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PRESENT

A CENTURY OF

CHINESE  
CINEMA

**A Century of Chinese Cinema.** It's a daunting title for a cultural project, and one appropriately subject to skepticism. The doubts begin with the first "C," for "Century." There are several possible dates to use as a starting point for any centenary, especially a milestone like this. Cinema first came to China with a Lumière roadshow in 1896, one year after its Paris debut. Films were soon integrated into variety shows, featuring comedy, acrobatics, Chinese opera and puppetry, that were performed in tea houses (the Chinese equivalent of American vaudeville theatres), first in Beijing and then in Shanghai. The first Chinese-produced film appeared in 1905, when Fengtai Photography filmed an episode from the Chinese opera *Dingjun Mountain*. The first proper movie theatres opened in Beijing in 1907, the first film studio was founded in Shanghai in 1909, while the first narrative films that approached something like feature length—*The Difficult Couple* and *Zhuangzi Tests His Wife*, produced in Shanghai and Hong Kong respectively, and both now destroyed—appeared in 1913.

The fate of those landmark first films would be shared by hundreds of other examples of early Chinese cinema. The first decades of the twentieth century saw China engulfed in social and political chaos, carved up by colonial powers, facing the slow yet inexorable end of the exhausted Qing dynasty and beset by riots, warlords and civil war in both city and countryside—a state of brutal, almost unremitting conflict that swallowed up an untold amount of China's film heritage in its destructive wake. Yet those invaluable films that remain give evidence that Chinese cinema could provide not only a much-needed escape for the country's beleaguered citizenry, but a tentative vision of a new society freed of both stultifying tradition and anarchic terror.

Now to the second questionable "C": "Chinese." East Asia's social and political history created a unique model for film production, one that calls the very idea of a single "Chinese" cinema into question. Due to conflicts of various kinds that created unwelcome environments for cultural expression, filmmaking in the region has been multi-polar in the extreme, with significant production centres located in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, Xi'an, Beijing and numerous points both between and farther afield. In this respect, Chinese cinema has always defied the film-historical myth of a unified "national cinema" focused

on a single location (Paris, Hollywood, Rio de Janeiro, etc.). For this reason, critics and scholars have tended to isolate major centres of Chinese filmmaking—namely the Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan—and champion these as distinct national cinemas.

There is, certainly, a great degree of logic to this approach. Each region has its own unique set of historical experiences that has informed its approach to cinema; each has absorbed a different set of cinematic influences (Soviet and left-wing European cinema on the Mainland, Hollywood popular cinema in Hong Kong, classical Japanese cinema in Taiwan); and each has developed its own distinctive film genres unshared with the others. Yet it is difficult to deny that the films made in these different places share more with each other—culturally, aesthetically, philosophically—than with any other non-Chinese cinema. Furthermore, recent scholarship has done much to reveal the remarkably fluid movement of Chinese filmmakers between these three regions, from cinema's very beginnings to the present day: the Mainland wars of the thirties and forties drove Shanghai's cultural elite to Hong Kong, some of whom would remain there permanently; the first generation of Taiwanese filmmakers frequently recruited skilled technicians and creative talent from Hong Kong; while Taiwanese and Hong Kong producers were some of the first to take advantage of the Mainland's late-century opening to outside investment, making large-scale epics on Mainland soil. It is this rich, complex and continuing inter-/intra-cinematic dialogue between these three regions—changing, evolving, rupturing and reforming over the course of a century—that this programme explores.

And now for that final "C": "Cinema" itself. As the ways in which films are created, distributed and viewed continue to change with astonishing speed, the very definition of "cinema" itself has been called into question, with visual arts, gaming, and multiple other forms stretching the boundaries of moving-image culture. We engage these new trends in our accompanying exhibition, which features new works commissioned especially for this programme by internationally acclaimed visual artist Yang Fudong and the legendary cinematographer Christopher Doyle Du Ke Feng, whose work for such filmmakers as Wong Kar-wai and Zhang Yimou has helped to shape the global image of contemporary Chinese cinema. ▶▶

A film programme of this magnitude could only have been made possible with the support of individuals and institutions who wish to celebrate what unites Chinese cinema rather than what divides it, and we are indebted to the amicable cooperation of the China Film Archive, the Chinese Taipei Film Archive and the Hong Kong Film Archive in working with us towards this shared goal. Nevertheless, we are keenly aware that, no matter its scope, this series could have taken several alternate and equally valid forms. Chinese cinema is rich beyond belief, and at least twice this many films could have been included in such a survey. We have aimed to achieve a balance between the canonical and the unjustly neglected, the historically vital and the thematically intriguing, and we have tried to cover as wide a spectrum of the key genres as possible. (Even so, we had to make the difficult decision to exclude notable traditions of documentary, animation and experimental filmmaking, each of which merits a programme of its own.)

In an effort to offer a general overview of this programme, we have divided this remarkably rich and complex cinematic history into five sub-sections. *The Golden Age* focuses on what has been acknowledged as the classical era of Shanghai filmmaking, from the early 1930s to its culmination with Fei Mu's masterpiece *Spring in a Small Town* in 1948. Blending progressive politics with exciting aesthetic experimentation, this period was also notable for the ascendancy of the legendary and tragically short-lived actress Ruan Lingyu. The second section, *A New China*, opens with the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and traces the developments within both Mainland cinema and the cinemas of Hong Kong and Taiwan—whose industries had received an influx of talent from the Mainland—up until the end of the 1960s.

From here, we break chronology slightly and segue into a capsule history of the Chinese action and fantasy films—*wuxia* swordplay epics, kung-fu films, gangster thrillers, folklore/ghost films, and the various hybrids of these extremely permeable genres—that have found enormous popularity and often represented Chinese cinema to the world. The fourth section, *New Waves*, celebrates the astonishing post-Cultural Revolution cinematic renaissance in all three regions from the 1980s and 1990s, from the renowned Fourth and Fifth Generation films on the Mainland to the dazzling genre revisionism of the Hong Kong New Wave and the new cohort of art-house masters that emerged from the Taiwanese New Wave. Our final and most (intentionally) diffuse section, *New Directions*, follows some of the intriguing paths that Chinese cinema has taken as it entered the twenty-first century, which both build on the innovations of the various New Waves while charting new territory in terms of form, narrative and subject matter.

It is necessary to reassert that none of the above categories or distinctions are hard and fast. As you will see in the short section introductions to follow, there is considerable continuity between various eras and genres, even in the case of such a decisive historical break as 1949—not least, as we hope to show, in the remarkably prominent place of female characters throughout the entire history of Chinese cinema. Just as we seek to trace a dialogue between cinema traditions, our series is designed to encourage discussion, not close it down. And even though the very notion of positing films from these three regions as a unitary cultural enterprise is an inherently controversial one, we regard this programme as an opportunity to both discover those elements they share and explore potential new pathways of scholarship and cinematic discovery.

—Noah Cowan

Film notes by Noah Cowan, Aliza Ma, Todd Brown and Jesse Wentz.

This programme would not have been possible without the exceptional contributions of a number of individuals and organizations. The two closest collaborators with me on this project were Sam Ho, whose insights into film history were inspiring and humbling, and my TIFF colleague Aliza Ma, who has worked tirelessly on every aspect of this project and has contributed exceptional writing. Thanks as well to Todd Brown, who collaborated with me on the *Swordsmen, Gangsters and Ghosts* section.

Thanks as well to:

IN BEIJING: Fu Hongxing, Tan Yanrong & Cubo, China Film Archive; Jia Zhangke; Xie Meng, Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art.

IN SHANGHAI: Davide Quadrio; Lorenz Helbling, Faye Yeong & Summer, ShanghART Gallery.

IN HONG KONG: Michael Werner, Winnie Lau & Laura Talsma, Fortissimo Films; Nansun Shi, Film Workshop; Li Cheuk-to, Hong Kong International Film Festival; Ken Hui; Albert Lee, May Yip & Catherine Chau, Emperor Films; Fred Tsui & Irene Lo, Media Asia; Angel Kwok, Fortune Star Entertainment; Josephine Ng & Rosa Li, Celestial Pictures; Bill Kong & Audrey Lee, EDKO; Runa Zhou & Candy Chiu, Tomson Group; Chow Keung & Eva Lam, Xstream Pictures; Weldon Fung & Gordon PC Fung, Golden Princess Film Production; Richie Lam, Priscilla Chan, Winnie Fu & Wendy Hau, Hong Kong Film Archive.

IN TAIPEI: Enga Chang & Sean Yeh, Central Motion Picture Corp.; Teresa Huang & Teresa Chang, Chinese Taipei Film Archive.

IN PARIS: Aurélien Dierler, Paris Cinéma International Film Festival.

IN THE US: Mark McElhatten, Sikelia Productions, New York; Daniel Bish, George Eastman House, New York; Dino Everett, Hugh M. Hefner Moving Image Archive, University of Southern California; Kaili Peng, Los Angeles.

IN TORONTO: Zhang Meifang, Consulate General of the People's Republic of China, Toronto; Stephen Siu, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (Toronto); Alice Shih & Louanne Chan, Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival; Bart Testa & Eileen Lam, University of Toronto; Prime Advertising, Inc.; Colin Geddes; and the steadfast, ongoing support of Justin Poy.

This programme was made possible through the extraordinary cooperation of the the China Film Archive, the Hong Kong Film Archive, and the Chinese Taipei Film Archive.

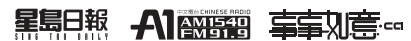


Special thanks to the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China, Toronto.

The Hong Kong section of the programme is supported by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (Toronto).

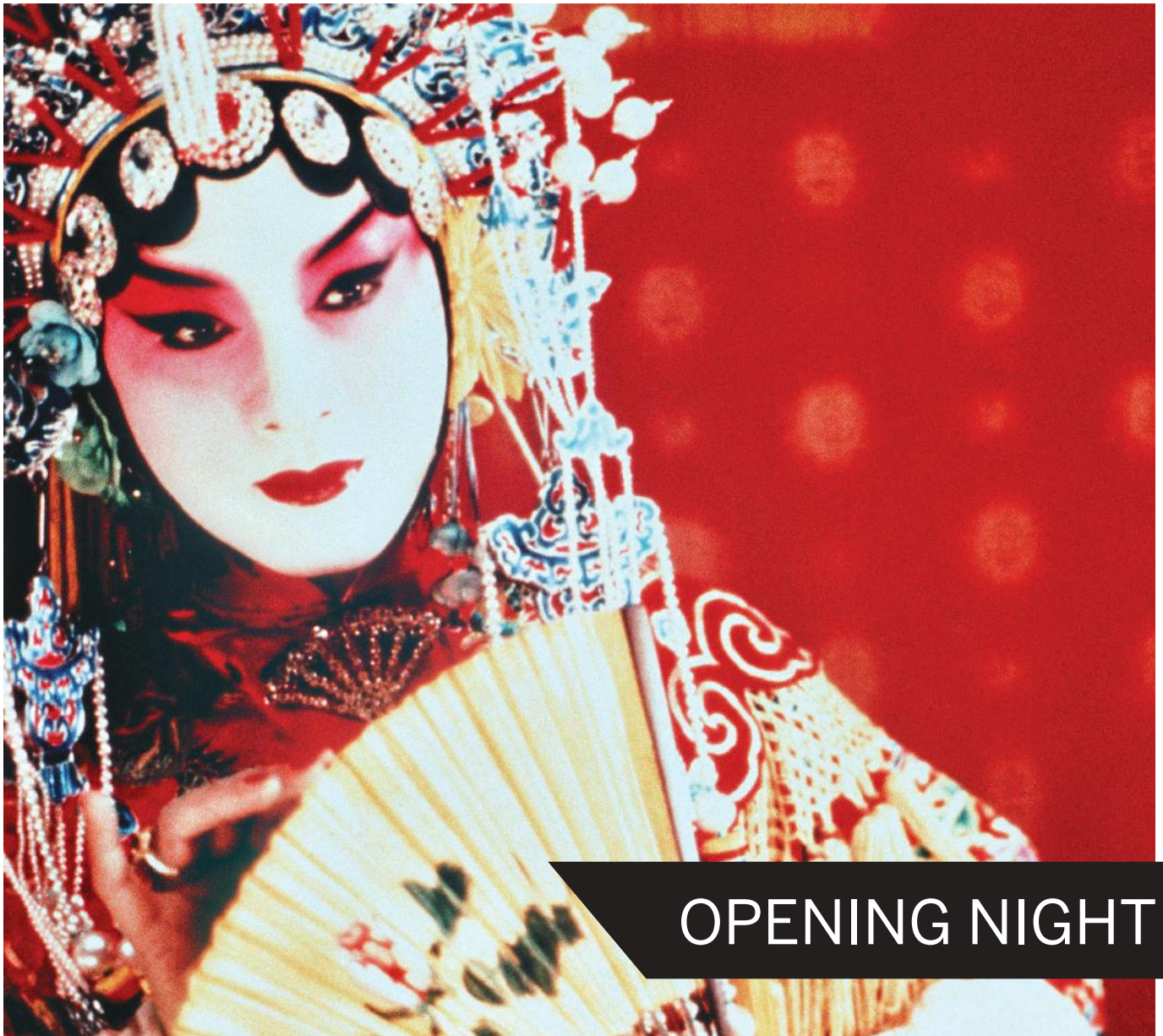


MEDIA PARTNERS



OFFICIAL AIRLINE





Chen Kaige presents  
*Farewell My Concubine*

Thursday, June 6  
7:30pm ☼

We are honoured to welcome Fifth Generation icon Chen Kaige, who opens our series *A Century of Chinese Cinema* by presenting this newly struck print of his Palme d'Or-winning masterpiece *Farewell My Concubine*.

**Farewell My Concubine**

霸王别姬

dir. Chen Kaige | Mainland 1993 | 171 min. | 14A **35MM**

**New Print!**

Winner of the Palme d'Or at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival and the first Chinese film to find significant mainstream success in North America, Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* is one of the most beloved and important Chinese films of all time. Not only has its sweeping visual and narrative style come to define the Chinese epic—bold colours, exquisite compositions, decades of history told through emblematic characters, resonant cultural signifiers (here Peking opera), all with a garnish of political and sexual scandal—but it also introduced the world at large to the late, great Leslie Cheung, one of the most important screen actors of the last century. Cheung plays Dieyi, an opera performer who as a youth is brutalized into accepting his fate as a boy turned into a girl in order to play female roles on stage. Dieyi's best friend and fellow performer Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi) becomes his protector and unrequited love interest, but later his enemy when Xiaolou weds high-class courtesan Juxian (indelibly portrayed by Gong Li). Chen's frank take on the rarely acknowledged impact of gay men on in Chinese arts and history is as remarkable as his unsparing portrayal of the violence that accompanied the Cultural Revolution. A mesmerizing tale of a performer lost between genders and historical eras, "Chen's visually spectacular epic is sumptuous in every respect. Intelligent, enthralling, rhapsodic" (Geoff Andrew, *Time Out London*). **NC**

## FREE EXHIBITION

Tours offered weekly starting June 9.

## Yang Fudong: *New Women*

杨福东  
新女性

The new project by celebrated Chinese visual artist and filmmaker Yang Fudong draws inspiration from the decadent aura of Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s. As immortalized in the racier films and literature of the era, Shanghai was an uneasy mixture of Chinese and foreign influence, of corruption and religious rectitude, of poets and policemen, and of the numerous types of “women of the night,” from streetwalkers to “sing-song” girls. All of this came to an end with the Japanese occupation of the city, but it left an indelible mark on succeeding generations of Chinese artists, and Chinese filmmakers especially. Shanghai’s creative energy, sexual charge and political ferment were a crucible of change for a society tentatively emerging from the stagnation and humiliations of the imperial era. Its key stylistic ideas, a particular blend of East and West known as *hai pai* (in contrast to the more traditional, Beijing-centred *jing pai*), finds no finer expression than in the city’s freewheeling filmmaking during the Art Deco age, always circumscribed by Guomindang censorship, impacted by war and its privations, and loathed and unrevived by China’s new rulers after 1949.

*New Women* locates *hai pai* in the female nude, a form considered the height of Western pollution by traditionalists at the time, but of course prevalent in private Chinese art from its earliest expressions. Yang Fudong seeks to resurrect a possibly invented form of decadent Shanghai storytelling: the erotic memoir. Actresses, each depicted on a large screen, move in an ephemeral world where architectural elements both within the film frame and physically in the gallery create tri-dimensional, highly staged and narratively rich situations. Five iterations appear in the gallery space, slightly tilted to echo the screen positions in the earliest movie theatres—a reminder that the boldest of these new women were to be found in the cinema, both on screen and in the audience, hungry for the arrival of the modern world.

The work serves not only as an evocation of an improbably remembered creative past, but also functions as an admission of how important women—and, more, ideas about women—were to China’s transition to modernity over the past century. Yang Fudong cleverly situates this discourse in an “in-between” space—part photography, part cinema, part painting, part sculpture—that mirrors the difficulty of deploying women as icons of progress. Existing in total silence, these women are restless ghosts of a past truncated by history.

Yang Fudong is himself a fascinating *hai pai* artist, gleefully mixing cinema and visual art practice, European art cinema with Chinese painterly compositions. The artist will underline these connections with a screening of his early film work, *An Estranged Paradise*, which he describes as an early precursor to *New Women*. The film took over four years to complete and holds the key to Fudong’s particular poetics. The first scenes contend with the principles and complications of Chinese painting history, its rules revealed in a meditative voiceover narration, followed by a manifesto for transposing those rules to the contemporary moment.

—Davide Quadrio & Noah Cowan

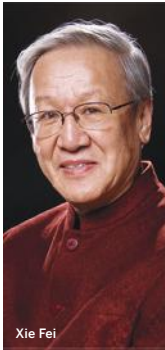
Yang Fudong appears  
in person to present  
*An Estranged Paradise* on  
Wednesday, June 5 at 7:00 pm,  
as part of our experimental  
film and video series  
The Free Screen.  
See page 91.

# ROUNDTABLES AND TALKS

FREE EVENT!



Chen Kaige



Xie Fei



Chen Biqiang



Bart Testa

## Higher Learning: Fourth & Fifth Generation Filmmakers Panel

Friday, June 7 1:00 pm ☼

TIFF Bell Lightbox Artistic Director Noah Cowan moderates this roundtable discussion that brings together filmmakers, film scholars and programmers to explore both the connections and divergences between the Fourth and Fifth Generations of Chinese filmmakers in the 1970s and 1980s. The discussion will feature directors Chen Kaige and Xie Fei, Senior Research Fellow of the China Film Archive Chen Biqiang, and University of Toronto scholar Bart Testa.

FREE EVENT!



Romance of the Western Chamber

## Buried Treasures of Chinese Silent Cinema

Saturday, June 8 12:00 pm ☼

### All Archival Prints!

This special free event, centred on an exceedingly rare screening of three of the earliest Chinese films still in existence, offers an invaluable glimpse into pre-Revolution China's largely vanished silent film heritage.

Between and following the screenings, a roundtable discussion featuring Chen Biqiang, Senior Research Fellow of the China Film Archive, University of Toronto scholar Bart Testa, Hong Kong film scholar and programmer Sam Ho, and TIFF Bell Lightbox Artistic Director Noah Cowan will place these films in greater context.

Presented with live musical accompaniment.

Approx. total running time: 240 min.

### Laborer's Love

劳工之爱情

dir. Zhang Sichuan | China 1922 | 30 min. **35MM**

Although virtually all of early Chinese cinema has been destroyed, what remains offers a fascinating glimpse into the creative crucible of 1920s Shanghai. *Laborer's Love*, written by Zheng Zhengqiu and directed Zhang Sichuan—both of them regarded as founding fathers of the First Generation of Chinese cinema—is a synthesis of Harold Lloyd-like silent comedy and the May 4th literature then in fashion. While the film's charming story of a soft-hearted carpenter turned fruit peddler trying to impress his future father-in-law does not much seem like a call to class warfare, the pointed references to urban corruption and the character of a happily liberated young woman anticipate the progressive impulse in much Chinese cinema to come. **NC**

### Romance of the Western Chamber

西厢记

dir. Li Minwei | China/Hong Kong 1927 | 45 min. **35MM**

Less than an hour remains of this sumptuous costume epic, at the time one of the most lavish Chinese productions ever made. Based on a scandalous Yuan Dynasty play, the film chronicles the blossoming affair between a young scholar and a courtier's daughter, set against the backdrop of a bandit siege. Featuring a few breathtaking hand-tinted sequences and replete with breakneck action, intrigue and old-fashioned romance, *Romance of the Western Chamber* anticipates the later "anything goes" spirit of Hong Kong New Wave director Tsui Hark. **NC**

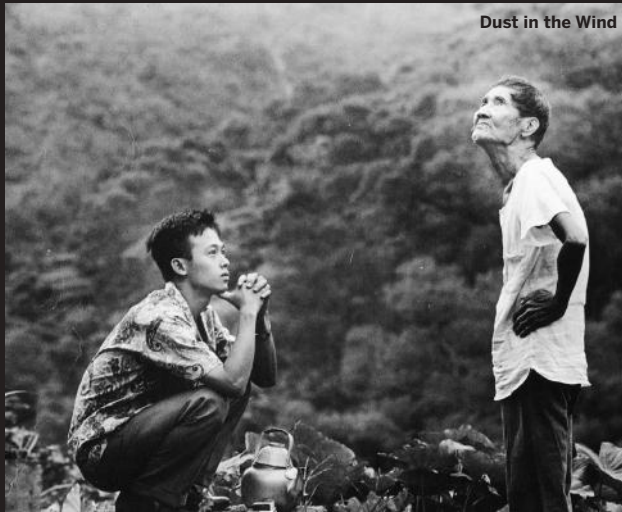
### Red Heroine

红侠

dir. Wen Yimin | China 1929 | 95 min. **35MM**

The only surviving section of the thirteen-part serial *Red Knight Errant*, this barn-burner of an action epic is a prime specimen of the martial arts/fantasy film explosion of late-twenties and early-thirties Shanghai—but one with a significant twist. In place of the typical manly hero, *Red Heroine* presents a swashbuckling woman clad in exotic costume soaring through the air, disappearing in clouds of smoke and laying waste to armies of baddies with a sweep of her sword. Opening with Red Heroine's abduction by a tyrannical warlord, the film follows her rescue by a hermit monk, her training to become an unstoppable killing machine, and her efforts to stop the warlord ravaging the countryside and enslaving numerous (very) scantily-clad young women. (Chiang Kai-shek, the Nationalist strongman then ruling China, had threatened to ban all martial-arts cinema for its immorality, but one wonders if the films' politics cut a bit too close to the bone as well!) Reportedly a smash hit on its release, *Red Heroine* helped set the template for later revivals of the martial-arts genre in Hong Kong and elsewhere. **NC**

## FREE EVENT!



Dust in the Wind

## Hou Hsiao-hsien Panel

Sunday, June 9 12:00 pm ☼

Following the free screening of *Dust in the Wind*, Bart Testa, Senior Lecturer at the University of Toronto's Cinema Studies Institute, moderates this roundtable discussion on the vastly influential oeuvre of Taiwanese filmmaker Hou Hsiao-hsien with noted film scholars David Bordwell and James Udden, author of the first English-language book on Hou's work.

PRECEDED BY

**Dust in the Wind**

戀戀風塵

dir. Hou Hsiao-hsien | Taiwan 1986 | 109 min. 35MM

Archival Print!

Both a heartbreaking coming-of-age tale and a quiet revolution in film style, *Dust in the Wind* was a crucial transitional film for Taiwanese master Hou Hsiao-hsien: placing a seemingly small-scale coming-of-age story against a vast spatial canvas, Hou signals the exponential growth of his unique cinematic universe in the historical epics he would embark upon soon after. *Dust in the Wind* follows Wan (Wang Chien-wen), a studious teenager from a small mining town, who moves to Taipei with his girlfriend Huen (Xin Shufen), where they make new friends, obtain tedious employment, and pledge to get married upon Wan's return from compulsory military service—but as both discover, life's seeming certainties are always less than certain. Conveying deeply felt emotion through a reserved, observational style and a painterly appreciation of space and distance, Hou's distinctive poetics has exerted a tremendous influence upon contemporary Asian cinema, most notably in the similarly precise films of Jia Zhangke; Hou's use of Taiwan's rugged landscape—at once a source of spiritual calm and a barrier creating physical entrapment—is particularly rich. "A miracle of humane observation and compositional perfection" (James Quandt); "As studied in its compositions as Ozu, as subtle in its melodrama as Naruse" (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*). **NC**

Sunday, June 9 10:00 am



Fist of Fury



## David Bordwell on Motion Emotion: The Art of the Martial-Arts Film

Monday, June 10 6:30 pm ☼

The distinguished film scholar and author of the essential *Planet Hong Kong* presents this illustrated talk on the dynamic language of martial-arts cinema and its evolution throughout the genre's nearly hundred-year history.

## MORE ROUNDTABLES AND TALKS!

Bart Testa on *Boat People*

Tuesday, June 11 6:00 pm ☼

See page 53 for full film and event details.

Noah Cowan on *Spring in a Small Town*

Tuesday, June 25 6:30 pm ☼

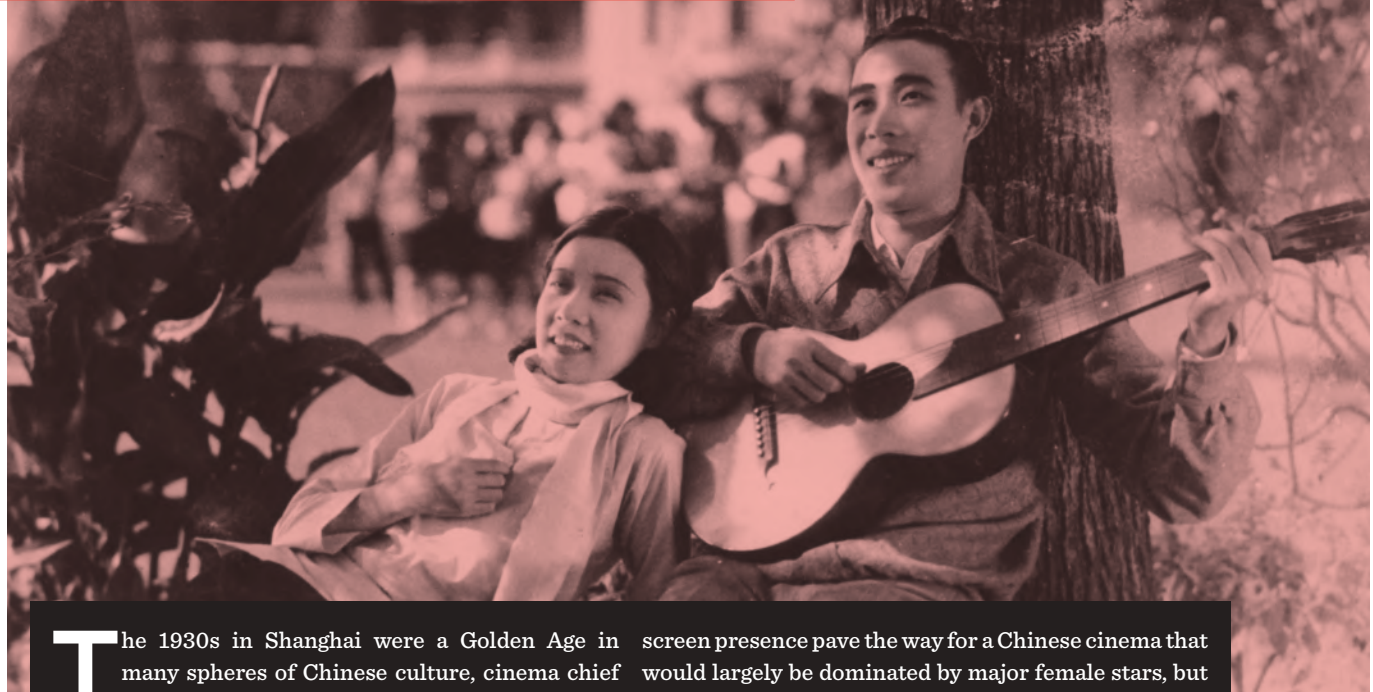
See page 30 for full film and event details.

The Roundtables and Talks section of *A Century of Chinese Cinema* is co-presented by the Asian Institute at the Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto, and the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada's National Conversation on Asia.

ASIAN INSTITUTE  
MUNK SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

The National Conversation on asia  
Le dialogue canadien sur l'Asie

# THE GOLDEN AGE



The 1930s in Shanghai were a Golden Age in many spheres of Chinese culture, cinema chief among them. Widely considered by the rest of the country as a den of iniquity, catering to foreign invaders walled off in concessions throughout the city, Shanghai presented an “anything goes” attitude that proved enormously fruitful for the upstart new medium. Despite heavy censorship by the Guomindang (Nationalist) government, Shanghai filmmaking during this period—aided considerably by the Chinese Communist Party cadres who infiltrated the growing studio system—was able to shatter age-old taboos and champion utopian ideals. Early masterpieces such as *Street Angel* and *The Big Road* (one of the first Chinese sound films) not only look towards a more just and equal society, but question how the art of cinema itself might be reconceived along progressive lines by experimenting with innovative visual techniques and unusual narrative structures.

The unquestioned symbol of thirties Shanghai filmmaking was Ruan Lingyu, the Garbo of Chinese cinema, who became the industry’s biggest star with her performances in such classics as *The Goddess* and *New Women* before tragically taking her own life at the age of twenty-four. (Ruan’s life and legend would later inspire one of the key works of the Hong Kong Second Wave, Stanley Kwan’s masterful 1992 biopic *Center Stage*; see page 64.) Not only did Ruan’s outsized

screen presence pave the way for a Chinese cinema that would largely be dominated by major female stars, but she helped make women in cinema emblematic of the larger progressive struggles then taking place. Both Nationalists and Communists viewed the liberation of women from the barbaric practices of the imperial era as a necessary component of a modern, twentieth-century China. Furthermore, female characters feature largely in the literature of the progressive, Western-oriented May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, whose works and authors figured largely in Golden Age Shanghai cinema and well into the post-1949 era.

The other major influence on the cinema of the Golden Age was another, considerably more dire struggle. Following numerous incursions into China by Japanese armies from the start of the 1930s, the Sino-Japanese War broke out in earnest in 1937 and led straight into the carnage of World War II—over a decade of traumatic conflict that cut China in half, filled its cities with starving refugees, and resulted in the deaths of as many as twenty million Chinese. Several of the key films of this period naturally take the war and its aftermath as its subject, from the two-part epic *The Spring River Flows East* (regarded as China’s *Gone With the Wind*) to the crowning achievement of the Golden Age, Fei Mu’s 1948 masterpiece *Spring in a Small Town*, considered by many critics as the finest Chinese film ever and one of the greatest films of all time. —Noah Cowan





Spring Silkworms



The Spring River Flows East



Street Angel

### Spring Silkworms

春蚕

dir. Cheng Bugao | China 1933 | 100 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Hailed as one of the first successful attempts to weave progressive politics into Chinese popular cinema, *Spring Silkworms* is as notable for its exquisite attention to the details of rural life as it is for its revolutionary spirit. Scripted by the greatest screenwriters of the day, Cai Chusheng and Xia Yan, from the (decidedly unmilitant) short story by May 4<sup>th</sup> writer Mao Dun, *Spring Silkworms* follows a humble silk-farming family struggling to be free of debt to exploitative middlemen (shades of Visconti's classic *La Terra Trema*). While bristling with rage at the destructive macroeconomic forces brought on by late-stage colonialism, the film never sacrifices empathy to ideology; the Marxist message is further modulated by First Generation master Cheng Bugao's lyrical depictions of local farming practices and the gorgeous Zhejiang countryside. Indeed, Cheng's luminous landscape sequences (influenced by ancient scroll painting) attests to *Spring Silkworms'* enormous continuing importance: regarding nature as virtually a character in itself, the film anticipates similar strategies in such later masterpieces as Fei Mu's *Spring in a Small Town* and Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth*. "A milestone in the development of Chinese, and indeed world, cinema" (Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949*). **NC**

**Saturday, June 15 12:00 pm** ☼

### The Spring River Flows East Part I: Eight War-Torn Years Part II: The Dawn

一江春水向东流 (上、下)

dirs. Cai Chusheng & Zheng Junli | China 1947 | 186 min. (96 min. + 90 min.) | PG **DIGITAL**

**Digital Restoration!**

"The most significant of the films of the late 1940s ... China's equivalent of *Gone With the Wind*" (Paul Clark). A milestone classic from two heavyweight Second Generation directors, the two-part *The Spring River Flows East* was released to widespread acclaim and massive success. Opening in early-thirties Shanghai and traversing the decade-spanning chaos and aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War, *Spring River* follows a man, Zhang Zhongliang (Tao Jin), and a woman, Sufen (Bai Yang), who meet and marry in the early years of the conflict. The couple is separated when Zhang travels inland to join the resistance against the Japanese invaders, finally going to seek work in the free city of Chongqing, where he becomes the lover of a wealthy debutante. When, after the war, Sufen goes to work for her husband's lover, loyalties of heart and class are tested—and ultimately succumb. An expansive, go-for-broke melodrama that poignantly depicts the painful moral decisions forced upon ordinary people by war, poverty and suffering, *Spring River* retains a remarkable sense of time and place amidst all the heightened emotions and impossible predicaments. **NC**

**Monday, June 17 6:30 pm** ☼

**The Spring River Flows East Parts I and II screen together as a double bill.**

### Street Angel

马路天使

dir. Yuan Muzhi | China 1937 | 91 min. | 14A **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Loosely based on Frank Borzage's 1927 silent classic *Seventh Heaven* (though bearing the title of the film he made a year later) and a major hit upon its release in Shanghai, *Street Angel* is a curious mélange of leftist Chinese cinema motifs and Hollywood bravado, and plentiful other delightfully discordant elements. (The opening parade scene, featuring copious cross-cutting between bemused onlookers and the film's playful main characters, could be mistaken for early Fellini.) Zhao Dan (the lanky hero of Shen Xiling's *Crossroads*, screening on July 6) stars as a misfit street musician who sets out to rescue two hard-luck sisters—one already sold into prostitution, the other on the verge of the same and barely subsisting as a teahouse singer—from their dire straits. A scintillating mixture of melodrama, social realism, exuberant musical numbers and slapstick comedy, *Crossroads* is considered the definitive portrait of Shanghai street life in the 1930s, marvellously capturing the earthy energy and wild collective mood swings that preceded the incipient Japanese invasion. **NC**

**Thursday, June 20 6:30 pm** ☼



The Goddess

**The Goddess**

神女

dir. Wu Yonggang | China 1934 | 85 min. | PG **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Silent screen legend Ruan Lingyu, giving a fierce and tragic performance in her signature role as a wronged prostitute, is the electric centre of *The Goddess*, one of the most powerful silent films of all time and an early high point for Chinese cinema. Ruan plays a nameless young “goddess” (1930s slang for her actual profession) who walks the streets in order to provide for her son. A run-in with a petty gangster results in the hoodlum becoming her pimp against her will; after he does nothing to help when her son is expelled from school, and ultimately steals the tuition money she had set aside, she exacts a terrifying vengeance. Key Second Generation director Wu Yonggang brings both an unsparing eye and a gentle humanism to this exceptional film, never flinching from the realities and consequences of the heroine’s work but never judging her for resorting to what was (and is) a relatively normal profession. But Ruan’s luminous performance and presence is the true crux of the film: scholars Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar consider her character in *The Goddess* “a remarkable condensation in one figure of different aspects of the times,” including Confucian family devotion, gender, national identity, the new complexities of capitalism, and Ruan’s own scandalous off-screen image (as brilliantly depicted in Stanley Kwan’s Ruan biopic *Center Stage*, screening after *The Goddess* at 3:15 pm). **NC**

Saturday, June 22 1:00 pm ☼

30 |||| 180°

**New Women**

新女性

dir. Cai Chusheng | China 1935 | 106 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

*New Women* was iconic actress Ruan Lingyu’s swan song, released mere months before her suicide; its story, thinly adapted from the memoir of Ai Xia, an actresses hounded to death by the press several years earlier, eerily parallels Ruan’s own tragically short life. “Often seen [by critics] as a metaphor for China itself, suffering under semi-colonialism, semi-feudalism and Japanese invasion” (Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China On Screen*), Ruan here plays the very model of a “new woman,” an independent-minded music teacher who dreams of becoming a celebrated writer. Her struggles, intensified by lecherous and vengeful men out to manipulate her and the need to provide for her sick daughter in the countryside, are contrasted with those of her best friend, a patriotic female factory worker who is presented as a model figure for post-revolutionary women. Influential left-wing director Cai Chusheng experiments with both the literary humanism of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement and the new revolutionary class politics in this fascinating transitional film, making Ruan both the embodiment of the era’s complexities and contradictions and the hope for their resolution; as Berry and Farquhar write, “If Ruan herself embodies a China that cannot act now, she also acts as a channel for the expression and articulation of hopes for future agency.” **NC**

Sunday, June 23 1:00 pm ☼

Noah Cowan on  
*Spring in a Small Town*

Tuesday, June 25 6:30 pm ☼



Noah Cowan, TIFF Bell Lightbox Artistic Director and programmer of *A Century of Chinese Cinema*, introduces our screening of Fei Mu’s masterpiece *Spring in a Small Town*, which is often named as the greatest Chinese film of all time.



Spring in a Small Town

**Spring in a Small Town**

小城之春

dir. Fei Mu | China 1948 | 93 min. | PG **DIGITAL**

**Digital Restoration!**

*Spring in a Small Town* is the apotheosis of Golden Age Shanghai cinema, at once a deeply literary work that forges unexpected connections between pre- and post-Republican prose forms, and a breathtaking visual masterpiece that marries symbolism derived from ancient landscape painting with innovative camera and editing ideas. His once great wealth lost in the aftermath of the Second World War, the sickly, middle-aged Dai Liyan (Shi Yu) now pines for the past in his ruined estate with his alienated wife Zhou Yuwen (Wei Wei), his young sister, and an old servant. The couple’s mutual ennui is temporarily lifted when an old friend—and Yuwen’s former lover—arrives for a visit. As old feelings rekindle, Yuwen becomes torn between loyalty to her husband and his family and the chance to begin life anew with her old flame. Cited as a formative influence by Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Jia Zhangke and Wong Kar-wai, *Spring in a Small Town* evokes the astonishing visual fluidity of Orson Welles while predicting the cinema of modernist master Alain Resnais in its beautifully affecting restraint and time-jumping, *Marienbad*-ish voiceover. Wei Wei is exquisite as the tortured Yuwen, her poetic voiceover suggesting a regretful ghost recalling her last possible moment of happiness; she endows the film with a tragic pain that lingers long after the wistful last shot. “An extraordinary work, anticipating Antonioni in its slow unfolding of an erotic situation, treated with a mixture of sympathy and austerity” (David Bordwell). **NC**

Co-presented by

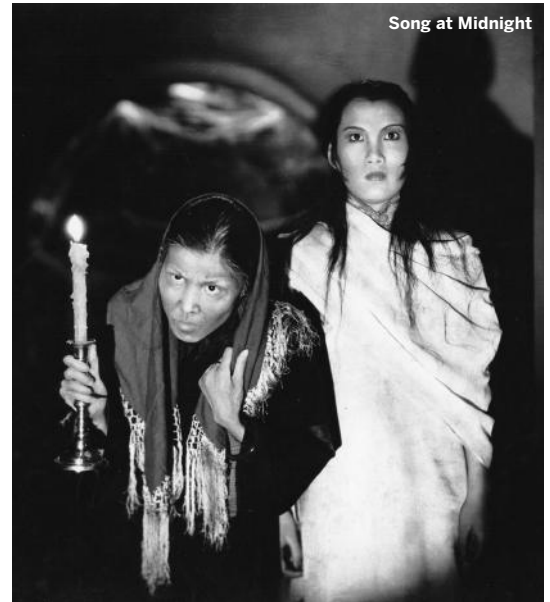




The Big Road



Crossroads



Song at Midnight

### Song at Midnight

#### 夜半歌声

dir. Ma-Xu Weibang | China 1937 | 119 min. | 14A **35MM**  
Archival Print!

A loose adaptation of Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Song at Midnight* is "an oddball mixture of horror film, propaganda piece and musical; it rates historical importance as the first acknowledged Chinese horror film" (Donato Totaro). Soon after the fall of the Qing dynasty, an opera troupe arrives at a theatre overseen by a troll-like custodian and a catatonic woman named Li Xiaoxia, who is entranced by the haunting voice of a plaintive, unseen singer. The young leftist leader of the troupe delves into the mystery and discovers that the voice belongs to a mysterious man named Song Danping, once a famous opera singer who was tortured and hideously disfigured by an evil lord over his love for the woman who now thinks him dead. Beautifully rendered in gothic black and white, *Song at Midnight* is intriguing both for its political content—making the wronged hero Song Danping "a fugitive revolutionary, using the theatre as a sanctuary ... with clear references to the chaotic political struggles of the 1920s" (David Robinson)—and its evocation of 1930s Hollywood horror films. Director Ma-Xu Weibang went on to be a force in postwar Hong Kong cinema, and may have helped institute its tradition of cleverly appropriating visual and narrative motifs from both Hollywood and other national cinemas. **NC**

Sunday, June 30 1:00 pm ☼

### Crossroads

#### 十字街头

dir. Shen Xiling | China 1937 | 110 min. | 14A **DIGITAL**  
Digital Restoration!

A free (and music-free) adaptation of *La Bohème* crossed with Frank Borzage's romantic and socially conscious Hollywood classics, *Crossroads* is a charming, engrossing, and finally heartbreaking portrait of impoverished young artists in Depression-era Shanghai. Four unemployed, artistically-minded friends are increasingly downhearted by their poverty and lack of opportunity. As talk of suicide floats through the air, one of the guys has to contend with an annoying new neighbour, who turns out to be the girl of his dreams. Much situational comedy, and occasional tragedy, ensues, until everyone marches off to defend the country against the invading Japanese. Directed by Shen Xiling, a leading figure in the progressive cinema movement (and famed for the seminal film *The Boatman's Daughter*), *Crossroads* possesses a sweetness and joy that belies its political agenda, infusing the Shanghai leftist-cinema template with frothy, dynamically Hollywood-style energy, helped considerably by the Jimmy Stewart-like Zhao Dan in the lead role. The film's mix of exuberant humour and down-and-out alienation finds an echo six decades later in the work of the Sixth Generation filmmakers, especially Wang Xiaoshuai's *The Days* (screening on June 30). **NC**

Saturday, July 6 1:00 pm ☼

### The Big Road

#### 大路

dir. Sun Yu | China 1935 | 104 min. | PG **35MM**  
Archival Print!

A big-hearted classic of the 1930s progressive film movement, *The Big Road* (also known as *The Highway*) chronicles the efforts of six young, patriotic and unemployed city men building a highway to aid the anti-Japanese war effort. Among the many major achievements of Second Generation master Sun Yu, the film is also an early and mesmerizing experiment in sound design: as Paul Clark explains, "the silence of the film is broken by songs, particularly the road-making songs, which the workers sing together, and by a curious device, a series of percussion sounds, when one of the four men playfully taps the nose, chest and forehead of a gang comrade." (This unabashed physical intimacy extends to a surprising nude bathing scene with the men, following some fairly raw talk from two women who are following the road crew's progress.) Wearing its patriotism on its sleeve, *The Big Road* emphasizes the necessity of presenting a united front against the Japanese invaders; the only real villain is a Chinese collaborator who kidnaps two of the men to impede the highway's progress. The film's insistence on identifying class enemies reveals a darker side of this otherwise effusive and joyous work. **NC**

Sunday, July 7 1:00 pm ☼



Red Detachment of Women

# A NEW CHINA

**T**he victory of the Chinese Communist Party over the Nationalist forces in 1949 marked the end of the long Chinese civil war and the birth of a radically different nation. Yet despite the vast and far-reaching changes effected throughout all spheres of Chinese society by the ideological imperatives of the new regime, it is intriguing to trace the many continuities between the cinemas of the pre- and post-Revolution periods. While Mao Zedong's Yan'an Rectification Campaign of the early 1940s had sought to purge the influence of the Western-oriented literature of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement and make the Party line supreme in all cultural fields, many of the most critically and commercially successful Mainland films of the "Seventeen Years" period (dating from the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 to the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966) would still be derived from these acknowledged classics of Chinese progressive culture. ▶▶



Execution in Autumn

Furthermore, brief periods of cultural experimentation such as the Hundred Flowers Campaign emboldened filmmakers to once again engage in social commentary and take both political and aesthetic risks in their films, leading to such recently rediscovered masterworks as Lu Ban's extraordinary *Unfinished Comedy*. The revival of this progressive spirit also allowed women to return to the forefront of Chinese cinema in comedies such as *Li Shuangshuang*, which features the fiery Zhang Ruifang gently but pointedly satirizing Party rigidity. This intriguing period would come to an end with the onset of the Cultural Revolution, the last and most brutal crackdown on intellectuals, which halted narrative film production for more than a decade; only model operas, adhering to the strict ideological guidelines of socialist realism, were permitted.

The 1949 Revolution would have an enormous impact on the cinemas of the other regions as well. In Hong Kong, where the British officials who ruled the colony were wary of films that might stir up social conflict, the commercial cinema of Hong Kong—infused with a steady stream of transplanted artists from the Mainland since the 1930s—kept the progressive spirit of the Golden Age alive by using the frameworks of popular entertainment to address social issues. In particular, commentary about the impossibility of housing the Hong Kong poor—an extremely pressing issue in the postwar period—would become a prominent theme in such powerful melodramas as *Parents' Hearts* and *In the Face of Demolition*, and provide the context for Wong Kar-wai's masterpiece *In the Mood for Love* five decades later.

In Taiwan, where the defeated Guomindang (Nationalist) forces had taken refuge and instituted a form of martial law, cinema could similarly serve as a vehicle of political inquiry. While the dictates of “healthy realism”—the Guomindang correlative to the Mainland's socialist realism—presented a cinematic portrait of Taiwan scrubbed clean of class struggle, crime, promiscuity and (especially) left-wing politics, political commentary found its way into films under the guise of historical drama (in the brilliant *Execution in Autumn*) or as subplots in romantic melodramas. As before, progressive sentiments in Chinese cinema went hand in hand with the presence of strong female characters: gentle realist dramas like Li Han-hsiang's wonderful *The Winter* set box-office records, as the island's largely female audiences tired of seeing the retrograde depictions of themselves in the industry's rote melodramas and period pieces.

—Noah Cowan

## Red Detachment of Women 红色娘子军

dir. Xie Jin | Mainland 1961 | 110 min. **B5MM**

### Archival Print!

“The films I directed before the Cultural Revolution are mostly about the contrast between the old society and the new society,” said Xie Jin, whose distinguished career extended from the pre- to post-Cultural Revolution periods. “What was the past like? What happened after the founding of New China?” The director boldly answered those questions in this tale of a violated peasant girl turned vicious fighting machine. The film's first half, situated on the sweltering island of Hainan, has the feel of a “James Bond of the East,” as a dashing spy recruits our heroine to the Communist cause; the second half, featuring her army training and fearsome all-female combat scenes, crosses the eye-popping style of Communist propaganda posters with the gritty realism of Soviet war films, creating an unclassifiable, proto-pop art socialist cinematography. While *Red Detachment* is certainly brimming with cadre spirit—it became one of the Mainland's most important films up to the fall of the Gang of Four, remade successively in literary, theatre, model opera and new film versions—Xie Jin never lets the proceedings sink into sloganeering; he later claimed that he kept such classic (and decidedly un-revolutionary) Chinese novels as *Romance of Book and Sword* in mind while making the film. **NC**

Sunday, June 9 8:00 pm ❖

## Execution in Autumn 秋決

dir. Li Hsing | Taiwan 1972 | 99 min. | PG **DIGITAL**

An intense historical drama of enormous emotional impact, *Execution in Autumn* was a departure for acclaimed director Li Hsing, best known as a pioneer of the “healthy realism” genre devoted to a clean image of Taiwan. Set in Han-era China, *Execution* concerns a bullish young man who is sentenced to death for three murders he committed during a brawl. As he languishes in prison waiting for his date with the executioner, his manipulative mother attempts to free him—or at least ensure that he produces an heir. Li's scenario allows him to subtly critique Confucian values by setting them against these extreme circumstances: How much should we sacrifice for our families? To what ends will we go to make sure that a family line continues? The film's heightened emotions are more than matched by its dazzling visual flair, from the perfectly composed and designed sets to the spectacular use of smash zooms and unsettling music cues; the long-held introductory shots of each of the four seasons as the young man awaits his fate are exceptional works of art in themselves. **NC**

Friday, June 14 6:30 pm ❖

Free Screening!

Li Shuangshuang



Unfinished Comedy



This Life of Mine

**Li Shuangshuang**

李双双

dir. Lu Ren | Mainland 1962 | 104 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

A brief relaxation of strict socialist realism guidelines in the 1960s saw the emergence of several wonderful and now rarely seen comedies, the most popular of which was the deft and enormously charming *Li Shuangshuang*. The title character (“Seventeen Years” superstar Zhang Ruifang) is a model member of a village commune who cheerily denounces the laziness and minor corruption of the village men, especially her kind but not overly bright husband. As she spurs on the other village women to do the same, she and her husband become estranged and unhappy. All ends well, of course, as the couple triumphantly reunite in the name of Party and Nation, but beneath the breeziness one can feel greater metaphors at work, and harbingers of things to come: is Li Shuangshuang perhaps a stand-in for an overly demanding Party, and her husband the exhausted people of China? (For Kevin B. Lee, “Li Shuangshuang’s uncompromising stance toward her community foretold the kind of behaviour that would explode full-scale during the sweeping, destructive purification campaigns of the Cultural Revolution just a few years later.”) **NC**

Sunday, June 16 1:00 pm ❖

**Unfinished Comedy**

没有完成的喜剧

dir. Lu Ban | Mainland 1957 | 80 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

“Seventeen Years” director Lu Ban was a master of comedies that gently tweaked the Party bureaucracy; his most famous film, *When the New Director Arrives*, poked good-natured fun at the feudal impulses and reactionary mindset of some lower Party officials. But *Unfinished Comedy*, easily the most surprising discovery of this series, is something else entirely. Never screened upon release and rarely seen since, its formal audacity and radical critique of Party censors landed it in hot water just as the Hundred Flowers Campaign, the brief period of significant artistic freedom in the late 1950s, was coming to a close; Lu himself was heavily persecuted, and never made another film. More or less playing themselves, two famous comedians from pre-Revolution days perform a series of sketches in a theatre for a group of Party cadres (purported to be “authorities in literary criticism”). The stage performances blend over into absurdist, self-contained fantasy episodes where the two comics allegorically parody Party propaganda and ideological orthodoxy. The cadres, as one might imagine, are far from amused, and their reactions parallel the film’s real-life treatment at the hands of the government. “Perhaps the most accomplished film made in the seventeen years between 1949 and the Cultural Revolution” (Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949*). **NC**

Sunday, June 23 3:30 pm ❖

**This Life of Mine**

我这一辈子

dir. Shi Hui | Mainland 1950 | 120 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

“Shi Hui, driven to suicide in Mao’s ‘Anti-Rightist Purge’ of the late 1950s, was one of the greatest screen actors ever and a very fine director; this adaptation of a short story by Lao She was probably his best work” (Tony Rayns, *Time Out London*). The first film produced in Shanghai after the end of the civil war, *This Life of Mine* delicately balances the interest in earthy local language that was a hallmark of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement with the class analysis demanded by the new regime. It is also among the first fully realized examples of Soviet-influenced cinematography in Chinese cinema: the film’s sublime play of light and shadow was much admired and frequently imitated in the years to come. The film traces the history of twentieth-century China from the fall of the Qing dynasty through to the 1949 Revolution through the eyes of a simple Beijing policeman, played by actor-director Shi Hui, who brilliantly conveys the changing face of the Chinese people through four tumultuous decades of conflict. “The ultimate discovery. As an expression of the New China’s spiritual turmoil, the film engages in intense moral inquiries and ambiguities that are unparalleled in socialist cinema, even as it tries to toe the party line” (Andrew Chan, *The L Magazine*). **NC**

Sunday, June 23 6:00 pm ❖



Red Crag: Life in Eternal Flame



Parents' Hearts



The East Is Red

### The East Is Red

#### 东方红

dir. Wang Ping | Mainland 1965 | 117 min. | 14A **35MM**  
**New Print!**

Though often thought of as the epitome of kitsch, model operas represent a key development in Chinese cinema's tradition of filmed performance, unique both for their extreme ideological rigidity and their mesmerizingly abstract design. While the genre hit its peak during the second phase of the Cultural Revolution, when such films as Xie Tieli's *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* were the only films permitted in theatres, the form was developed over a number of years. Made during the first stirrings of the Cultural Revolution, and in many ways setting the template for what was to come—not least in the ideological fervour of its hard-line director Wang Ping, one of the very rare women allowed behind the camera during the period—*The East Is Red* was the most lavish, and most important, of these earlier films; its title song became the unofficial national anthem, and the film itself remained a cornerstone of Mao's cult of personality until his death a decade later. Retelling the history of the Chinese Communist Party, from its founding in 1921 to its victory over the Nationalists in 1949, as a grand musical pageant, *The East Is Red* is both breathtaking and discomfiting in its monumental design; the opening sequence, for example, with vast numbers of spectators entering the Great Hall of the People, eerily recalls the films of Leni Riefenstahl. **NC**

**Tuesday, June 25 9:15 pm** ☼

### Red Crag: Life in Eternal Flame

#### 烈火中永生

dir. Shui Hua | Mainland 1965 | 137 min. **DIGITAL**  
**Digital Restoration!**

A taut wartime thriller, *Red Crag: Life in Eternal Flame* anticipates the paranoia and violence of the imminent Cultural Revolution while harking back to the aesthetic splendour of the Golden Age Shanghai cinema of the late 1940s. (This opulence is largely due to the work of cinematographer Zhu Jinming, the master visual stylist of *Shangrao Concentration Camp* and other key "Seventeen Years" films.) The film concerns a hard-boiled woman working in the Chongqing Communist underground during World War II, whose commitment to the guerrilla cause is only intensified after she witnesses her husband's head mounted on the city walls by the Nationalist forces. Arrested while escorting a weapons shipment to her comrades, she resists Guomindang torture and becomes a leader in the rough-and-tumble prison. As the Communist army approaches and the prisoners are threatened with execution, a desperate escape is planned. As directed by Shui Hua, one of the more reliably orthodox directors with talent during this period, *Red Crag* features much chest-beating and many Mao-inspired smiles as it revels in the glories of martyrdom, but it also has a swagger and bravado that is rarely seen in Chinese films of the period. **NC**

**Thursday, June 27 9:15 pm** ☼

### Parents' Hearts

#### 父母心

dir. Chun Kim | Hong Kong 1955 | 111 min. **DIGITAL**

Life imitates art in this heartbreaking drama about the tragic life of a bit-part Cantonese opera actor: the decline of the once prominent Cantonese opera scene, and its ultimate migration into Hong Kong cinema, is a persistent theme throughout the film, and its finest moments take us backstage to witness the workings of this highly localized art form. Real-life Cantonese opera star Ma Si-tsang plays an actor who, laid off from his job at the opera, is forced to play a clown in a low-rent company and become a street performer in order to support his family. When his beloved son decides that he wants to become a performer himself, the conflicted patriarch must make some difficult choices about his family's future. Transcending the sticky sentimentality of so many Hong Kong films of this period through Chun Kim's sensitive direction and Ma's astonishingly rich performance, *Parents' Hearts* continues to inspire fervent love from Hong Kong critics: it was voted to *Time Out Hong Kong's* list of the hundred greatest Hong Kong films ever made, while a recent Hong Kong Film Archive programme note gushed, "*Parents' Hearts* is one of the best Hong Kong films, ever!" **NC**

**Saturday, June 29 1:00 pm** ☼



**The Arch**

董夫人

dir. Cecile Tang | Hong Kong 1968 | 95 min. **35MM**  
Archival Print!

The incomparably original Cecile Tang, one of the few female filmmakers working in Hong Kong in the sixties and seventies, made two of the most interesting and important films of the era with her debut *The Arch* and its follow-up *China Behind*. A profound character study that feels like a hybrid of Kenji Mizoguchi's tales of female sacrifice, the tragic romances of Chinese costume drama and the interruptive techniques of the French New Wave, *The Arch* focuses on a wealthy widow (Lisa Lu) in the early Qing dynasty on the eve of her crowning achievement, the erection of a triumphal arch in honour of her many good works. When a young and handsome cavalry officer is billeted at her palatial house and soon begins to court both the matriarch and her immature daughter, the widow is forced to choose between her own happiness and her daughter's well-being. Shot in soft, luminous black and white by Satyajit Ray's longtime cinematographer Subrata Mitra, *The Arch* is "one of the most significant art-house classics in [Hong Kong] film history ... as if Alain Resnais met Henrik Ibsen in seventeenth-century China" (Edmund Lee, *Time Out Hong Kong*). **NC**

Thursday, July 4 6:30 pm

Co-presented by



**China Behind**

再見中國

dir. Cecile Tang | Mainland 1974 | 89 min. **35MM**  
Archival Print!

Highly influenced by the French New Wave and presaging many aspects of the Hong Kong New Wave to come, the films of Cecile Tang stand apart from the kung-fu and Chinese opera films that dominated seventies Hong Kong cinema. One of the most exciting discoveries of this series, Tang's second film *China Behind*—banned for over a decade by the Hong Kong government, on the grounds that it would "damage good relations with other territories"—follows a group of Mainlanders as they desperately try to flee from a China in thrall to the Cultural Revolution. Narrowly escaping capture as they set out, the fugitives are willing to do anything—including a long, death-defying swim—to reach freedom. But what they find when they reach the haven of Hong Kong is a far cry from their dreams of liberty: the final passages of the film are a damning and powerful indictment of both the socialist and free-market "utopias" that defined the ideological landscape of the century just past. "One of the earliest films to deal with the clash of Communist and capitalist ideals that would inevitably manifest itself with the 1997 handover[;] the moral degradation and spiritual disenchantment of its characters reveal the dehumanizing effects felt [on] both sides of the border" (Edmund Lee, *Time Out Hong Kong*). **NC**

Thursday, July 4 9:00 pm

**Two Stage Sisters**

舞台姐妹

dir. Xie Jin | Mainland 1964 | 112 min. **DIGITAL**  
Digital Restoration!

*Two Stage Sisters* was denounced at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution for its glorification of the bourgeoisie, and the charge is not far off the mark: this stunning film noir melodrama by "Seventeen Years" master Xie Jin is a sumptuous treat straight out of the Bette Davis-Joan Crawford playbook. The film follows two (unrelated) country opera singers in a travelling troupe who relocate to Shanghai in the 1940s, where they engage in a bitter rivalry over nothing less than the New China itself: one woman convinces a major theatre to mount a revolutionary model opera, while the other embraces the glamorous trappings of capitalism as provided by her industrialist boyfriend. A scenery-eviscerating performance by Xie Fang, a host of memorable tunes, and an over-the-top (and truly fabulous) final courtroom scene made this a major revelation at last year's *(Re)Inventing China* series at the Film Society of Lincoln Center. "*Two Stage Sisters* feels like a culmination of the contradictory forces that shaped Communist Chinese cinema up to that point.... Above all, [it] is a story of how art itself is a means for both societal reconciliation and revolution" (Kevin B. Lee, *Moving Image Source*). **NC**

Sunday, July 7 3:30 pm





Two Stage Sisters

### The Winter

冬暖

dir. Li Han-hsiang | Taiwan 1969 | 95 min. | PG **DIGITAL**

Best known for such lavish epics as *The Kingdom and the Beauty* and *The Love Eterne*, veteran director Li Han-hsiang reveals a more intimate and nuanced side with this rarely screened film, whose understated tone was enormously influential on both Hou Hsiao-hsien and Ang Lee (who used the lead actress, Ling Fang, in several films), as well as many directors of the Hong Kong New Wave. *The Winter* tells the deceptively simple story of a woman returning to her hometown and reconnecting with an old family friend, a restaurateur who cannot bring himself to confess his love for her. His feelings are finally revealed when he challenges some small-time hustlers to a fight at a street festival; after tending his wounds, she leaves town, only to return years later with a child. Much like the socialist realism of the Mainland, Taiwan's state-sanctioned "healthy realism" offered a scrubbed-clean cinematic image of the country free of poverty, immorality or left-wing politics; within its gentle, small-scale story, *The Winter* defies these conventions, depicting a Taiwan beset with far more fraught social conditions and offering a more complex view of sexual morality. It's also a very beautiful film, its night scenes cast with a tremulous glow that heartbreakingly mimics the couple's tentative, fragile emotional connection. "A delicate and touching work that is now considered one of the best Chinese-language films of the 1960s" (Sam Ho, Hong Kong Film Archive). **NC**

Wednesday, July 10 6:00 pm ☼



The Love Eterne

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Ivy Ling Po  
presents  
*The Love Eterne*

Saturday, July 13  
1:00 pm ☼

One of the most famous actresses in Chinese film history, Ivy Ling Po joins us to introduce the beloved 1963 classic that made her a star.

### The Love Eterne

梁山伯與祝英台

dir. Li Han-hsiang | Hong Kong 1963 | 126 min. **35MM**

New Print!

Shaw Brothers' in-house epic specialist Li Han-hsiang had his greatest success with this Huangmei opera film based on the legend of the Butterfly Lovers, a whirlwind cross-dressing romance sometimes referred to as the "Romeo and Juliet of the East." A true "event" movie, *The Love Eterne* broke box-office records throughout Asia (especially in Taiwan, where it apparently was the first film to make the young Ang Lee cry), and unlike many of its creaky contemporaries stands up extremely well today: the songs are eminently hummable and the performances of the female leads Betty Loh and (especially) Ivy Ling Po are wonderfully balanced between classical theatre and modern gesture. In the distant past, young male scholar Liang Shan Bo (Po) bumps into the aristocratic Zhu Ying Tai (Loh) on her way to attend a male-only school disguised as a boy. They become unusually close and spend an idyllic three years studying together. When Zhu must leave the school, Liang becomes frantic, eventually learning her true identity and tracking her down ... but he may be too late to win her back. "The Chinese folk legend of the Butterfly Lovers may have been adapted countless times, but this sumptuous rendition—with its catchy tunes, poetic lyrics and eye-searing colour scheme—is hard to be surpassed either artistically or historically" (Edmund Lee, *Time Out Hong Kong*). **NC**

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HONG KONG ECONOMIC & TRADE OFFICE

**New Year's Sacrifice**

祝福

dir. Sang Hu | Mainland 1956 | 110 min. | PG **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

One of more confounding aspects of Chinese cinema of the “Seventeen Years” period is the prevalence of films derived from works associated with the left-leaning, Western-influenced May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, which Mao Zedong had implicitly denounced as being insufficiently attentive to the lives of the peasantry and the mechanics of class struggle. However, the literary cachet of these works assured audiences that the film adaptations would be “quality pictures,” while their mildly progressive politics made them reasonably acceptable to the ideological dictates of the new regime. Hugely successful at the time, these films have a fascinating awkwardness about them, the square peg of early modernist literature meeting the round hole of socialist realism. Based on the celebrated short story by literary lion Lu Xun, *New Year's Sacrifice*—which chronicles the travails of a poor servant (Bai Yang) in the house of a wealthy noble family who is twice sold into marriage, twice widowed and forced back into lowly servitude—is among the most successful of these adaptations, largely due to a refined screenplay by May 4<sup>th</sup> acolyte Xia Yan and the carefully detailed direction of Second Generation master Sang Hu. **NC**

Thursday, July 25 9:00 pm



**In the Face of Demolition**

危樓春曉

dir. Li Tie | Hong Kong 1953 | 125 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Set almost entirely within the walls of a crumbling apartment complex, this early Hong Kong left-wing social drama established a now omnipresent theme in Hong Kong cinema—the plight of the urban poor—and demonstrates both the genre's shaggy, rambling charm as well as the political urgency that gives an edge to even the films' most sentimental or melodramatic moments. With its panoramic portrait of the building's various down-and-out denizens—a taxi dancer, an unemployed teacher, a professional reduced to selling his blood and, of course, a venal landlord—the film is also a fine example of the multi-character Mandarin-language melodramas, featuring displaced Mainland stars, that were especially popular during this period. “The mise-en-scène has a Renoirian flavor, and at certain points, the film clearly recalls *Le Crime de M. Lange*: like Renoir's hero, the teacher hero of *In the Face of Demolition* is an aspiring writer who is promised the moon by a would-be publisher and gets let down badly” (Chris Fujiwara); “A film that defines its time” (Sam Ho, Hong Kong Film Archive). **NC**

Thursday, August 1 6:15 pm

**Shangrao Concentration Camp**

上饶集中营

dirs. Meng Sha & Zhang Ke | Mainland 1951 |

96 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

One of the major discoveries of our series and one of the greatest POW films of all time, *Shangrao Concentration Camp* is set in the hellish confines of a Guomindang (Nationalist) prison, where the brutal officials try to force two female Communist prisoners to reveal their leader's identity and location. While its subject and year of production might suggest a propaganda film, *Shangrao* has garnered some interesting (if chronologically impossible) comparisons to Bresson from some critics for its intense, haunting minimalism, though its true roots are in the Soviet cinema then widely distributed in China: in particular, the great cinematographer Zhu Jinming offers a brilliant echo of Dovzhenko's overwhelming landscapes in his images of China's rugged northern climes. With an extraordinary use of long takes and surprisingly mobile camera movements accentuating the passionate, earthy performances of leads Tang Hua Da and Jiang Jun, *Shangrao Concentration Camp* is “a powerful meditation on human relations under pressure” (Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949*). **NC**

Saturday, August 3 1:00 pm





The 36th Chamber of Shaolin  
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## SWORDSMEN, GANGSTERS AND GHOSTS

# THE EVOLUTION OF CHINESE GENRE CINEMA

**M**artial-arts schools played a major role in late imperial Chinese history: the Boxer Rebellion, the notorious anti-foreigner crusade that lasted from 1899 to 1901 and led to the fall of the Qing dynasty, was spearheaded by one such school. Despite the rebellion's total failure, it became a powerful symbol of Chinese nationalism; and hardly coincidentally, most examples of the emergent silent-era martial-arts film (known as *wuxia pian*, literally "chivalrous combat films") were fiercely patriotic in the Boxer spirit. Mingxing, the same company that launched Shanghai's progressive cinema movement in the 1930s, was also responsible for the earliest documented martial-arts film (actually a series of films), the now-lost *The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple*. The immense popularity of this long-running serial, and the many other martial-arts films that followed in its wake, flew in the face of officially sanctioned opinion. Patriotic sentiments aside, the films' outré special effects and bevy of louche women led to a ban on the genre from the Guomindang (Nationalist) government as promoting "superstition and moral decadence." The Communists would continue this policy for much the reason, claiming that *wuxia* films promoted the worst aspects of feudal China. ▶▶



In the late-1940s, with anti-*wuxia* policies in place both on the Communist Mainland and Guomindang-controlled Taiwan, talent from both the world of filmmaking and that of the martial-arts schools began a migration to Hong Kong, which had begun to rebuild the studio complexes destroyed during the war and would soon become the undisputed centre of martial-arts cinema worldwide. Beginning in 1948, the fantastic popularity of the series of Hong Kong films based on (and considerably embroidering) the life of the real-life martial-arts guru Wong Fei-hung inspired a boom in martial-arts film production, driven by the Shaw Brothers studio and its rival Golden Harvest, that would reach its peak in a roughly ten-year period from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies. While directors like King Hu (*Come Drink With Me*) and Chang Cheh (*One-Armed Swordsman*) took the fantasy-heavy, swordplay-focused *wuxia* film to new heights, it was an offshoot of *wuxia* that would bring the martial-arts film to the world: the unarmed combat-based kung-fu genre, exemplified in the films of the great director Lau Kar-leung (*The 36<sup>th</sup> Chamber of Shaolin*) and finding its global figurehead in the one and only Bruce Lee.

The eighties and nineties saw several major evolutions in Chinese cinema's unique contribution to the action genre as the craze for the "classic" martial-arts film began to wane. Once touted as a successor to Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan instead found global superstardom as the clown prince of kung fu, blending the often solemn martial-arts template with slapstick and low comedy while taking the genre's incredible physical displays to eye-popping new heights. Prolific Hong Kong New Wave leader Tsui Hark would take the *wuxia* film into a lavish new era with such ambitious epics as *Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain*, and re-energize the classic kung-fu film for the nineties with *Once Upon a Time in China*. Blending Chan's populist comedy with Tsui's outrageous flights of fancy, the Tsui-produced *A Chinese Ghost Story* and Jeffrey Lau's two-part *A Chinese Odyssey* brought fantasy and the supernatural into the martial-arts mix. Finally, at the turn of the century martial-arts cinema

returned to the Mainland that once spurned it: following Ang Lee's global success with his King Hu-inspired *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, a series of baroque, Mainland-produced *wuxia* epics emerged, with the best among them—such as Zhang Yimou's *Hero* and Feng Xiaogong's *The Banquet*—garnering significant domestic and international success.

Concurrent with and intrinsically related to the rise of the *wuxia* and kung-fu genres were the Hong Kong gangster and crime thrillers, which refracted the martial-arts films' themes of loyalty, brotherhood and patriotism through a dark, distorting lens. As evidenced by Patrick Lung Kong's long-neglected 1967 milestone *The Story of a Discharged Prisoner*, the gangster film originally had its roots in Hong Kong's socially progressive cinema, stressing the connection between crime and poverty and holding out some hope, however faint, that these social ills could be healed. In the 1980s, however, the genre began to evolve in a considerably darker, more nihilistic and hyperbolic direction, in such films as Johnny Mak's startlingly bleak *Long Arm of the Law* and, most famously, John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow*. A loose remake of *Discharged Prisoner* infused with the influence of Leone, Peckinpah and Kurosawa, *A Better Tomorrow* made "heroic bloodshed" the new byword of Hong Kong action cinema with its outrageously stylized, over-the-top gun battles. The decades to come have seen several other innovative directors take the genre to exciting new places: Andrew Lau and Alan Mak reinvigorated Hong Kong cinema as a whole with their 2002 hit *Infernal Affairs*, while the great Johnnie To took a considerably more cynical and sardonic look at Woo-style blood-brothering in a series of hard-edged crime films that culminated in his 2005 diptych *Election* and *Election 2*.

—Noah Cowan

The Hong Kong section of this programme is supported by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (Toronto).



Photo courtesy of Teo Keng Beng

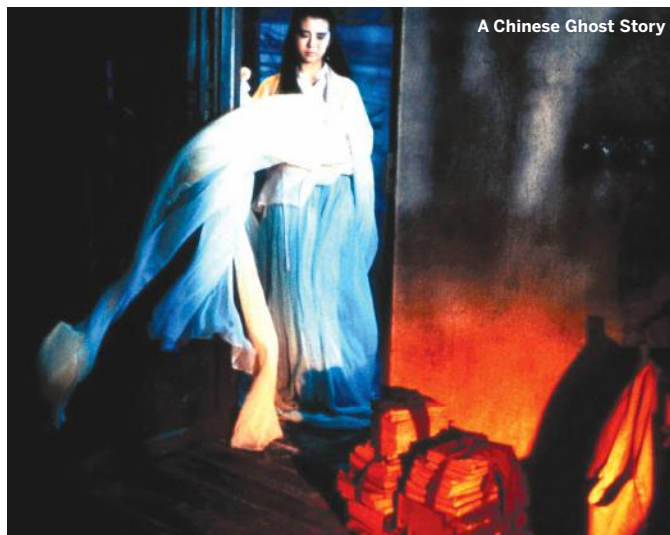


## Nansun Shi presents *A Chinese Ghost Story* and *A Better Tomorrow*

**Friday, June 7 10:00 pm**  
**Saturday, June 8 8:00 pm**

Nansun Shi, Executive Director of Film Workshop—the Hong Kong genre-film powerhouse which Shi and her husband Tsui Hark co-founded in 1984—joins us to introduce two of the studio's biggest and most influential hits.

Co-presented by



A Chinese Ghost Story



A Better Tomorrow

### A Chinese Ghost Story

倩女幽魂

dir. Ching Siu-tung | Hong Kong 1987 | 94 min. | 14A **35MM****Archival Print!**

Produced by Hong Kong New Wave icons Tsui Hark and Nansun Shi, the enormously popular martial arts-horror-comedy hybrid *A Chinese Ghost Story* was loosely adapted from a story by eighteenth-century writer Pu Songling, whose collection *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* also served as an inspiration for films by King Hu and Li Han-hsiang. The great Hong Kong actor and pop star Leslie Cheung—who would soon after attain global fame in Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* and several landmark films by Wong Kar-wai—stars as Ning Choi-san, a timid young tax collector sent to a remote town to collect the yearly dues. Shunned by the locals and refused shelter, he spends the night in a crumbling temple, where he meets and becomes enamoured of a beautiful young woman—who, no surprise given the title, turns out to be a ghost. With the aid of a mystically talented wandering swordsman, Ning tries to free his spectral beloved from her otherworldly enslavement. Raucous, unabashedly silly and just plain fun, *A Chinese Ghost Story* is “the quintessential merger of the traditional Chinese ghost story with the Hong Kong pop sensibility” (Barbara Scharres). **TB**

**Friday, June 7 10:00 pm**  
**Nansun Shi in person!**

### A Better Tomorrow

英雄本色

dir. John Woo | Hong Kong 1986 | 95 min. | R **35MM****Archival Print!**

John Woo was a journeyman Hong Kong director for the first eighteen years of his directing career, working in an array of genres without ever truly making his mark. But when he loosely remade *The Story of a Discharged Prisoner* (screening on July 5) as *A Better Tomorrow*, he caused a sensation: the film became a blockbuster hit, made Chow Yun Fat into a global icon of cool, and helped to break non-kung fu Hong Kong action cinema in the West. High-ranking triad member Sung Tse-ho (former Shaw Brothers star Ti Lung) is imprisoned after a deal goes sour, while his best friend and triad enforcer Mark Lee (Chow Yun Fat) is crippled in a shootout. Released from prison three years later, Sung tries to reconnect with his straight-arrow police-officer brother Kit (Leslie Cheung), but is bitterly rebuffed. Harassed by his former subordinate, who is now the head of the triad, Sung eventually reconnects with Mark for some blazing and bloody score-settling. Woo's distinctive brand of “heroic bloodshed”—wildly over-the-top and intricately choreographed gunplay, super-cool anti-hero swagger, heightened and hilariously self-serious stories of macho redemption—emerges fully formed here, and while Woo would scale even more operatic heights with *The Killer* and *Hard Boiled*, this is perhaps the purest expression of his signature style. **TB**

**Saturday, June 8 8:00 pm**  
**Nansun Shi in person!**



Don't miss  
**David Bordwell on  
 The Art of the  
 Martial-Arts Film**  
 Monday, June 10 6:30 pm

**Sam Ho & Winnie Fu on  
*Wong Fei-hung: The Whip That  
 Smacks the Candle***

**Monday, June 10 9:00 pm**

We are delighted to welcome two experts on Hong Kong cinema—film critic, curator and researcher Sam Ho and Hong Kong Film Archive programmer Winnie Fu—to introduce our screening of this milestone of martial-arts cinema.

Co-presented by



**Wong Fei-hung: The Whip That Smacks the Candle**  
 黃飛鴻鞭風滅燭

dir. Wu Pang | Hong Kong 1949 | 72 min **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

One of the most revered of Chinese folk heroes, the legendary martial artist Wong Fei-hung (1847-1924) is also one of the most popular and enduring screen characters in cinema history. A tried and true symbol of Chinese tradition and patriotism standing tall against Western influence and foreign incursion, Wong was portrayed at various ages and in numerous incarnations, from the comic to the ultra-serious, in over one hundred feature films—most famously by Jackie Chan (in 1978's *Drunken Master* and its absolutely awesome 1994 sequel) and Jet Li (in the *Once Upon a Time in China* series, the first two parts of which screen August 4). But Wu Pang's 1949 *The Whip That Smacks the Candle* started it all: not only did it bring Wong to the screen for the first time in the person of Chinese opera star Kwan Tak-hing (who would go on to play the role in over seventy features, serials and TV episodes), it set the template for the modern kung-fu genre by eschewing the fantasy elements of the silent-era *wuxia* films in favour of realistic action choreography and a focus on the importance of martial-arts discipline and technique. Come see where it all began! **TB**



**Jackie Chan presents  
 Three Kung-fu Classics**

**Wednesday, June 12  
 Thursday, June 13**

*"Chan has earned his place in movie history somewhere in the same hall of fame that also houses the other great physical performers who really did their stuff themselves: Buster Keaton, Douglas Fairbanks Sr., Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly and, yes, Jackie Chan."* —Roger Ebert

Trained in the Peking opera and apprenticing as a child actor, stunt performer and fight choreographer on numerous Hong Kong martial-arts films throughout the sixties and seventies, Jackie Chan became a superstar with a series of astonishing comic kung-fu capers and modern-day action movies, and conquered the globe beginning with the North American release of *Rumble in the Bronx* in 1995.

We are delighted to welcome Jackie Chan to introduce our screenings of three of his greatest kung-fu classics, as well as a trailer for his upcoming film *Police Story 2013*.

Co-presented by





Drunken Master

### Drunken Master

醉拳

dir. Yuen Woo-ping | Hong Kong 1978 | 111 min. | PG **35MM**

Archival Print!

Following a tepid attempt to sell him as yet another successor to the irreplaceable Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan was finally allowed to hit his stride when he displayed his comedy chops alongside his eye-popping fighting skills in *Drunken Master*. Taking on the mantle of venerated kung-fu folk hero Wong Fei-hung—a role first immortalized by Kwan Tak-hing in 1949's *The Whip That Smacks the Candle*, and remade for a new generation by Jet Li in *Once Upon a Time in China*—Chan blows a raspberry at tradition by playing Wong as a young, wild, clumsy and unmanageable kung-fu student who is sent to train with his notoriously cruel and inebriated uncle Beggar Su (played by Yuen Siu-tien, father of the film's director and renowned fight choreographer Yuen Woo-ping). After being painfully schooled in the technique of the Eight Drunken Gods—which requires that the practitioner be four sheets to the wind to yield the best results—Fei-hung must return home to protect his perpetually disapproving father when an assassin nicknamed Thunderleg (Jang Lee Hwang) agrees to kill him for cash. *Drunken Master* marvellously mixes furiously fast fist- and footwork with Three Stooges-style slapstick antics; the climactic battle between Chan and Hwang—a flurry of kicks, punches, and outrageous gags—stands as one of the most amazing fight scenes in film history. **JW**

Wednesday, June 12 6:00 pm

Jackie Chan in person!

### The Legend of Drunken Master



### The Legend of Drunken Master

醉拳 II

dir. Lau Kar-leung | Hong Kong 1994 | 99 min. | 14A **35MM**

Returning to period kung-fu films after a series of modern-day action movies, Jackie Chan made what many consider to be his masterpiece with this loose sequel to his 1978 hit *Drunken Master*. (The film was released in 1994 as *Drunken Master II*; we are screening the dubbed, retitled and very slightly edited version prepared for North American release in 2000.) Chan once again takes on the role of folk hero Wong Fei-hung, who becomes embroiled in a plot by British officials to steal a valuable Chinese artifact. Forced to fight, Fei-hung must take to the bottle to give his drunken boxing its full, astonishing power (imagine Popeye's spinach, only 100 proof!) and defeat the legions of thugs who soon come after him. Although producer-star Chan and his director, former Shaw Brothers giant Lau Kar-leung (*The 36<sup>th</sup> Chamber of Shaolin*), didn't see eye to eye—Chan actually fired him midway through production and took over directing duties himself—the combination of Lau's intricate choreography and Chan's audience-pleasing acrobatics and gleeful mugging results in one of the all-time peaks of martial-arts cinema. The opening set-to between Chan and director Lau underneath a train, an epic bar fight against a gang of axe-wielding assassins, and the final, foot-wagging battle with the chief British henchman are unparalleled examples of Hong Kong kung-fu craftsmanship at its finest. **JW**

Wednesday, June 12 9:00 pm

Jackie Chan in person!

### Police Story



### Police Story

警察故事

dir. Jackie Chan | Hong Kong 1985 | 94 min. | PG **35MM**

Archival Print!

Though Jackie Chan was already an established star in Hong Kong, *Police Story* took him to a new level of success and showcases the mind-bogglingly multi-talented performer at his physical, comedic and creative peak, both in front of and behind the camera. Departing from the period martial-arts movie formula and seeking a way to integrate his tried-and-true screen persona into the contemporary world, Chan mixes elements from Hollywood cop and car-crash films with unabashedly silly comedy and his signature acrobatics and death-defying stunts, to stunning (and hilarious) effect. The story is simplicity itself—a zealous young cop (Chan), in hot pursuit of a drug lord, finds himself framed by his nemesis for murder, and must go on the run to clear his name—but the execution is everything, and the film brings the goods and then some. From the spectacular opening car chase that rips through a hillside shantytown to Chan's final battle against the drug lord's henchmen in a super-modern shopping mall, *Police Story* is a jaw-dropping exhibition of dazzling physical prowess, devil-may-care fearlessness and raw, goofy charm. **TB**

Thursday, June 13 6:00 pm

Jackie Chan in person!



Nora Miao  
presents  
*Fist of Fury*

Friday, June 14  
9:00 pm

The former Golden Harvest star and Toronto radio personality introduces our screening of the martial-arts classic, in which she co-stars opposite the legendary Bruce Lee.



Fist of Fury

**Fist of Fury (The Chinese Connection)**

精武門

dir. Lo Wei | Hong Kong 1972 | 107 min. | PG **DIGITAL**

Possessed of ineffable charisma, propulsive power and dazzlingly deadly grace, Bruce Lee was the living symbol of the worldwide kung-fu craze in the 1970s, and remains the face of the genre to this day. A martial-arts innovator who created his own style (*jeet kune do*) that fused elements from several different disciplines, Lee eschewed the wire-assisted acrobatics that dominated kung-fu cinema in favour of a stripped-down presentation of his incredible physical prowess. A hyper-patriotic revenge fantasy that echoes the pro-Chinese, anti-foreign ideology of the original Wong Fei-hung films, Lee's second starring film *Fist of Fury* (a.k.a. *The Chinese Connection*) casts him as kung-fu prodigy Chen Zhen, who returns to Japanese-dominated early twentieth-century Shanghai to discover that his former master's death was actually murder. Righteously enraged, he leaves his fiancée (Nora Miao) behind and declares a one-man war against the rival Japanese dojo responsible. Presenting Lee at his most ferociously pure (and vice versa), *Fist of Fury* was a foundational film of the modern martial-arts cinema. "The most influential star in all Hong Kong cinema, Lee stands at the centre of his classics; the plots, staging and shooting simply set off his glowering charisma" (David Bordwell). **TB**

Co-presented by



A Touch of Zen

**A Touch of Zen**

俠女

dir. King Hu | Taiwan 1971 | 200 min. | PG **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

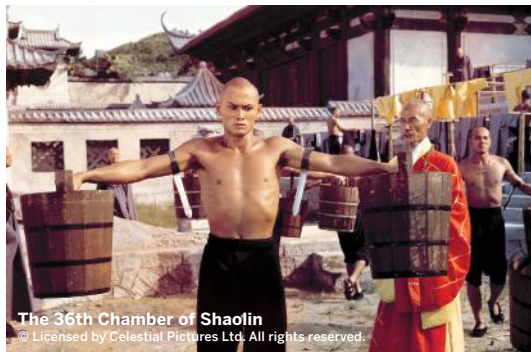
Legendary director King Hu began his career at the Shaw Brothers studio in the late fifties, and achieved his first major success with the classic 1966 *wuxia* film *Come Drink With Me*. Temperamentally opposed to the macho stylings of Chang Cheh (*One-Armed Swordsman*) which then dominated at Shaws, the art school-educated director relocated to Taiwan, where he founded his own company so that he could be free to pursue his own unique artistic vision. Hu made his masterpiece in 1971 with *A Touch of Zen*, an acknowledged influence on Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and the only martial-arts film ever admitted to competition at the Cannes Film Festival, where it won the Technical Grand Prize. An epic fantasy about a timid artist and scholar (a stand-in for the director) drawn into a battle to protect a beautiful young woman from corrupt nobles intent on wiping out her entire family, *Touch* introduces those features that would come to define Hu's cinema: exquisite, painterly compositions cut through by rapid-fire editing and spectacular physical and cinematic choreography, often taking place in near-silence. Intertwining its extraordinary visuals with themes from traditional Chinese philosophy, *A Touch of Zen* is not only a classic of the martial-arts film but a complex and enduring work of cinematic art. **NC**

Saturday, June 15 7:30 pm

Co-presented by







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Long Arm of the Law



Hero

### Long Arm of the Law 省港旗兵

dir. Johnny Mak | Hong Kong 1984 | 100 min. | R **35MM**  
**Archival Print!**

Introducing a note of giddily amoral brutality into the previously moralistic Hong Kong gangster genre, Johnny Mak's socio-political time bomb was wildly successful and widely influential, laying the groundwork for the "heroic bloodshed" films of Ringo Lam and John Woo that would soon make Hong Kong action cinema into an international phenomenon. Arriving in Hong Kong to pull off a jewel robbery, a Mainland gang of former Red Guards is forced to go underground when the heist goes south. Tension with their Hong Kong allies, and within the gang itself, soon leads to explosive violence, until the authorities put a fittingly nasty and brutish end to their rampage. Featuring exceptionally choreographed shootout setpieces and ostentatiously spare direction by Mak—with much emphasis on primitive lighting sources like exposed lightbulbs, traffic lights, police flares and market stall lanterns—*Long Arm of the Law* has a nastiness and intensity that clearly signals that there is more going on here than just gangster gunplay. The film's toughness, desperation and dead-end nihilism have been interpreted as symptomatic of the "handover syndrome" preceding Hong Kong's return to the Mainland in 1997, while the apocalyptic ending takes place in Kowloon Walled City, which, as critic Li Cheuk-to notes, is a symbolic site of Chinese resistance to British rule. **NC**

Friday, June 21 9:00 pm

### The 36th Chamber of Shaolin 少林寺三十六房

dir. Lau Kar-leung | Hong Kong 1978 | 119 min. | 14A **35MM**  
**New Print!**

First released in North America as *Master Killer* and immortalized by a certain New York hip-hop collective, *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* is the unquestioned masterpiece of the great director and fight choreographer Lau Kar-leung, and arguably the greatest martial-arts film of all time. The director's bald-pated godbrother Gordon Liu became a star as San Te, a young man drawn into a rebellion against the oppressive Manchu government. After a brutal Manchu attack slaughters his friends and family members, the wounded San Te flees to the Shaolin Temple and spends years mastering his martial-arts skills in the monks' punishing training regimen, in preparation for some well-earned payback. While in outline *36th Chamber* follows the revenge narrative template so typical of the genre, director Lau—a bona fide martial-arts master whose father studied with the legendary Wong Fei-hung—emphasizes the discipline and dedication of the martial arts, as opposed to the flamboyant brutality of his contemporary Chang Cheh (*One-Armed Swordsman*). But this grounding in (relative) realism doesn't stop *36th Chamber* from being riotously entertaining: San Te's bruising, unsentimental education provides some of the most spectacular (and hilarious) sequences in kung-fu film history. **TB**

Print courtesy Celestial Pictures Ltd.

Saturday, June 22 10:00 pm

### Hero 英雄

dir. Zhang Yimou | Mainland/Hong Kong 2002 | 99 min. | PG **35MM**

One of the most flat-out gorgeous martial-arts films ever made, *Hero* rode the wave of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* to smashing international box-office success. Jet Li anchors a dream cast—which includes superstars Tony Leung Chiu-wai, Maggie Cheung, Donnie Yen and Zhang Ziyi—as a nameless assassin (fittingly named Nameless) who arrives at the court of a powerful warlord, claiming to have killed the three seemingly invincible assassins who had previously made attempts on the warlord's life. In flashback, Nameless recounts his battles with the trio of master killers and their deaths at his hand—but it gradually becomes clear that the anonymous warrior has a hidden agenda of his own. A near-total inversion of the "noble hero fights official corruption" template of virtually all Hong Kong *wuxia* films, the Mainland-produced *Hero* tellingly (or transparently) argues for the virtues of peace and stability offered by centralized state control. Ideological questions aside, however, the artistry on display here is simply extraordinary: Fifth Generation icon Zhang Yimou, best known for his historical art-house dramas, proves himself amazingly adept at the high-flying action sequences, while master cinematographer Christopher Doyle Du Ke Feng surpasses himself with the film's breathtaking, boldly colour-coordinated visual design. **TB**

Friday, June 28 9:15 pm



A Chinese Odyssey

**A Chinese Odyssey**

**Part I: Pandora's Box**

西遊記第壹佰零壹回之月光寶盒

**Part II: Cinderella**

西遊記大結局之仙履奇緣

dir. Jeffrey Lau | Hong Kong 1995 | 182 min. (87 + 95 min.) | 14A **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

This comedy-fantasy-wuxia hybrid is widely considered to be the best of the numerous screen adaptations of the classic Ming Dynasty novel *Journey to the West*, and for three very simple reasons: 1) Stephen Chow, 2) Stephen Chow, and 3) Stephen Chow again. Though virtually unknown to mainstream Western audiences until his special effects-heavy crossover bids *Shaolin Soccer* and *Kung Fu Hustle* in the early 2000s, Chow had been a massive star in Hong Kong for well over a decade. *A Chinese Odyssey* casts the comedian in one of his best roles as a sixteenth-century outlaw who discovers that he is the reincarnation of a prankster demi-god known as the Monkey King, who betrayed his master while the two were travelling to the West to bring the teachings of Buddha back to China; much supernatural slapstick, time-travelling, and star-crossed romance ensues. Though only a moderate success in Hong Kong, *A Chinese Odyssey* became a cult hit on the Mainland, and has evidently remained very much in its makers' minds: Chow recently directed his own version of *Journey to the West*, which set box-office records upon its release earlier this year. **TB**

**Saturday, June 29 9:00 pm**  
**A Chinese Odyssey Parts I and II**  
**screen together as a double bill.**



One-Armed Swordsman  
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**One-Armed Swordsman**

獨臂刀

dir. Chang Cheh | Hong Kong 1967 | 117 min. **35MM**  
**New Print!**

One of Shaw Brothers' top directors in the sixties and seventies, Chang Cheh achieved great success with a series of brutal and intensely self-serious martial-arts epics heavy on bodily mutilation and homoerotic male bonding—an aesthetic he passed on to his one-time assistant director John Woo, who would transpose the Chang style to the modern era with *A Better Tomorrow*, *The Killer* and *Hard Boiled*. While it would be difficult to single out any one "greatest" film from Chang's impressive oeuvre—which includes such classics as *Golden Swallow*, *Five Deadly Venoms*, and the fabulous *Crippled Avengers*—it's hard to top Chang's first big hit *One-Armed Swordsman*. The erratic but enormously talented Jimmy Wang Yu—who yearned for but never achieved the international success of his rival Bruce Lee—became a star as an orphaned martial-arts prodigy whose career is cut short when he loses his right arm in a street battle. After teaching himself a new one-armed style of swordplay from a half-burnt training manual, he returns to the martial-arts world to defend his school and master from the vicious gang that killed his father. Remade by Tsui Hark in 1995 as *The Blade*, *One-Armed Swordsman* is an unquestioned high point in the careers of its director, star and studio. **TB**

Print courtesy Celestial Pictures Ltd.

**Sunday, June 30 9:00 pm**

**The Story of a Discharged Prisoner**

英雄本色

dir. Patrick Lung Kong | Hong Kong 1967 | 119 min. **35MM**  
**Archival Print!**

Only recently being rediscovered, this tough-as-nails, black-and-white crime thriller from 1967 has had an enormous and lasting influence: it served as the basis for John Woo's 1986 bullet-ballet opus *A Better Tomorrow*, which made "heroic bloodshed" the new face of Hong Kong action cinema. Patrick Tse Yin stars as the eponymous ex-con Lee Cheuk-hung, who is released from prison after fifteen years to discover his fiancée has become the mistress of powerful triad boss One-Eyed Jack (Shek Kin, best known in the West as the villain in Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon*), who tries to recruit Lee into his gang. Determined to stay on the straight and narrow, Lee refuses; but when the vengeful Jack starts putting the pressure on, the former foot soldier is forced to once again show that he has the "true colours of a hero" (as per the film's original title). Both a groundbreaking action melodrama (featuring fight choreography from legendary martial-arts master Lau Kar-leung's brother Lau Kar-wing) and a forceful, socially conscious portrait of the plight of the marginalized in a rapidly modernizing Hong Kong, *The Story of a Discharged Prisoner* is "[both] a damning critique [and] a call for hope ... [this] is filmmaking at its sharpest and most masterful" (*South China Morning Post*). **TB**

**Friday, July 5 9:00 pm**



Don't miss  
**In Conversation With...**  
**Johnnie To**  
 Saturday, July 13 4:00 pm

### Infernal Affairs



### Infernal Affairs 無間道

dirs. Andrew Lau & Alan Mak | Hong Kong 2002 | 101 min. | PG **35MM**

A box-office smash in Hong Kong, where it was hailed as a revitalization of what many viewed as the moribund state of post-handover Hong Kong cinema, *Infernal Affairs* surpasses its incurably goofy English-language title (the far more distinguished original-language title is *The Unceasing Path*) and establishes itself as a modern masterpiece of the crime thriller. Superstars Tony Leung Chiu-wai and Andy Lau (not to be confused with the film's director Andrew Lau) play a pair of undercover moles who, unbeknownst to each other, have burrowed their way deep into the other's organization over a number of years: cop Leung into a triad society, triad member Lau into the police department. When the two men realize each other's existence and true mission, they engage in a deadly and intricate game of cat-and-mouse, each man trying to root out the other before his own cover gets blown. Deliciously twisty and shot with a striking visual sheen, *Infernal Affairs* was followed by two sequels and was remade in the US by Martin Scorsese as *The Departed*, which went on to win Best Picture and Best Director at the Academy Awards. **TB**

**Saturday, July 6 9:30 pm**

### Johnnie To presents *Election and Election 2*

Following his In Conversation With... event, the internationally acclaimed action auteur returns to introduce our screenings of his two-part gangster epic *Election* and *Election 2*.

Co-presented by



### Election



### Election 黑社會

dir. Johnnie To | Hong Kong 2005 | 100 min. | 14A **35MM**

### Election 2 黑社會2 以和為貴

dir. Johnnie To | Hong Kong 2006 | 92 min. | 18A **35MM**

Now recognized as one of the pre-eminent genre directors in the world, Johnnie To has had a long, diverse and prolific career, but made his name with a series of super-tough crime movies—including *The Mission*, *PTU*, *Fulltime Killer* and *Exiled*—that mixed a John Woo-like flair in action sequences with a remarkable formal control and a considerably more cynical, ironic and down-to-earth tone than in Woo's baroque paeans to brotherly love and bloody redemption. The *Election* diptych is a perfect display of To's mastery, dispensing with the sentimental notion of honour among thieves that marks so many gangster films and capturing the nakedly amoral lust for power at the dark heart of organized-criminal society. Featuring a stellar cast of To veterans including Simon Yam, Tony Leung Ka-fai and Louis Koo, the two films constitute a sprawling crime epic that traces the power plays, betrayals and retributions of high-level gangsters battling to fill the power vacuum left after the leadership of their triad society comes up for grabs. Though the films were shot and released separately, *Election 2* is not a sequel to the first film but the essential tying-up of its many intricate narrative strands, making it imperative to view both films together. **TB**

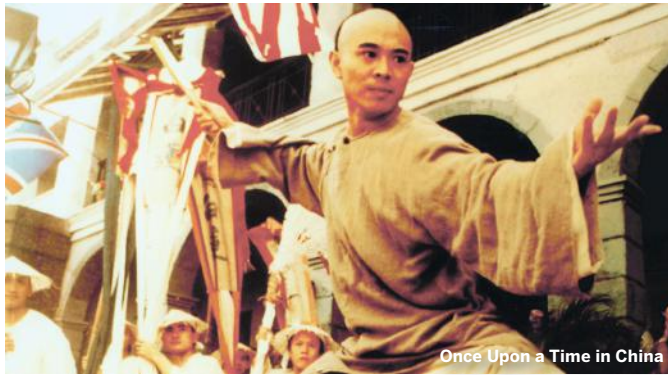
**Election and Election 2 screen as two separate screenings.**

**Election** Saturday, July 13 6:00 pm

**Election 2** Saturday, July 13 8:30 pm



Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon



Once Upon a Time in China



The Banquet

**The Banquet**

夜宴

dir. Feng Xiaogang | Mainland 2006 | 131 min. **35MM**

Archival Print!

Unfairly dismissed at the time as merely another in the spate of big-budget Mainland *wuxia* and historical epics that followed on the heels of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Hero*, *The Banquet* now looms larger in retrospect—not least because it marked the point where the film’s director Feng Xiaogang went from being an accomplished small-scale journeyman to become the Mainland answer to Steven Spielberg, a decisive shift in scale which culminated in his massively successful 2010 IMAX production *AfterShock*. A loose adaptation of *Hamlet* set in tenth-century China, *The Banquet* finds some surprising intersections between Shakespeare’s tale of the Melancholy Dane and traditional Chinese family values; rather than focusing on the dissolution of the angst-ridden prince, the film becomes rather a cautionary tale about the chaos that strikes the family when traditional roles are denied or break down. Featuring a fine cast—including Daniel Wu as the glum princeling and the ubiquitous Zhang Ziyi as a combination Gertrude/Ophelia—and a simply enormous scope in its sets and art direction, *The Banquet* is a more cerebral entry in the *wuxia* genre, but typically sterling work by the great fight choreographer Yuen Woo-ping keeps the energy level high throughout. **TB**

Thursday, August 1 9:15 pm

**Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon**

臥虎藏龍

dir. Ang Lee | Taiwan/Hong Kong/USA/Mainland 2000 |

120 min. | PG **35MM**

Celebrated Taiwanese director Ang Lee brought *wuxia* to the West with this sweeping period swordplay epic, which won four Academy Awards and became one of the only foreign-language films to make more than \$100 million at the North American box office. When a rebellious teenaged heroine (Zhang Ziyi, in her star-making role) steals the legendary jade sword of martial-arts master Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun Fat) from his warrior friend Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh), she sets off a breathlessly paced pursuit entailing magnificent chases over rooftops, lakes and trees. Paying homage to *wuxia* master King Hu—Zhang’s Jen evokes Hu’s heroine Golden Swallow in his breakout hit *Come Drink With Me*, while the spectacular final battle atop the swaying branches of a bamboo forest references the conclusion of Hu’s classic *A Touch of Zen* (screening on June 15)—Lee created a fusion of martial arts and art house that would prove immensely influential on his fellow Chinese art-filmmakers. Fifth Generation master Zhang Yimou would soon after enter the big-budget martial-arts field with *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*, Chen Kaige followed with *The Promise*, while Wong Kar-wai, Jia Zhangke and Hou Hsiao-hsien are all prepping their own upcoming martial-arts films. **TB**

Saturday, August 3 6:15 pm

**Once Upon a Time in China**

黃飛鴻

dir. Tsui Hark | Hong Kong 1991 | 134 min. | 14A **35MM**

**Once Upon a Time in China II**

黃飛鴻之二男兒當自強

dir. Tsui Hark | Hong Kong 1992 | 113 min. | 14A **35MM**

Archival Print!

Forty-two years after Wong Fei-hung was first immortalized on screen in *Wong Fei-hung: The Whip That Smacks the Candle* (screening on June 10), director Tsui Hark teamed with star Jet Li to create arguably the most famous and popular big-screen iteration of the legendary martial artist, which spawned five sequels in all. *Once Upon a Time in China* casts Wong in his frequent role as defender of Chinese culture, standing tall against the physical plundering of the country by Europeans and Americans and symbolizing the strength and persistence of local traditions against the creeping pervasiveness of Western technology and ideas. (In this, the films also speak to another, far more imminent worry: the impending 1997 handover of Hong Kong to the Mainland.) Yet Tsui, with his typical brio and mix-and-match approach to genre, is able to fuse this pro-China patriotism with a template that very clearly evokes the classic American western, and revitalizes the period martial-arts film with some of the most spectacular fight sequences ever put on screen, notably the concluding ladder battle in Part I and a rare onscreen clash between Li and his fellow martial-arts icon Donnie Yen in Part II. **TB**

Sunday, August 4 6:30 pm

Once Upon a Time in China I and II screen together as a double bill.

## NEW WAVES

The Blue Kite



The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution—the mass social-political movement that sought to affirm “Mao Zedong thought” and purge capitalist, traditional and “cosmopolitan” elements from Mainland society—looms as large in Chinese memory as the traumatic experience of the war years. Launched in 1966, the Cultural Revolution paralyzed cultural and intellectual life and violently uprooted society in both the cities and the countryside, as swarms of militant young Red Guards attacked or publicly humiliated their “backwards” elders and destroyed artifacts of China’s historical and religious heritage, while the military, the factories and even the Communist Party itself were subjected to systematic purges. As with all the other arts, cinema was profoundly affected by the ravages of the Cultural Revolution: film production was stopped altogether for a time, and only gradually re-emerged with an exclusive output of ideologically orthodox model operas.

As the Mainland finally emerged from the shadow of this cataclysmic event a decade later, the Mainland filmmakers who became known as the Fourth Generation—a pre-Cultural Revolution cohort many of whom had themselves been denounced, “re-educated” and forced to endure the ridicule of the young militants for their commitment to cultural life—sought for ways to express the ordeal that had been visited upon the country. The result was the so-called “scar films,” simple, affecting dramas that employ intimate and small-scale narratives focusing on individual tragedies as microcosmic representations of massive societal trauma. This style of storytelling would prove remarkably influential even beyond the context of the Cultural Revolution; perhaps the most surprising echo of the Fourth Generation’s work would come in the mid-1990s during the Mainland’s race toward capitalism, when filmmakers like Jia Zhangke and Wang Xiaoshuai produced quiet, observant and obliquely political critiques of their own, vastly different society.

Some of the Fourth Generation’s most notable figures, such as Xie Fei (*Black Snow*) and Wu Tianming (*The Old Well*), served as mentors to the far more celebrated group of Mainland directors whose work closely followed their own. The filmmakers who became known as the Fifth Generation were children during (and sometimes participants in) the Cultural Revolution, and became the first students admitted to the Beijing Film Academy following its end. Marked by radical aesthetic experimentation, boldly emotive performances, and complex and critical thinking about the events leading up to and following 1949, such celebrated films as Chen Kaige’s *Yellow Earth*, Zhang Yimou’s *Red Sorghum* and Tian Zhuangzhuang’s *The Horse Thief* came to represent a definitive break with preceding Mainland cinema. ▶▶

The films' dazzling play with colour and striking, often symbolic use of landscape—drawing explicit inspiration from ancient scroll paintings, though such Golden Age films as *Spring Silkworms* had already established a cinematic precedent—endowed them with an epic dimension that brought Chinese cinema to the forefront of the international art-house circuit. Yet while the Fifth Generation is largely identified with the sweeping historical dramas of Chen and Zhang, several other brilliant filmmakers from that same cohort have explored other dramatic, thematic and generic territory, from jaundiced, distinctly anti-heroic war films (Zhang Junzhao's *One and Eight*) to dark social satires (Huang Jianxin's *The Black Cannon Incident*) to modernist murder mysteries (Li Shaohong's *Bloody Morning*).

As these radical changes in cinematic culture took place on the Mainland, much was changing in the other regions as well. The Hong Kong New Wave challenged the predictable, studio-bound commercial Hong Kong film industry with a combination of boundary-pushing content, local specificity and outré stylization that both alienated and galvanized local audiences. No less than their peers on the Mainland, the New Wave filmmakers were greatly affected by the Cultural Revolution and its echoes in Hong Kong, evinced in their work by an atmosphere of wary paranoia and a dark expectation of violence and cruelty. Ann Hui, after infusing genre cinema with complex metacinematic experimentation and pointed political themes in *The Spooky Bunch*, shifted seamlessly to tough-minded realist drama with *Boat People*, which is often cited as the greatest Hong Kong film of all time. Following a Japanese photographer as he confronts the brutality of everyday life in postwar Vietnam, the film serves as an allegory for the powerless rage felt by Chinese filmmakers of all regions in the face of the upheavals they helplessly witnessed in their youth. Meanwhile, the unstoppably prolific producer-director Tsui Hark—who shook the local film scene to its core with the anarchic, cynical and politically charged *Dangerous Encounters of the First Kind*—became Hong Kong cinema's most successful and ceaselessly creative genre revisionist/extremist, merging the opera and martial-arts genres in the wildly successful *Peking Opera Blues* and resuscitating classic period martial-arts cinema with the *Once Upon a Time in China* series (the first two parts of which screen in our Chinese genre cinema programme on August 4).

In Taiwan, the gradual easing of strict Guomindang (Nationalist) censorship allowed for the emergence of Hou Hsiao-hsien and the late Edward Yang, two of the greatest auteurs in contemporary cinema. Though the contrast in their styles is pronounced, the work of both filmmakers is palpably haunted by the violent political cultures, both on and off the island, that characterized the sixties and seventies. They also

were (and shared) close friends and collaborators: Hou starred in Yang's *Taipei Story*, while Hou's frequent screenwriter Wu Nien-jen—whose masterful directorial outing *A Borrowed Life* also screens in this series—would play the lead in Yang's last film *Yi Yi*.

Hou first came to international prominence with a series of semi-autobiographical dramas such as *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* and *Dust in the Wind* (which screens for free in connection with our panel discussion devoted to Hou on June 9). These films developed a new kind of cinematic grammar—characterized by spare dialogue, long, lingering shots, extraordinarily precise compositions and a remarkable use of deep focus—that would become vastly influential on art cinema worldwide, particularly after the international success of Hou's ambitious historical drama *A City of Sadness*, which elevated his unique artistry to a new level and stands as one of the milestones of the last half-century of world cinema. The Western-oriented, more conspicuously cosmopolitan Yang showcased a consciously and aggressively modernist style in *The Terrorizers*, his lacerating portrait of contemporary Taipei, and made his masterpiece with the novelistic epic *A Brighter Summer Day*, a portrait of wayward youth that is at once highly personal and emblematic of the larger cultural and historical currents informing the cinema of the time.

Though markedly different in many ways, the roughly simultaneous cinematic renaissances that occurred in Hong Kong and Taiwan share some powerful links with the emergence of the Fourth and Fifth Generation filmmakers on the Mainland. Whether through intimate character study (*The Women from the Lake of Scented Souls*), flamboyant spectacle (*Farewell My Concubine*), art-house rigour (*A City of Sadness*) or displaced allegory (*Boat People*), the weight of history is keenly felt in the films that emerged from all these assorted New Waves. Furthermore, continuing a pattern that can be seen throughout the history of Chinese cinema, it is notable how these new cinematic movements have foregrounded female characters, as well as the actresses who play them. The changing role of women has always been a barometer of wider changes in Chinese society (or any society), and Chinese cinema has been remarkably forthright in speaking to this fact. Beyond this, the New Waves introduced a trio of actresses—Gong Li (from the Mainland), Brigitte Lin (a native of Taiwan) and the Hong Kong-born Maggie Cheung (soon to be a fixture of the Hong Kong Second Wave)—who would capture the imagination of audiences much as the great Ruan Lingyu did in her day. Ferocious, fearless and astoundingly versatile, these women helped bring Chinese cinema to both new heights of achievement and new levels of international recognition and success.—Noah Cowan

Don't miss  
**In Conversation With...  
Chen Kaige**

Friday, June 7 8:00 pm



Yellow Earth



Chen Kaige presents  
*Yellow Earth* and  
*King of the Children*

**Friday, June 7 5:30 pm**  
**Sunday, June 9 12:00 pm**

Following his Opening Night presentation of *Farewell My Concubine* (see page 23), Chen Kaige returns on Friday, June 7 and Sunday, June 9 to introduce our screenings of two of his early masterpieces, which became formative films of Mainland Fifth Generation cinema.



King of the Children

**Yellow Earth**  
黄土地

dir. Chen Kaige | Mainland 1984 | 89 min. | PG **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

The film that changed Chinese cinema forever has lost none of its power or beauty since its explosive debut. In 1939, a young cadre comes to a dirt-poor village in Shaanxi province (the cradle of Chinese communism) to collect local folk songs so they can be adapted into Maoist anthems. (This same campaign created the theme for *The East Is Red*, screening on June 25.) He befriends a young girl and educates her about the new social status that women will enjoy come the revolution. After he departs, she tries to follow him, with tragic consequences. Beautifully etching both the beauty and terror of rural life, director Chen Kaige and cinematographer Zhang Yimou upend all the conventions of Seventeen Years-style socialist realism through poetic symbolism drawn from ancient scroll paintings and an exquisite use of traditional folk music. A true milestone, *Yellow Earth* introduces all the key elements of Fifth Generation filmmaking and would help propel the Mainland to the top ranks of global art cinema. "Chen Kaige and his cinematographer Zhang Yimou have invented a new language of colours, shadows, glances, spaces, and unspoken thoughts and implications; and they've made their new language sing" (Tony Rayns, *Time Out London*). **NC**

**Friday, June 7 5:30 pm** ☒

**Chen Kaige in person!**

**Friday, July 12 9:30 pm** ☒

**King of the Children**  
孩子王

dir. Chen Kaige | Mainland 1987 | 106 min. **35MM**

**New Print!**

Between the simple pleasures of *Yellow Earth* and the epic sweep of *Farewell My Concubine*, Chen Kaige made this deceptively small-scale masterpiece. Part allegory, part scorchingly political *j'accuse*, *King of the Children* recounts the story of an urban exile (a "sent-down" boy) who is assigned to teach children in a remote village in the lush Yunnan province during the Cultural Revolution. He finds a one-room, open-air schoolhouse, no textbooks, and a bunch of rowdy kids thirsty for knowledge. Encouraging his students to think creatively and imagine a different life for themselves, he becomes their hero—until the local authorities get wind of his "subversive" teachings and punish him. One of Chen's most purely beautiful films, *King of the Children* is also one of his most ambitious experiments in allegorical storytelling, blending in elements of magic realism that modulate and comment upon the film's story. "[*King of the Children*] takes its tonality from the harsh beauty of the Yunnan landscape of soaring forests and misty valleys: a territory of the mind where hard-edged realism blurs easily into hallucination.... By any standards, this follow-up to *Yellow Earth* and *The Big Parade* is also something like a masterpiece" (Tony Rayns, *Time Out London*). **NC**

**Sunday, June 9 12:00 pm** ☒

**Chen Kaige in person!**



Xie Fei



Fu Hongxing

## Xie Fei and Fu Hongxing on *The Women from the Lake of Scented Souls* and *Black Snow*

**Sunday, June 9  
2:30 pm & 5:00 pm**

Fourth Generation master Xie Fei—who as a professor at the Beijing Film Academy taught such leading filmmakers as Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou and Jia Zhangke—is joined by Fu Hongxing, Director of the China Film Archive, to introduce our screenings of two of his greatest films.



The Women from the Lake of Scented Souls



Black Snow

### The Women from the Lake of Scented Souls 香魂女

dir. Xie Fei | Mainland 1993 | 105 min. **DIGITAL**

**Digital Restoration!**

Winner of the Golden Bear at the 1993 Berlin Film Festival, *The Women from the Lake of Scented Souls* marries the relatively straightforward style of the Fourth Generation “scar films” with the ravishing landscapes and dense, visually rich cinematic language of the celebrated Fifth Generation filmmakers. (The film’s director Xie Fei was the former teacher of Fifth Generation figurehead Chen Kaige, and the relationship between the two was never clearer than in this unjustly overlooked film.) Sold as a child bride to a crippled husband, Sister Xiang (the much celebrated Siqin Gaowa) has risen to become a successful sesame oil entrepreneur and the richest person in her village. In a regressively feudal manoeuvre, Sister Xiang uses her free market-acquired wealth to purchase a bride for her mentally challenged son, and rules over her unwilling daughter-in-law with an iron hand. But as surprising revelations emerge through the film’s gentle, unhurried pace, she finds herself transitioning from being the young girl’s oppressor to her fellow victim. Forging a link between the pre-Cultural Revolution women’s pictures of the 1960s and the female-centric rural epics of the Fifth Generation, *The Women from the Lake of Scented Souls* is “gratifyingly rich in detail [...] From the lotus blossoms on the lake to the ceremonial grandeur of a Chinese wedding, the film is gentle, moving and precise” (Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*). **NC**

**Sunday, June 9 2:30 pm** ✪  
**Xie Fei and Fu Hongxing in person!**

### Black Snow 本命年

dir. Xie Fei | Mainland 1990 | 107 min. **DIGITAL**

**Digital Restoration!**

The Fourth Generation cohort of Chinese filmmakers had their careers interrupted by the Cultural Revolution. When films were again allowed to be made, these directors focused on making heartfelt humanist dramas that became known as “scar films,” small-scale stories about personal tragedies that speak microcosmically to the massive cultural upheaval that occasioned them. Xie Fei, the acknowledged leader of the Fourth Generation, helped pioneer this tradition with his celebrated *A Girl from Hunan*, but it is his second feature *Black Snow* that marks him as a key figure in the future evolution of Mainland cinema. The great actor Jiang Wen, combining macho brutality with puppy-dog eyes, stars as a petty criminal—a protagonist never seen in Chinese films of the time—who returns to Beijing at the onset of the Mainland’s entry into the global capitalist market. Confused by the changes he sees all around him, he falls for and becomes the bodyguard of a cabaret singer, while his old buddies try to drag him back to a life of crime. Employing handheld camerawork (another novelty in Chinese filmmaking at the time) to accentuate the feeling of its hero’s constricted circumstances and the impoverished urban environments through which he moves, *Black Snow* presages much of the work of future Sixth Generation luminaries Lou Ye and Jia Zhangke in its picture of the new China at its most contradictory. **NC**

**Sunday, June 9 5:00 pm** ✪  
**Xie Fei and Fu Hongxing in person!**





## Bart Testa on *Boat People*

Tuesday, June 11 6:00 pm ☼

Bart Testa, film scholar and Senior Lecturer at the University of Toronto's Cinema Studies Institute, gives an introductory talk prior to our screening of Ann Hui's 1982 masterpiece of the Hong Kong New Wave.

Co-presented by



Boat People



## Boat People 投奔怒海

dir. Ann Hui | Hong Kong 1982 | 105 min. | R **35MM**

New Print!

"Unquestionably one of the most important films in Hong Kong cinema" (Edmund Lee, *Time Out Hong Kong*). Ann Hui, the great humanist of the Hong Kong New Wave, first began mixing elements of documentary and fiction in her work for television, and after some milestone achievements in genre cinema (including *The Spooky Bunch*, screening on July 30) she received great acclaim both at home and abroad for this superlative political drama, which is frequently named as the best Hong Kong film of all time by both critics and audiences. Returning to Vietnam three years after documenting its liberation by Ho Chi Minh's Communist forces, a Japanese photojournalist now encounters a country in a state of perpetual fear and paranoia, living under the omnipresent threat of state brutality and horrific forced-labour camps. Though the film is charged by pressing contemporary concerns—namely providing some context for the scores of emaciated Vietnamese refugees washing up on Hong Kong shores at the time—it has also been interpreted as an allegory about the handover of Hong Kong to the Mainland. Brutal, beautiful and impossibly moving, *Boat People* has both the immediacy of a news broadcast and a poetry born of fear and despair. **NC**



One and Eight

## One and Eight 一个和八个

dir. Zhang Junzhao | Mainland 1983 | 90 min. **35MM**

New Print!

The filmmakers who became known as the Fifth Generation were the first students admitted to the Beijing Film Academy after the Cultural Revolution, and their work—marked by radical aesthetic experimentation, boldly emotive performances, and considerably more complex and critical thinking about the events leading up to and following 1949—came to represent a definitive break with the cinema that preceded them. Widely considered to be the first feature to emerge from this group, Zhang Junzhao's *One and Eight* set the tone for many of the films to follow while also functioning as a superbly tense war film. During the Sino-Japanese War, a political commissar serving with a Communist army unit in the vast landscapes of northeastern China is suspected of treason by his superior, and thrown into prison with eight hardened criminals. When the unit comes under attack by the Japanese, the commissar demonstrates his loyalty by rallying his fellow prisoners to join the Communist troops in a last-ditch rearguard action. Featuring bleached, strikingly high-contrast cinematography by future Fifth Generation standard bearer Zhang Yimou and some remarkably stylized passages (particularly the tour-de-force, near-silent opening sequence), *One and Eight* both looks and feels like the start of a new cinematic revolution. **NC**

Saturday, June 15 5:00 pm ☼

The Black Cannon Incident



Sacrificed Youth



The Blue Kite

**Sacrificed Youth**  
青春祭

dir. Zhang Nuanxin | Mainland 1985 | 92 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

The gender equity programmes put into place on the Mainland after 1949 saw the emergence of some influential female voices in Chinese cinema, the most famous of whom was Zhang Nuanxin. Her masterpiece *Sacrificed Youth* tells the story of seventeen-year-old Li Chun, who is transported to the mountainous Dai territory in Yunnan during the Cultural Revolution as a “sent-down girl” to live and work amongst the locals. Boarding in a Dai home with a “Dadie” (Father), “Yiya” (an old Grandmother) and “Dage” (Elder Brother), this daughter of urban intellectuals is shocked by the earthy sensuality of the locals. While she eventually comes to realize that beauty is something deeper and more primal than the Maoist maxim repeated to her by her teachers (“Only true modesty is true feminine beauty”) and begins to share in the joyous, vibrant and uninhibited life of her indigenous hosts, her rejection of Dage’s lustful attentions precipitates her return to the city. Revisiting the area years later, she receives a shocking and heartbreaking surprise. While her use of landscape is as breathtaking as that of her Fifth Generation successors—especially in the staggering final sequence, a series of long shots of barren plains and forbidding mountains that resembles a fractured Qing scroll painting—Zhang forgoes their symbolism in favour of a more ethnographic (and empathetic) style, and combines this with rarely addressed issues of female self-realization and sexual awakening. **AM**

**Sunday, June 16 3:30 pm** 🎬

**Bloody Morning**  
血色清晨

dir. Li Shaohong | Mainland 1992 | 103 min. | **PG 35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Unavailable for many years and barely known to critics or audiences, *Bloody Morning* is now considered among the greatest Fifth Generation films. Freely adapted from Gabriel García Márquez’s *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, the film follows the investigation of a local teacher’s murder in a small and desperately poor rural village, the story of the crime gradually pieced together from the fragmented memories of witnesses forced to testify at an inquest. Sharing with her Fifth Generation colleagues Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang a remarkable eye for the barren landscapes of northern China and a fascination with small-town life—especially those enduring superstitions that Communism failed to erase—director Li Shaohong also introduces several formal innovations, particularly in storytelling structure, that remain unprecedented in Chinese cinema. “With its maze of snow-dusted paths and smoky, damp interiors, the village provides an ideally insular, almost claustrophobic setting ... Scenes such as the joyless wedding proceedings and the villagers’ collective impotence in the final act speak volumes about a psychology mired in tradition and ignorance” (Laura Thielen, San Francisco International Film Festival). **NC**

**Tuesday, June 18 6:30 pm** 🎬

**The Black Cannon Incident**  
黑炮事件

dir. Huang Jianxin | Mainland 1985 | 94 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

A key Fifth Generation work released during the second phase of Deng Xiaoping’s social and economic reforms, this robust social satire delightfully depicts the clash between the rising class of rapid industrial modernizers and old Party cadres with a serious Cultural Revolution hangover. The film chronicles the Kafkaesque predicament of a bumbling factory translator who is suspected of industrial espionage after sending an innocent telegram that is intercepted by a militant snoop. (The “black cannon” of the title refers to the missing chess piece the hapless hero is trying to locate.) Placed under investigation and reassigned to a less sensitive department but never informed of the reason for his demotion, he petitions to get his job back, sparking an increasingly obtuse and hilarious series of Party meetings, set in a boardroom straight out of German Expressionism. “Take the resulting chaos as comedy or tragedy; either way, there’s no doubt the Chinese ruling class comes in for an unsparing hammering. What’s more, the film’s political daring is matched by a torrent of bright ideas in the plotting, design and colour-control departments” (Tony Rayns, *Time Out London*). **NC**

**Friday, June 21 6:30 pm** 🎬



The Horse Thief



The Time to Live and the Time to Die

### The Blue Kite 蓝风筝

dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang | Mainland 1993 | 140 min. | 14A **35MM**

Tian Zhuangzhuang's lyrical, deeply moving film focuses on a young boy named Tietou, who, from his humble vantage point in a traditional *hutong* courtyard in Beijing, witnesses the terrible human cost of three enormous historical ruptures—the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution—as he grows into a man. A film whose delicate understatement belies its simmering anger, *The Blue Kite* feels very much in dialogue with the historical elegies of the great Hou Hsiao-hsien, both in its themes and its aesthetics. Like Hou, Tian is a formidable visual stylist—his masterpiece *The Horse Thief* is among the most beautiful films ever made—and in *The Blue Kite* he devises a sophisticated design schema that employs a distinct colour palette for each of the film's three chapters (titled "Father," "Uncle," and "Stepfather," after the three patriarchs who Tietou sees successively swept away by China's tumultuous mid-twentieth-century history). Bearing quiet witness to what was lost in the Mainland's lurch into modernity, *The Blue Kite* creates a feeling of almost universal sorrow without ever leaving its beautifully intimate register. "Of all the remarkable films to have come out of China over the past few years, *The Blue Kite* could well be the most authentic, the most accessible and, finally, the most powerful" (Kenneth Turan, *The Los Angeles Times*). **NC**

Saturday, June 22 7:00 pm ☼

### The Horse Thief 盗马贼

dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang | Mainland 1986 | 88 min. | PG **35MM**

**New Print!**

One of the greatest achievements of Fifth Generation cinema, this oblique, ravishingly beautiful epic was famously praised by Martin Scorsese as the best film he saw in the 1990s. Like many of his Fifth Generation peers, director Tian Zhuangzhuang was exposed to the remote countryside during the Cultural Revolution, and his hunger to tell the tales of the people who inhabited these far-flung reaches led to this poetic portrait of rural life in Tibet. Featuring minimal dialogue and structured around a series of elaborate Buddhist ceremonies, *The Horse Thief* tells the simple story of Norbu, the eponymous horse thief, as he struggles to support his family and attempts to give up his larcenous ways in contrition for his young son's death. Stunningly gorgeous in all respects—the film's widescreen cinematography and use of sound is beyond remarkable—*The Horse Thief* created a new and highly influential form of ethnographic cinema, offering a fascinating glimpse into the seemingly timeless existence of these distant peoples whilst never overlooking their highly specific placement within this politically sensitive land. "Tian's visionary insistence lofts him to the [heady] realm of such anthropological aesthetes as Sergei Paradjanov, Robert Gardner and Werner Herzog. Its vast empty landscape accentuated by a dramatic use of CinemaScope, [*The Horse Thief*] has an epic sweep—it suggests a western told from a Native American point of view" (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*). **NC**

Saturday, June 29 4:00 pm ☼

### The Time to Live and the Time to Die 童年往事

dir. Hou Hsiao-hsien | Taiwan 1985 | 138 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

One of our most important living filmmakers, Hou Hsiao-hsien made his first masterpiece with this semi-autobiographical drama about a family who settle in Taiwan in 1947. At once a highly specific and universally resonant portrait of the cross-generational difficulties facing refugees as they try to adjust to life in a new land, *The Time to Live* parallels the respective experiences of the young boy Ah-ha, who has never known anything other than his family's adopted home in a small village; his old grandmother, exhausted by a lifetime of violence and suffering under both feudal rule and the chaos of civil war, who now takes refuge in senile fantasies of a blissful return to the home she left behind; and his father, one foot in each place, torn between his filial obligations and his longing for a new start. Hou's masterfully measured tone, his impeccable compositions and often astonishing use of deep focus announced him to the world as a major new artist; the widespread acclaim and festival success of *The Time to Live* laid the groundwork for the triumphant international reception of *A City of Sadness* four years later. "Everything is right: the miraculous use of sound, the limpid cinematography, the natural acting ... one of [Hou's] simplest films, and one of his most universal" (Derek Malcolm, *The Guardian*). **NC**

Monday, July 1 12:30 pm ☼



A Borrowed Life



The Terrorizers



A City of Sadness

**A City of Sadness**

悲情城市

dir. Hou Hsiao-hsien | Taiwan 1989 | 160 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

By the late 1980s, Hou Hsiao-hsien had become recognized internationally for his signature filmmaking style—consisting of spare dialogue, long, lingering shots, extraordinarily precise compositions and a remarkable use of deep focus—and his highly specific but universally resonant stories of intergenerational conflict and change. With *A City of Sadness*, Hou takes on a far broader historical canvas: the period of the “White Terror” between 1945 and 1950, when Taiwan became host to the Nationalist Chinese government-in-exile as they fled from their defeat at the hands of Mao’s Communists—an era of political repression that reached its brutal culmination in the “February 28 Incident,” the 1947 massacre of thousands of Taiwanese civilians by Nationalist soldiers. Focusing on four brothers, each of whom represents a different response by the Taiwanese to the Nationalist government—with particular emphasis on the gentle, deaf-mute Wen-ching, movingly played by Hong Kong superstar Tony Leung Chiu-wai—Hou keeps the famous historical events off-screen while showing the tragic ruptures they create within the microcosmic world of the family. A Taiwanese mirror of the “scar films” then being made in a Mainland just recovering from the Cultural Revolution, Hou’s beautiful, tragic, and ineffably moving *City* is “one of the supreme masterworks of the contemporary cinema” (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*). **NC**

Monday, July 1 3:30 pm ☘

**The Terrorizers**

恐怖分子

dir. Edward Yang | Taiwan 1986 | 109 min. **DIGITAL**

**Digital Restoration!**

Acclaimed by scholar Peggy Chiao as the first Taiwanese film to explore the fundamental nature of film and filmmaking (ironic, as the film had its debut on television), *The Terrorizers* garnered a Silver Leopard at the 1987 Locarno Film Festival and has been praised by critics as one of the radical works of the Taiwanese New Wave. Yang deftly weaves together a number of seemingly disconnected narrative strands and characters—including a Mainland doctor and his self-absorbed novelist wife, a gang of petty street hoodlums and their female compatriot, and a young photographer who wanders the streets quietly observing the teeming life around him—to create a lacerating vision of the pervasive anomie and subterranean violence of a rapidly globalizing Taipei. Famously identified by Fredric Jameson as the postmodern film par excellence—its palimpsestic portrait of urban space rhyming with (while being distinctly different in method from) the genre revisionism of the Hong Kong New Wave—*The Terrorizers* is a crucial film in Yang’s oeuvre and paved the way for his even more ambitious *A Brighter Summer Day*. “Jameson rightly sees *The Terrorizers* as bathed in a ‘postmodern’ light, but this is mainly a nocturnal film defined by a no less postmodern darkness ... The sense of an encroaching void broken by a few warm islands of light in which tenuous relationships flicker recalls Nicholas Ray’s *Rebel Without a Cause* in more ways than one” (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*). **AM**

Monday, July 1 7:00 pm ☘

**A Borrowed Life**

多桑

dir. Wu Nien-jen | Taiwan 1994 | 167 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Best known in the West as the star of Edward Yang’s final film *Yi Yi*, Wu Nien-jen was the screenwriter for many of Taiwanese cinema’s greatest films, including Hou Hsiao-hsien’s *The Time to Live* and *The Time to Die* and *A City of Sadness*. This epic, finely detailed study of a coal-mining family during the Japanese occupation and beyond is one of the few films he directed himself. Sharing with Hou’s films a highly deliberate mise-en-scène and a sophisticated rendering of family dynamics, *A Borrowed Life* proved to be politically incendiary in its depiction of how conflicting loyalties in the Sino-Japanese War put the relationship between a father and son to the test. While the kindly family patriarch remains in thrall to the Japanese culture that he has known all his life, his son, in disbelief at his father’s unthinking faith—especially following revelations of wartime atrocities against the Chinese people—meanwhile grows enamoured of the new Nationalist regime in Taiwan. “One of New Taiwanese Cinema’s masterpieces ... Few films have so vividly re-created the sensation of having known another human being for one’s entire life, while simultaneously evoking the suspicion that all along one has loved a stranger” (Andrew Chan, *Film Comment*). **NC**

From the collection of George Eastman House.

Saturday, July 6 3:30 pm ☘



The Old Well

## The Old Well

老井

dir. Wu Tianming | Mainland 1986 | 130 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Though not well known in the West, the prominent Fourth Generation filmmaker Wu Tianming is a key figure in the history of Chinese cinema. In the period following the Cultural Revolution, he directed several important films that would help reshape Chinese cinema. As chief of the Xi'an Studio, which became the home of the Fifth Generation, he oversaw the production of the early masterpieces by Chen Kaige, Tian Zhuangzhuang and Zhang Yimou, the latter of whom starred in Wu's most celebrated film, *The Old Well*. The film is a fascinating hybrid: its first section, in which a proud young man returns from his urban education determined to better his hometown, feels akin to the work of the younger Fifth Generation with its vast landscapes, hardy peasants, and pronounced symbolism; but when the man and his former girlfriend get trapped inside the eponymous well in the film's second half, it begins to feel far more like the Fourth Generation "scar films." Intimate and highly personal, *The Old Well* quietly yet devastatingly exposes the horrors of the past and questions the possibility of individual effort in the face of history. **NC**

Monday, July 8 6:30 pm 🍷



Red Sorghum

## Red Sorghum

红高粱

dir. Zhang Yimou | Mainland 1987 | 91 min. **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Already a renowned cinematographer for his work on such landmark Fifth Generation films as *Yellow Earth*, Zhang Yimou announced himself as a master director with this deceptively simple folk fable; the film also introduced the world to his muse and future wife Gong Li, who went on to become the most famous film actress to ever emerge from the Mainland. Set in the lead-up to the Sino-Japanese War, *Red Sorghum* tells the story of a young peasant girl, Jiu'er (Gong), whose parents sell her into marriage with an elderly winemaker. Attacked by bandits on the way to her wedding, Jiu'er is rescued by one of her palanquin bearers (Jiang Wen, sporting maximum swagger), who later returns and becomes her lover. Together they turn around the wine business she has inherited, but then have to grimly dig in to face the invading Japanese armies. From its bawdy beginnings to its tragic conclusion, where an unimaginable nightmare becomes all too real, *Red Sorghum* is above all a formidable visual accomplishment: every shot feels utterly original, every nuance of colour a boldly symbolic flourish. "The cinematography in *Red Sorghum* has no desire to be subtle, or muted; it wants to splash its passionate colours all over the screen with abandon, and the sheer visual impact of the film is voluptuous" (Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*). **NC**

Sunday, July 14 3:30 pm 🍷



The Story of Qiu Ju

### The Story of Qiu Ju 秋菊打官司

dir. Zhang Yimou | Mainland 1992 | 100 min. | PG **35MM**

#### Archival Print!

Following a series of lavish and internationally acclaimed historical dramas (*Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou*, *Raise the Red Lantern*), Zhang Yimou struck out in a radically different direction with this bracing, unforgettable foray into contemporary neorealism, which won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival and confirmed Zhang's muse and then wife Gong Li as one of the world's most gifted film actresses. Gong plays the pregnant wife of a peasant farmer who is badly beaten (complete with a vicious kick to the balls) by the village chief. Against her husband's wishes, Qiu Ju complains to the local policeman, who charges the chief a small fine and asks him to apologize; unrepentant, the chief throws the money at Qiu Ju and stomps off without an apology. The indignant Qiu Ju continues to appeal her husband's case to ever higher authorities in ever bigger cities, until her out-of-control crusade collapses when she goes into labour and receives help from an unexpected source. Providing a fascinating glimpse into the Mainland's massive, late-century urban migrations and slowly recalibrating justice system, "*The Story of Qiu Ju* reaffirms Zhang Yimou's stature as storyteller and sociologist extraordinaire, and as a visual artist of exceptional delicacy and insight" (Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*). **NC**

Sunday, July 14 6:00 pm ☉

### The Spooky Bunch 小姐撞到鬼 aka. 撞到正

dir. Ann Hui | Hong Kong 1980 | 93 min. | PG **DIGITAL**

Virtually unclassifiable, *The Spooky Bunch* is a horror-comedy that oscillates wildly between vaudevillian slapstick and tragic political drama. A low-rent Cantonese opera troupe is lured to the remote island of Cheung Chau by the wealthy Mr. Ma, who wants his playboy nephew Dick (Kenny Bee) to marry bit-part player Ah Chi (the sublime and hilarious Josephine Siao Fong-fong, who went on to become one of Hong Kong cinema's biggest stars) in order to lift a curse he believes Ah Chi's grandfather put on his family. As the troupe rehearses, they are assailed by a playful spirit called Cat Shit, whose appearance heralds the arrival of a host of murderous ghosts out for vengeance against the families of Dick and Ah Chi for long-ago betrayals, both personal and political. Possessions, kooky dances, and some particularly gruesome murders follow in quick succession, as the ghosts hijack the production and force the put-upon (and quite terrible) actors to perform classic Chinese dramas that reveal the true stories of what happened during the terrible times of war and conflict. Directed by Hong Kong New Wave master Ann Hui, *The Spooky Bunch* is both a delightful entertainment and a complex, sophisticated and multi-layered metacinematic genre experiment, as Hui fuses the traditions of Cantonese opera with the idioms of contemporary Hong Kong popular film. There is simply nothing quite like it. **NC**

Tuesday, July 30 9:00 pm ☉



Dangerous Encounters of the First Kind

### Dangerous Encounters of the First Kind 第一類型危險

dir. Tsui Hark | Hong Kong 1980 | 95 min. **DIGITAL**

The discordant and cheerfully offensive trumpet that heralded the arrival of the Hong Kong New Wave has been restored to the vision of its author. Upon its original release, *Dangerous Encounters of the First Kind* had its incendiary opening sequence banned by the British-led bureaucracy, which was afraid that the film's depiction of serial bombings of movie theatres would lead to copycat crimes in real life—but if they thought that was offensive, did they even bother to watch the rest of the film? A thoroughly deranged urban rampage by three nerdy teenage "bomb-makers," a sociopathic blackmailing beauty and an American Vietnam vet reveals Hong Kong as a city of deceit, cover-up, lurking terror and gruesome violence. *Dangerous Encounters'* propulsive energy, docudrama feeling and deep-seated, politically fuelled cynicism and anger would become trademarks of the Hong Kong New Wave of the decade to follow, and established Tsui as one of the medium's most outrageous (and courageous) innovators. "[Tsui] creates a subversive, desperate portrait of a Hong Kong society that has lost its values. A quintessential New Wave film" (Aurélien Dirlor). **NC**

Print courtesy of Fairchild Films International Ltd.

Saturday, August 3 9:00 pm ☉



The Spooky Bunch



A Brighter Summer Day



Peking Opera Blues

### Peking Opera Blues

刀馬旦

dir. Tsui Hark | Hong Kong 1986 | 104 min. | R **B5MM**

**Archival Print!**

"A satire on the Chinese ignorance of democracy," as Tsui Hark provocatively described his first real masterpiece, the much-loved comedy-action-political thriller *Peking Opera Blues* sees the director's signature manic style hitting an early peak, perfecting the mongrel, *masala*-like form that Hark had been developing in his previous films (most notably in *Peking's* similarly named predecessor *Shanghai Blues*). In one of the most famous performances in Chinese cinema history, the magnificent Brigitte Lin sports a close-cropped haircut and tight-fitting military garb as a cross-dressing general's daughter in 1913 Beijing, who joins forces with a fortune hunter (Cherie Chung) and the daughter of a Peking opera impresario (Sally Yeh) as part of her plot to overthrow the corrupt regime of Yuan Shikai, the first president of Republican China. Tsui loves overthrowing conventions, and innocent flirtation in cross-dressing operas is one of those sacred cows; here, the lesbian subtext bobs to the surface unexpectedly and with great charm. "A speed-crazed riff on what happens when a spy melodrama meets a backstage comedy: Feydeau with blood at 150 beats per minute" (Tony Rayns, *Time Out London*). **NC**

**Sunday, August 4 1:00 pm** 🍴

### A Brighter Summer Day

牯嶺街少年殺人事件

dir. Edward Yang | Taiwan 1991 | 237 min. **B5MM**

**Archival Print!**

Inspired by a real-life 1960s murder case, Edward Yang's novelistic epic ranks with Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness* as the crowning achievement of the Taiwanese New Wave. Its title derived from the mistranslated lyrics of Elvis Presley's "Are You Lonesome Tonight?," *A Brighter Summer Day* focuses on Xiao Si'r (Chang Chen), an intelligent but underachieving high school student who becomes involved with a local street gang. When Si'r falls for Ming (Lisa Yang), the girlfriend of imprisoned gang leader Cat (Wong Chizan), her seemingly innate inconstancy pushes him further and further into an unhealthy obsession. Forgoing the more assertive modernism of *The Terrorizers*, Yang ingeniously uses his small-scale story to create a portrait of a whole society gripped by a perpetual identity crisis: the elder generation still attached to the war-ridden Mainland they forsook for a Taiwan now under the repressive thumb of the Nationalists, the younger generation knowing nothing but their island home and resentfully reacting against their parents' nostalgia with aimless, no-future nihilism. "[*A Brighter Summer Day*] belongs in the company of key works of our era ... richly realizing a physical and social world as dense with family, community, and other personal ties as any John Ford film, and furnished with more sheer physical presence (including characters, settings, and objects) than any other fiction film I know of from the nineties" (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*).

**Monday, August 5 2:30 pm** 🍴

In the Mood for Love



## NEW DIRECTIONS

**A**s the millennium approached, Chinese society once again found itself facing profound changes. The Mainland was surging towards global economic pre-eminence. Hong Kong, after over a century as a British colony, was united once again with the Mainland as a Special Administrative Region, while maintaining its special cultural characteristics. In Taiwan, the reinstatement of democratic debate following decades of authoritarian Guomindang rule became a tug of war between those who wanted a future separate from the Mainland and those seeking greater integration. After the terror and violence that had dominated the Chinese experience of the twentieth century, that century's end felt comparatively optimistic, yet also strangely uncertain—creating a kind of apprehensive malaise that would be both reflected in and expressed by an increasingly more diffuse Chinese cinema. As overt political, cultural and generational conflict appeared to recede, the collective consciousness that had bound the previous Generations and New Waves together began to disperse, allowing for more distinctly individualistic, stylistically eclectic and globally-oriented filmmakers to come to the fore. ▶▶



This lack of cohesion is particularly pronounced on the Mainland, where the filmmakers who comprise the co-called Sixth Generation—Wang Xiaoshuai and Jia Zhangke chief among them—go to great lengths to deny any shared approach to cinema. Yet especially in their early years, there are distinct group characteristics that link these exceptional artists, despite their disparities in age, style and sensibility. For one, they were the first generation of Mainland filmmakers to be exposed (as students) to the entirety of their own nation's film history, and also the first to have relatively unrestricted access to Hollywood films and European art cinema. One can also discern a cluster of common influences in their work: their preoccupation with urban life has much in common with the Hong Kong New Wave; their predilection for exquisite compositions and gentle pacing owes much to Taiwan's Hou Hsiao-hsien; while their small-scale, delicately wrought narratives of ordinary people buffeted by vast social change rhyme with the Fourth Generation "scar" films and reject the largesse (some would say excess) of the flamboyant Fifth Generation epics.

In Hong Kong, the Second Wave that appeared at the end of the 1980s took the opposite approach to the Sixth Generation's carefully studied minimalism, one that contrasted as well with the work of the earlier New Wave. Led by Wong Kar-wai and Stanley Kwan, the Second Wavers created impossibly lush, superbly stylized films that diverged from both the low-key realism of Ann Hui and the genre-based wildness of Tsui Hark and John Woo. Following in the modernist footsteps of Edward Yang, the Second Wavers took film itself as a primary subject: self-consciously invoking the history of cinema in virtually every frame of their films, they presented it as a kind of prism through which to view contemporary society during a moment of transformation that was comparably gentler, but no less profound, than the major upheavals that came before.

The heavy weight of history so often evident in Chinese cinema becomes a luxurious, even decadent fascination with the past in the work of the Second Wave. Kwan especially ties together many themes of this programme with *Center Stage* (a.k.a. *Actress*), his meta-modernist biopic of Ruan Lingyu, which uses the great star's tragically short life as a means to examine the rise and fall of Golden Age Shanghai cinema, and contrast that era's otherworldly glamour with a considerably more quotidian present. Wong Kar-wai as well evokes the timeless elegance of the Shanghai 1930s, blended with Hong Kong commercial melodramas of the fifties, in his sinfully gorgeous masterwork *In the Mood for Love*. Enormously influential, the Second Wave not only produced some of the region's (and the world's) most famous actors—notably Maggie Cheung, Tony Leung Chiu-wai, and the late Anita Mui—but also introduced a powerful new art-film aesthetic to international cinema, one that seemed to speak to the anxiety, velocity and instability of contemporary urban existence. Wong's *Chungking Express* in particular—in its bold experimentation with editing and framing, fragmentary narrative construction, and woozily beautiful camerawork by Christopher

Doyle Du Ke Feng—has been singled out by critics and academics as an encapsulation of the "postmodern" in both its style and subject.

With its love-hungry policemen mopily making their rounds through the urban jungle of Hong Kong, *Chungking* also signalled another important trend. In much of recent Chinese cinema, a certain kind of character emerges: a young man (usually), self-aware, detached, often cynical, and, above all, a creature of the city. Aimless youth had of course been a presence in Chinese cinema for decades, from the charming, streetwise coterie of young men, poor as dirt and devoted to living culturally rich lives, in the thirties screwball melodrama *Crossroads*, to Tsui Hark's urban terrorists in *Dangerous Encounters of the First Kind* to Hou Hsiao-hsien's ambling underachievers and Edward Yang's no-future street hoodlums in *The Terrorizers* and *A Brighter Summer Day*. But whereas these figures were usually sociologically placed, symptoms or exemplars of contemporary alienation or disaffection, this new breed of drifter has more in common with the nineteenth-century *flâneur* that Walter Benjamin famously found in the work of Baudelaire: an urban wanderer both dazzled by the society of the spectacle (whether capitalist or socialist) that surrounds him while also seeing through it.

This neo-*flâneur* figure has become a virtual trademark of Taiwan's most important and exciting new filmmaker to emerge at the turn of the century, Tsai Ming-liang. In his second film *Vive L'Amour*, in which Tsai's onscreen alter ego Lee Kang-sheng plays a suicidal businessman who hides out in an empty apartment used by a beautiful young realtor for her assignments, Tsai established his distinctively elliptical style, marked by minimal dialogue, a reliance on *temps mort*, and a deadpan sense of humour. Both strangely otherworldly and remarkably insightful in their oblique social criticism, Tsai's absurdist reveries transpose the breathless speed of Wong's money-fuelled Hong Kong to Taipei and slows it down to a mesmerizing crawl.

Where Wong's lovelorn romantics and Tsai's opaquely yearning drifters speak eloquently to the psychological, social, sexual and spiritual dislocations of millennial capitalism, the wandering protagonists in the films of many Mainland directors evince a comparable rootlessness. The *flâneur* can be seen in the bohemian artists of Wang Xiaoshuai's *The Days*, the travelling players of Jia Zhangke's *Platform*, and even in the bumbling rural cop of Lu Chuan's debut feature *The Missing Gun*—which, in a sign of the Mainland's re-engagement with the West, absorbed that marginal figure back into mainstream cinema and asserted an edgy new style that paralleled the technical flash and dazzle of Hollywood. Yet even as Lu established himself as a leading figure in Mainland cinema's ongoing commercial renaissance, he demonstrated with his second film *KekeXili: Mountain Patrol*—a gritty survival epic that brilliantly questions and repositions the Fifth Generation's veneration of landscape—that complex dialogue with the past, combined with an ambitious attempt to remake cinematic language, that has been the hallmark of this extraordinary century of Chinese cinema.—Noah Cowan



Christopher Doyle Du Ke Feng presents  
*Comrades: Almost a Love Story* and *Chungking Express*

Wednesday, June 5 9:30 pm  
Saturday, June 8 5:00 pm

The legendary cinematographer introduces our screenings of two of his finest hours behind the camera: Peter Chan's moving romantic drama *Comrades: Almost a Love Story* and Wong Kar-wai's wildly influential postmodern reverie *Chungking Express*.

Co-presented by



**Comrades:  
Almost a Love Story**



**Chungking Express**

**Comrades: Almost a Love Story**

甜蜜蜜

dir. Peter Chan | Hong Kong 1996 | 118 min. | PG **35MM**

Made one year before the handover of Hong Kong to the Mainland, prolific Second Wave filmmaker Peter Chan's tender, lyrical boy-meets-girl chronicle garnered nine prizes at the Hong Kong Film Awards, including Best Director and Best Actress. Leaving his fiancée back home in Beijing, wide-eyed Xiao Jun (Leon Lai) arrives in Hong Kong from the Mainland in 1986 to pursue his dreams of making a comfortable life for his future family. He soon meets the ambitious, shrewd and hard-working Li Qiao (Maggie Cheung), who turns out to be a fellow Mainlander. The friendship between Xiao Jun and Li Qiao, made more intimate by their mutual physical dislocation and experience of urban isolation, quickly escalates into a heated love affair that spans a decade and the vast distance between two islands in transition—Hong Kong and New York City—as the couple separate and reconnect with each other in unexpected circumstances. Its soundtrack filled with the warm and nostalgic songs of pan-Asian singing sensation Teresa Teng—whose tragically early passing during production inspired Chan to change the film's Chinese title to that of one of her best-known songs ("Tian Mi Mi")—*Comrades* is both a spellbinding romance and a scintillating snapshot of Hong Kong, capturing the megacity's palpable anxiety and disorientation on the brink of profound historic change. **AM**

Wednesday, June 5 9:30 pm

Christopher Doyle Du Ke Feng in person!

**Chungking Express**

重慶森林

dir. Wong Kar-wai | Hong Kong 1994 | 98 min. | 14A **35MM**

Archival Print!

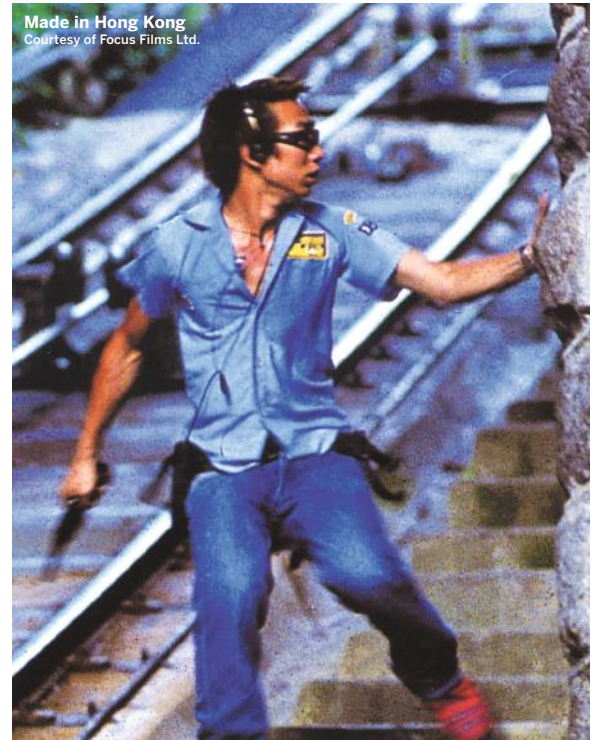
Wong Kar-wai's visually dazzling and endlessly rich fusion of offbeat romantic comedy and coolly postmodern reverie has become a signature film of millennial cinema. In many ways a culmination of the cycle of urban cinema that began with such 1930s Shanghai films as *Crossroads* and *Street Angel*, *Chungking Express* also heralded the emergence of what we may call (after Baudelaire and Benjamin) the *flâneur* element that one can see in so many contemporary Chinese films: the emphasis on wandering and wondering, exploring the mysteries and sensations of life in the modern city. Combining parallel, inverted stories of unrequited love involving two unnamed cops—Officer 223 (Takeshi Kaneshiro), who pursues a mysterious, be-wigged criminal (Brigitte Lin), and Officer 663 (Tony Leung), who is pursued by a spunky noodle-stand vendor (Faye Wong)—Wong and master cinematographers Christopher Doyle Du Ke Feng and Lau Wai-keung transform Hong Kong into a woozy array of sublime neons and entropic slow-motion, a dizzying dance of disorientation and displacement. Rushed to completion in just under two months, *Chungking Express* has become a remarkably influential cinematic dispatch on life in contemporary urban space: its anomie, its loneliness, its pure silliness and its breathless speed. "A film about time, serendipity, the hard shimmer of night, and the erotics of camerawork, *Chungking Express* is a genuine wonder: dazzling, bewildering, intoxicating" (Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*). **NC**

Saturday, June 8 5:00 pm

Christopher Doyle Du Ke Feng in person!



Kekexili: Mountain Patrol

Made in Hong Kong  
Courtesy of Focus Films Ltd.

### Kekexili: Mountain Patrol 可可西里

dir. Lu Chuan | Mainland 2004 | 95 min. | PG **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

A rugged hybrid of docudrama and American western set against Tibet's vast mountain ranges, *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol* is a harsh reply to the poetic awe that the Fifth Generation classics found in similarly uninviting landscapes. A journalist is embedded with a posse of vigilantes hired (but rarely paid) by the government to track down antelope poachers. He accompanies them on a grim manhunt as they seek vengeance for the murder of one of their own—a blood feud that leaves most of them dead and the journalist's idealism more than a little deflated. Unlike Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou et al., director Lu Chuan (*City of Life and Death*) finds not grace in nature so much as grimly Darwinian struggle, a pervasive violence all the more brutally ironic given the land's extraordinary, unapproachable beauty. "As tough and unsparing as its backdrop, a blood-boiling environmental thriller with a dash of Sergio Leone. Filled with strange and horrible visions, it draws you in again and again [with] set pieces that distill the story's life-and-death struggle to its essence" (Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*). **NC**

**Tuesday, June 11 9:00 pm** ☼

### In the Mood for Love 花樣年華

dir. Wong Kar-wai | Hong Kong 2000 | 98 min. | PG **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Wong Kar-wai's masterpiece of romantic longing is a love letter to much of Chinese cinema history. Its tale of a man and a woman (Tony Leung Chiu-wai and Maggie Cheung), crammed into adjacent tiny apartments, their spouses embroiled in an affair and their own passions repressed by tradition, propriety, and a fear of the unknown, echoes a tradition of *wenyi* melodrama stretching back to the 1930s. The film has a deep, almost fetishized relationship with the postwar period, especially its clothing and interior design, that speaks to the continuing weight of history and memory on contemporary Chinese filmmaking. (Critic Stephen Teo astutely identifies the film's deep formal echoes of Fei Mu's postwar masterpiece *Spring in a Small Town*, further underlining this connection.) But *In the Mood's* most profound connection to the past is in the intoxicating performances of Leung and Cheung, whose grace and vulnerability conjure up the aura of vanished stars from the Golden Age of Shanghai cinema in the thirties and forties. Displaying Wong Kar-wai at the height of his powers, his extraordinary control over tone and gesture felt in every frame, *In the Mood for Love* was recently anointed as the most important Chinese film on *Sight & Sound's* decennial poll of the greatest films ever made. "Rhapsodically sublimated and ultimately sublime" (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*). **NC**

**Sunday, June 16 6:00 pm** ☼

### Made in Hong Kong 香港製造

dir. Fruit Chan | Hong Kong 1997 | 108 min. **35MM**

"Every frame of this tale of wasted youth and irresponsible adults—possibly Hong Kong's most acclaimed indie feature ever—screams of muffled anguish" (Edmund Lee, *Time Out Hong Kong*). Where the glistening reveries of Wong Kar-wai and the stately melodramas of Stanley Kwan have become the designated standard-bearers of Hong Kong's Second Wave, Fruit Chan delivers a far more kinetic, punk-rock experience in his gritty low-life portraits, most often situated in the pungent underbelly of Hong Kong's ghettos. Winner of a passel of awards, the independently made, ultra-low-budget *Made in Hong Kong* focuses on low-rent wannabe gangster Chung-chau (played with extraordinary intensity by first-timer Sam Lee) as he ineffectively attempts to wheel and deal his way through the Hong Kong underworld, his desperation and ennui palpable. The film follows his downwards trajectory into triad violence as he tries to forge some kind of emotional connection to two teenage girls, one a suicide who leaves behind a letter that obsesses him, the other a debt-ridden beauty in need of a kidney transplant. Released in the same year that Hong Kong was returned to the Mainland, *Made in Hong Kong* is often considered the culmination and the *ne plus ultra* of the "handover anxiety film," the unofficial genre visible in various guises throughout the preceding two decades of Hong Kong cinema. **NC**

**Tuesday, June 18 9:00 pm** ☼



Vive L'Amour



The Days

**Vive L'Amour**

愛情萬歲

dir. Tsai Ming-liang | Taiwan 1994 | 118 min. **DIGITAL**  
**Digital Restoration!**

Winner of the Golden Lion at the 1994 Venice Film Festival, the astonishing second feature by Tsai Ming-liang—the foremost auteur of the Taiwanese Second Wave—connects elements of the Theatre of the Absurd with an atmosphere of creeping ennui in a constellation of eerily underpopulated urban spaces. *Vive L'Amour* follows the interactions of three variably rootless urban drifters (much like the Mainland Sixth Generation *flâneurs*): Mei (Yang Kui-mei), a lonely woman in her thirties working as a real-estate agent; Ah-jung (Chen Chao-jung), a handsome street vendor selling women's clothing; and Hsiao-kang (Lee Kang-sheng, Tsai's frequent onscreen muse and alter ego), a suicidal gay man selling niches for the cremated dead. When Mei accidentally leaves her key in the door of a vacant, fancy new condo she is trying to sell, the trio begins to converge and coexist in dangerously intimate situations. The film's breathtaking and vexing final shot is one of the most iconic conclusions in all of contemporary cinema. "Working principally without dialogue—with a feeling for both modern architecture and contemporary urban despair that often recalls Michelangelo Antonioni—[*Vive L'Amour*] gathers force slowly but builds to a powerful and devastating finale" (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*). **AM**

Thursday, June 20 8:45 pm

**Center Stage (Actress)**

阮玲玉

dir. Stanley Kwan | Hong Kong 1992 | 167 min. | PG **5MM**  
**Archival Print!**

The most important actress of prewar Chinese cinema, the tragically short-lived Ruan Lingyu took her own life at the age of twenty-four after she was savagely attacked by the press over an adultery scandal, but her extraordinary legacy continues to be a significant source of inspiration for Chinese artists. Director Stanley Kwan, famous for his lush period films, paid Ruan her greatest cinematic tribute with this exceptionally innovative biopic, and created a new screen icon in the process: Maggie Cheung, whose performance won her the prize for best actress at the Berlin Film Festival and launched her as a massive global star. An elegant and complex blend of fiction and non-fiction, *Center Stage* alternates between exquisitely detailed recreations of key moments from Ruan's life, clips from her films, and charming on-camera conversations between Kwan and Cheung about Ruan. Celebrated in much academic and critical writing as a key text about the status of women in twentieth-century cinema, *Center Stage* is above all a heartfelt and achingly beautiful testament to one of the true legends of the cinema. "A masterpiece ... the greatest Hong Kong film I've seen" (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*); "tender, vivid and almost overwhelmingly moving" (Tony Rayns, *Time Out London*). **NC**

Saturday, June 22 3:15 pm

**Center Stage (Actress)**



The Missing Gun



Platform

### The Days

冬春的日子

dir. Wang Xiaoshuai | 1993 | 80 min. **35MM**

A pioneering work of the millennial Sixth Generation, Wang Xiaoshuai's debut feature was one of the first truly independent productions made in China. Masterfully shot on black-and-white 35mm (despite its shoestring budget), this stark portrait of urban anomie focuses on two bohemian artists—played by real-life avant-garde painters Yu Hong and Liu Xiaodong (who would later star in Jia Zhangke's *Dong*)—as they drift through the miasma of old Beijing in the 1980s, their relentlessly quotidian lives both contrasting with and implicitly speaking to the massive social, cultural and political tensions simmering just outside the frame. With no extra-diegetic sound apart from the main character's first-person voiceover monologue and a decidedly cinema vérité feel, *The Days* decisively contrasts with the nostalgic tone and lush visuals of the Fifth Generation in its defiant DIY aesthetic, non-professional leads and resolute present-tenseness. Even more importantly, it points towards the more muted, rigorous kind of formalism of the Sixth Generation works to come: Wang's studied compositions and austere, precise depictions of the artists' process are as painterly as his subject Liu's paintings are cinematic. **AM**

**Sunday, June 30 3:45 pm** ☒

### The Missing Gun

寻枪

dir. Lu Chuan | Mainland 2002 | 90 min. | PG **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

Loosely based on Akira Kurosawa's classic *Stray Dog*, the auspicious debut from leading contemporary director Lu Chuan follows small-town cop Ma Shan (the compulsively watchable Jiang Wen) as he desperately tries to track down the service revolver he misplaced following a night of drunken revelry. As Ma moves up and down the social ladder in his desperate search—with everyday betrayals and unexpected killings cropping up along the way—each of his interactions with the town's citizenry speaks volumes, through body language and nuanced performance, about the relationship between those in authority and those they are meant to protect. A huge hit at the domestic box office, *The Missing Gun* brought a brash new energy to Mainland cinema and signalled the absorption of the marginal characters of Sixth Generation filmmaking into the mainstream. While Jiang's Ma has a kinship with the petty-crook protagonists of the early films by Jia Zhangke and Lou Ye, the film's madly kinetic camerawork and breathless editing make it far more akin to Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting*. "The heart of the film rests on the shoulders of Jiang Wen, who proves more than worthy of the task. His slow-burning intensity with moments of explosive emotion supplies an intriguing interior monologue with the character's essential decency" (George Wu, culturevulture.net). **NC**

**Monday, July 15 8:45 pm** ☒

### Platform

站台

dir. Jia Zhangke | 2000 | 193 min. | 14A **35MM**

**Archival Print!**

We are thrilled to be able to screen the original, full-length version—on a rare 35mm print shown only once before in Toronto—of Jia Zhangke's second feature and first masterpiece, recognized as the banner film of the Mainland's Sixth Generation. Set in Jia's hometown of Fenyang and spanning roughly a decade (from the late 1970s to the early nineties) during the era of post-Maoist reform on the Mainland, *Platform* focuses on a group of rural twentysomething performers who gradually transition from being a state-run troupe performing traditional folk music and Maoist anthems to a private outfit offering up desultory disco routines and punk-rock imitations. Depicting a society that seems to have passed from the pre- to the postmodern virtually overnight, Jia's most autobiographical film (the director was himself a breakdancer in a troupe of travelling players as an adolescent) employs long takes and artfully arranged long-shot compositions to confront a country in rapid transition and raise vital questions of documentation, history and memory. Ruminative, rigorous and breathtaking, *Platform* is "One of the richest films of the past decade ... it's Pop Art as history[.] Jia finds subtle ways to transform the world into a stage[.] the play of the proscenium against the filmmaker's taste for unmediated reality is fascinating" (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*). **AM**

**Tuesday, July 23 6:30 pm** ☒