more difficult. The dialogue in the work draws my attention. Although it is seemingly innocuous conversation, it is like pillow talk. It may seem irrelevant, like constant rain, but I want it to continue. At first, I didn't understand the relationship between the two characters. Maybe they are lovers or friends, but it doesn't matter. I like its visuals, like drifting into unconsciousness when you go to sleep. The difficulty lies in getting out of a character's own subjectivity and consciousness. The characters are intimate but their relationship is ambiguous, and the dialogue between them is not rigid. One character seems excited while the other is calmer and natural.

Kong: If you cut out the beginning and end of *Moon Monsoon* and play it repeatedly in an exhibition hall, the effect may be comforting. But if you watch it as a time-based work, it is hard to get into the story, so this work is hard to evaluate.

Lo: Its dialogue is attractive both in content and tone, but the visuals employ a relatively abstract treatment. Imagine if you only look at the picture without the sound, it will feel a little inadequate and weak. The lines are too simple, even though the animation is beautiful and uses a freestyle artistic approach.

Fan: Our jury members do need to look at many different types of works. Because they are short films, they are not governed by established rules. The next work is *A Comprehensive Theory*.

Kong: We chose this work as one of the finalists precisely because of such discussions. This type of work is rare in the animation category. It presents a special atmosphere, which uses 3D animation to create a feeling of unreality. The experience of watching movies is unique, but it is difficult to compare with other narrative works. It's not completely earth-shattering, but the atmosphere, idea, design and visual tension are handled well. You will definitely remember this work after watching it.

It depends on your personal opinion whether it is good or bad. I look at the design of the first part of the film to see if the latter part is reasonable, and try to use the language of the film to analyze whether the work has achieved its intended effect. I think the film is a little unfinished at the end. A lot of new directions and designs are introduced at the end, but the process is not reasonably explained.

Chiu: I actually don't understand this work. I usually watch the film first before reading the synopsis. I feel that the stated intentions are written after the fact and cannot be deduced from the film. This kind of 3D work was more common 20 years ago. At that time, CGI animations had first appeared and most of works were based on physical forms, and this work also has the same physical design. I agree that it should be included among the finalists. It is a way of encouraging in the independent spirit, but it may not win any awards, because I was not able to get its message. It didn't connect with me, while other works show different facet of life.

Lo: It presents a dynamic effect with different textures in an interesting way. The problem is that the whole work lacks coherence, and the anti-natural dynamics in the latter part appear suddenly, which has absolutely nothing to do with the concept of the work. There is nothing special about the handling of computer animation.

Wong: The artistic direction of this work should be encouraged. Many large

international film festivals actually show a lot of these types of films, while other works focus on humanities and emotions. This type of work is important in terms of human progress. I agree that half of the director's statement is redundant, but I agree with the other half. Suppose I want to make a purely theoretical, intellectual, non-emotional work. How can I present it in animation and how to represent my ideas in a simple manner? That is the process of creation. Compared with other similar works, it succeeds in creating tension as well as presenting a theory visually. The boundaries of animation itself are wider than that of movies or other images, so it is important that people know about this kind of work. When I watch this film, I try to "see" the image rather than feel the emotions it conveys.

The director also seems to be an art major, so the film should have been shot in a gallery, in which case everything will make sense.

- Tsang: I think this kind of work shouldn't just focus on what the director wants to say, that feels irresponsible. This also involves subjectivity. If I can't understand it, I don't know how to appreciate the work. I've also seen other experimental creations that give more room to the imagination. I don't appreciate this work very much, but I agree that different types of creation should be encouraged and people should know that there is no limit to the boundaries of art, even though this freedom should not be abused.
- Wong: Theories do not have to be presented as a story. What this animation wants to convey is chaos in space, but at the same time there should be order that governs chaos, showing the tug of war between the two.
- Kong: If this work was placed in the Media Arts category, would its creative intentions be more clearly understood?
- Fan: If you talk about categories, first of all, the director has the right to choose what category to place his work. If this work is a video installation, we need to know how the artist wants to install it, which is related to space. We will not make decisions for the entrants, unless the work itself needs to be shown in a gallery. *A Comprehensive Theory* is a complete short film, so we think it can definitely participate in the Animation category, but I also agree with Wong that this artist produced an animated installation art.
- Lo: ifva receives such abstract works from time to time, but only in small numbers. *A Comprehensive Theory* is interesting, I especially like the pulling of the ropes at the beginning, and the work definitely has something to say, but it is difficult to compare it fairly with other finalist works.

Fan: Now we have come to the second part, which is the nomination of awards. Unlike Gold and Silver Awards, one of the guidelines of the Special Mention is that the work may not be outstanding in all aspects, but some points are worth emphasizing or encouraging, but what that is depends on what the jury panel decides is important. Maybe you can choose three works you like the most.

Lo: I choose *Nyala*, *A Bite of Bone* and *Depths of Night*.

Chiu: I choose *The Visit*, *Takano Intersection* and *Butterfly Jam*.

Kong: My Gold Award is *A Bite of Bone*, my Silver Award is *The Visit*, and Special Mention is *Depths of Night*, *Nyala* or *Butterfly Jam*.

Wong: I choose *A Bite of Bone*, *Nyala* and *Butterfly Jam*, and the Special Mention is *Moon Monsoon*.

Tsang: I choose *The Visit*, *A Bite of Bone* and *Depths of Night*.

Fan: Next, we can choose the Gold award from the above works.

Lo: *A Bite of Bone* is my Gold award.

Wong: It has a level of integrity and excellence in all aspects.

Chiu: I was the only jury member who did not choose *A Bite of Bone*. *Butterfly Jam* also deals with the theme of memory, and I find it more interesting. I like *A Bite of Bone*, but not very much because it is bland, and I felt a little tired from watching it towards the end. Its narration moved me and I can understand the whole story, but the hazy effect bothered me, and the emotions are a bit deliberate and unnatural. However, I respect everyone's opinion.

Wong: I also think the method of expression in *Butterfly Jam* is more interesting, but *A Bite of Bone* is better in other aspects, such as sound and dubbing.

Lo: *A Bite of Bone* is more mainstream, and many excellent works in the past have followed this direction. From the audience's point of view, I believe it is more pleasing, the information is very clear, and all the expressions are very perfect and professional.

Chiu: When compared with *The Visit*, both works express the emotion of losing

family members. Even though the father in *The Visit* is alive, they only meet for a short time, and the daughter feels she is gradually losing him. In terms of literary quality, *The Visit* seems to be more beautiful, showing many small details, such as the video call, singing birthday song, etc. *A Bite of Bone* is very stable. I agree that it is very outstanding. From an emotional standpoint, it uses a child's point of view, which gives people a special feeling. But looking at it objectively, the emotions of *The Visit* are more profound. There are not many films on this subject, so this work explores a new territory. I appreciate that the work is very restrained, which is more difficult to do. The themes of the three works are similar, but the viewpoints are different, and they are all interesting. My Gold award nomination is *The Visit*, because it is rare to see such a sensitive work. Since it is stop-motion animation, the expressions of the characters can be controlled, and it expresses a poetic feeling. Since the images of *A Bite of Bone* are always moving, the frequency is very consistent and the timing has been set, so I wait for it to stop at the end.

- Lo: *The Visit* is fourth place for me. It has more static shots, and because the story is complete, it doesn't need to have too many movements. The most complicated thing is just the walking shots, and the rest are close-ups. Of course, not every work has to be full of movement. However, I feel that *A Bite of Bone* requires more work, is more experimental and not overdone.
- Wong: Although I didn't choose *The Visit*, it was the only work that touched my heart and I gave it a high score, but I prefer *Butterfly Jam* which has more exploratory elements, while *A Bite of Bone* is average in every way.
- Kong: When the works are all high quality, I tend to see which works have more flaws. *A Bite of Bone* is very difficult to make and has few flaws. Although the story is a bit flat, the director did not make any mistakes. On the other hand, *The Visit* is less dynamic in terms of creativity. Since both works are excellent, I can only compare their technique.
- Tsang: My Gold award is *A Bite of Bone*. I made my choice by exclusion. *The Visit* affected me emotionally. You can see the conflict between the two generations in this story, and the story development is based on emotions. The technique is also unquestionably good. Everyone thinks that the story of *A Bite of Bone* is flat, but the dots on the images are evenly distributed, just like sand paintings, which goes well with the light tone of narration and the use of child's perspective. The whole work is just right, it expresses a kind of nostalgia for his father. The pointillist technique in *A Bite of Bone* is more difficult to achieve.

Lo: I want to switch my choice from *Nyala* to *The Visit*.

Fan: So the Gold award goes to *A Bite of Bone* and the Silver award goes to *The Visit*?

(Everyone agrees)

Wong: Both works deserve to win, but for the record I would like cast my vote for the Silver award to *Nyala* or *Butterfly Jam*.

Fan: The next award is Special Mention.

Wong: Judging from the current situation, the chances of *Moon Monsoon* winning the award is slim, so I will switch my vote for Special Mention to *Nyala*.

Lo: For my Special Mention, I choose *Depths of Night*, which is a thoughtful work.

Kong: Let me share my personal feelings. *Nyala* is a very outstanding work in Hong Kong, but from an international perspective, it seems not to be too outstanding. By comparison, *Butterfly Jam* is slightly more superior. But I don't know how to compare *Depths of Night* to *Butterfly Jam*.

Lo: *Depths of Night* is an important work for Hong Kong. It is full of ambition. Even though there are many areas that need to be improved, there are also many unique points, elements that never existed in Hong Kong animation.

Kong: If I have to choose a third-place work, I will choose *Butterfly Jam*; if it is Special Mention, *Depths of Night* is more meaningful, but I am still not sure.

Chiu: I have the same idea as you guys. I would choose *Butterfly Jam* as third place. But if Special Mention is meant to encourage more inspiring works, will the public understand the significance of the award?

Lo: Since the transcript of the jury meeting will be made public, people will know our reasons selection the winning entries, and will understand that Special Mention is not equivalent to third place, but given to works that are worthy of encouragement.

Kong: *Butterfly Jam* and *Depths of Night* are very similar in terms of exploring female themes, so we need a stronger reason to choose *Depths of Night*. If

we want to encourage a director to continue in his creative direction, I may not necessarily choose *Depths of Night*. What I can agree with is that it is difficult to create in Hong Kong, so we need to encourage artistic creation in here.

Lo: I think this reason is valid. ifva is a Hong Kong competition, and we understand the creative background of this work.

Kong: We can say that *Depths of Night* overcame many production difficulties, which is closely related to the development of independent short films in Hong Kong. If the award is given because of the creative background of *Depths of Night*, do we also need to understand the creative background of *Butterfly Jam*?

Wong: Lo Sir, you initially gave the Silver award vote to *Nyala*. Why don't you vote for it as Special Mention?

Lo: Let me clarify. At the beginning, my Gold award vote was for *A Bite of Bone*, my Silver award vote was for *Depths of Night*, and Special Mention was *Nyala* and *The Visit* was the fourth place. I then took into consideration the hard work that went into the work, the innovation of the structure, etc., and decided it is reasonable for *The Visit* to win the silver award. Since the Gold and Silver awards have been decided, only *Depths of Night* and *Nyala* are left. Comparing the two, I choose *Depths of Night*.

Fan: Choosing a Special Mention has always been the hardest part. We believe in the professionalism of the jury members, who will indeed understand the background information of some of the work, but whether we can obtain the same information about other works, that is honesty very difficult. Also, we can't be sure if getting such information is a good or a bad thing.

Chiu: If there is a record of our meeting, why don't we decide by voting? It seems that we have already discussed a lot about the works.

Tsang: I would like to share the reason why I chose *Depths of Night*. It is because the work requires a high level of skill and the work is complete. The work is worthy of appreciation, and therefore my vote for this work is without doubt.

Wong: My vote for *Nyala* is firm because I wanted to encourage another way of storytelling, more so than I want to encourage effort and ambition. On the other hand, when I first saw *Nyala*, I felt that it was an outstanding work made within the relatively narrow confines and ideological environment of

Hong Kong, and it shows a kind of distinctiveness.

Tsang: The story of *Nyala* is better than that of *Depths of Night*, but the reason why I didn't choose it is that the technique of the work still has room for improvement when compared to works from around the world. The handling of *Depths of Night* has reached international standards.

Fan: The voting results: there are two votes for *Nyala*, one vote for *Butterfly Jam*, and two votes for *Depths of Night*. Because only Mr. Chiu voted for *Butterfly Jam*, if you change your vote, would you choose *Nyala* or *Depths of Night*?

Chiu: I will vote for *Depths of Night*. It is easy for me to compare these two works, because I don't know their background information, nor do I know the directors. As far as the works is concerned, I think *Depths of Night* is more challenging, and it is quite an achievement for the director to reach this state. It is lengthy and the possibility for errors is large. *Nyala* has visual impact, but the ending of the story is simple and the turning point is not strong enough.

Fan: So Special Mention goes to *Depths of Night*.

27th ifva Animation Category Award Winners

Gold Award

A Bite of Bone

Honami Yano (Japan)

Silver Award

The Visit

Morrie Tan (Singapore)

Special Mention

Depths of Night

Step Cheung (Hong Kong)