

## **19th ifva Awards - Youth Category Jury Meeting Transcript**

Jury members: Adam Wong Sau-ping (Wong), Adrian Chow (Chow), Heiward Mak (Mak), Candace Chong (Chong), Ong Yi-hing (Ong)

**ifva** representatives: Teresa Kwong (Kwong), Kattie Fan (Fan), Wa Choi (Choi)

Kwong: Welcome to the jury panel meeting for the 19<sup>th</sup> **ifva** Youth Category. The purpose of today's meeting is mainly to select award-winning works for the Youth Category. **ifva** consists of four sections, and the competition is the one with which most people are familiar with.

The Youth Category is open to Hong Kong residents aged 18 or younger. We place no limitations on the form and content of the entrees, which qualify as long as they are under 30 minutes in length. The aim of **ifva** is to discover shorts, animation and interactive media works from Hong Kong and Asia. **ifva** is open to both Hong Kong residents and people across Asia, and encourages cross cultural exchange. In March each year, we organize the **ifva** Festival.

With regards to judging standards, we consider a work's content, creativity, form and technique. We place great emphasis on independent spirit and creativity, which are the main considerations for this competition.

This year, our awards consist of one Gold Award, the winner of which will receive HK\$20,000, a Silver Award, the winner of which will receive HK\$10,000. There are also three Special Mentions, the awarded works whose overall standard may not be on par with Gold and Silver Award winners, but are nevertheless worthy of being recognized. It is up to the jury panel to determine what aspects of the works deserve recognition. Examples may be acting or screenplay, and we can discuss them later.

Now let's move on and start discussing the work. The first one is **Instagram**. There's one more point I'd like to add. By the closing date in late October last year, we received 79 works in this category, from which the first round jury members chose 10 finalist works.

Ong: This work touches on a subject of interest to today's young people. The artists are interested in this topic, and did not simply make it for the sake of this competition. I have served as the juror for other competitions, and often people produce works that serve a particular purpose or in fulfillment of certain standards. This work

chooses an easy-going topic and way of presentation. Even though the artists are under the age of 18, I could easily picture it broadcasted on television. Their technique and editing are outstanding. However, I wonder whether this work is a true documentary, or does it merely imitate the design of documentaries. The first few minutes were ok, it was like a normal documentary, but as it went on, there were more and more interference and control by the directors, like how they wanted people to answer and how they edited it, etc., which made me wonder whether the artists were pretending to be fair and objective, but in fact already had a preconceived idea. If that was the case, I would question what the directors are trying to express about the popular app Instagram. I am not so certain. They interviewed many people, but what are they questioning or reflecting upon? Overall this work is above average, but it did not really leave a deep impression with me.

Chong: I agree that the work is easy on the eyes, and also what Ong said about the director's point of view and attitude. Because I don't play Instagram, I feel enlightened by the work, although it does not delve too deeply into the topic. Their questions are leading, and their choice of interview subjects and the kinds of questions they ask only serve to achieve a preconceived conclusion, which is a pity. I feel they could have done better.

Ong: With their editing, they only keep the things they want, and even edit out half a sentence. If their interview subjects were really man-on-the-street and if their goal was to entice older people into playing with Instagram, then they are very successful. The two girls at the beginning of the film seem too contrived. They don't seem to me like normal man-on-the-street, which made me question the directors' motives.

Wong: I think it's obvious that the directors intervened, so from the start, I did not judge it from the perspective of whether or not it is objective. The part that left the deepest impression with me is the heart shaped stickers on the photos. If you are unfamiliar with Instagram, I should explain. The hearts in Instagram represent "likes", and so they transposed this symbol derived from Instagram into the film. I don't mind the fact that they intervened, only that they do not have much point. They only presented Instagram in a superficial, disjointed, piecemeal manner. I don't think they explored anything.

Mak: I agree that the work does not draw any conclusions. Even for documentaries, there is no problem in taking a stand on an issue, the problem is that they are not clear

enough. I don't know whether the directors are criticizing this topic or satirizing it. When I wrote my comments for this work, I mentioned that they made an interesting attempt to represent Instagram with live characters. When we do such things on the internet, nobody feels strange, but when we do it in real life, it is ridiculous to a certain extent. Even if I don't know you, I can still "like" you this way. Some people use Instagram because they want to attract attention. However, the artists did not express this to any great extent. Even though they take a stand in this matter, they show only a limited side of things to the audience since most of the interviewees are their friends.

Ong: It does not show the attitude of older people or that of people who do not like Instagram.

Mak: They could have done so with additional interviews, or how people earn "likes" on social network. For a work in the Youth Category, this film is alright, and it is a pleasant viewing experience, although they could have delved deeper.

Ong: I agree with Heiward. It is a clever rather than creative work. This type of actualized treatment of the virtual world is nothing new. Jan Lamb Hoi-fung did it in one of his stand-up shows, so there is nothing groundbreaking in this film.

Chow: I quite like this work. Reading their artist statement, they are not too ambitious. They merely want to show the phenomenon of Instagram among the younger generation, and emphasize how people buy "likes" and followers. They do not intend to draw grand conclusions, and their motives are simple. The film's editing is tight and nice to watch, as well as entertaining. From this point of view I like this work. As Heiward said, no matter if the work is fiction or non-fiction, it expresses the artist's position, and it's hard to be completely objective.

Kwong: If you have nothing to add, let's move on to the next work, **Ex**.

Ong: I think this work tries too hard to be cool, even though putting it this way is a bit rude. Also the Japanese titles are wrong. "Ex" in Japanese is not written this way. The film's stylized treatment gives it a feeling of coolness, but it's just empty techniques, like the grainy black and white footage. It tries to express young people's attitude towards love, but what does it say at the end? Why does it show the girlfriend interviewing her former boyfriend, but it leads nowhere? I wonder what message the film is trying to convey? Does the scene where the lead female character taking

a shower serves to please the audience? If you do not question the mistakes in the Japanese titles and credits, you cannot help but be impressed by the film's technique, yet there is no content. If we say that the maker of *Instagram* lacks an identifiable stance, then *Ex* is even more so.

Chong: However, parts of the film are really cool, like the section with the ex-boyfriend, which feels real and the character is likeable, and I enjoyed watching it. The visuals are beautiful, even though the rest of the film does not surprise me.

Wong: The gay character is also good. He shares his thoughts with sincerity and expresses how he defines a relationship with honesty. They like speaking in English, which expresses their speaking habits. I don't have much to say about this work, except that I don't like the Japanese titles.

Mak: I also question his motives in using Japanese. Does he wish to reach a wider audience, such as those who speak Japanese, or is he merely using Japanese as decoration? Even if it is just decoration, it should at least be correct. I think it's alright to want to be cool; in the beginning of one's artistic life one always tends to imitate. I am curious about the three cases presented. The one involving the girl bathing emphasizes her everyday life at home. I am fonder of the part with the gay guy, which presents his experiences in a simple way. The part with the girl has good technique, but it's hard for to get into that world. It contains a lot of cool techniques that allows you to enjoy its visuals and music. After watching the film, I think what allowed the film to be including among the finalists is the part with the boyfriend because it is the most real. Even though there are technical problems with that section, I don't think it matters. It's hard for me to say whether I like this work or not.

Chong: The part with the boyfriend is quite distinctive. The whole film is about love, but it is only in this part that I feel the love.

Chow: Watching it again, I do not have any new thoughts. I still think it is cool, the background music is good, and it looks real. However there is not much content. I don't have strong feelings about the boyfriend, except that he is cute.

Ong: The director wasted a good topic. The term "ex" easily stirs people's imagination and experience, but she does not quite get to the heart of the matter. With this topic, you need to have moving personal events or real experiences. There is nothing

new in this work, and it only showcased the director's filming technique. It is remarkable that a person under the age of 18 can achieve this. However I expected that the film would reveal the younger generation's breathtaking attitudes toward love, which it failed to deliver in the end.

Chow: The director's statement is just one simple line: break-ups are ugly.

Ong: I don't see it in the work.

Mak: The name of the film made me want to watch it, but the Japanese titles turned me off.

Kwong: The next work is *Kidnap*.

Ong: I gave this work quite high marks, not because of the actors or technique, but because of its political symbolism. Independent films should have independent spirit and the courage to speak out, and among the ten works, this one alone achieves that. *Instagram* is only concerned with its own world, but even though this film's technique is green, it has something to say and tries to express it, but does not do so in a didactic manner. Because of its independent spirit and concern for society, I gave it high marks.

Chong: I don't think the film works, and it is too obvious. The metaphor is not that interesting.

Wong: I selected this work as one of the finalists. I don't think it as a metaphor. It simply not forthcoming, leaving things unsaid and letting the audience figure it out for themselves. That's why I don't think it quite reaches the level of a metaphor because it does not have a larger meaning. It talks about the current situation of Hong Kong as being like a kidnap, but wants you to fill in the gaps.

Chow: I like this work even though the metaphor is an obvious one. It uses a monologue format to explore the tension between Hong Kong and China, and inspires the audience to reflect upon the deeper questions surrounding Hong Kong's current political impasse. It is rare for secondary school students to have such vision. The use of camera movements and voice-over, which add to the sense of tension and drama, is especially noteworthy. When the lead character sings "I Dreamed a Dream" at the end, it hit the Hong Kong dilemma right on the head, and makes me

feel sad. Actually the lead character is not very good, but I treasure this effort from a group of Form 5 students. The use of a single actor is a bold move and quite laudable.

Ong: The work has courage and vision, but the dialogue is not good enough. There should be more double entendres that make people think. Even though the technique is lacking, the filmmakers should be lauded for making this work rather than a more palatable work like *Instagram*, which shows their passion for the subject. Technique can be improved with practice, but their spirit deserves praise. I highly recommend this work, for we should encourage young people to explore subject matters that go beyond their own interests.

Mak: It does not matter to me whether ifva entrees or others works explore politics or personal issues. If they have chosen this angle, then I have to look at what stance they take and what message they try to convey. At the end of the film, when he points a gun to his own head, the message is very clear. In the process, we can see what messages young people are exposed to and what education they had received, and how they view Hong Kong-China relationship. I am surprised that they touched on this topic. I believe that many more young people go on the streets to protest rather than make a video. It is bold of them to choose a monologue format. The film looks better on the big screen than on DVD. This is my feeling.

Kwong: The next work is **6**.

Wong: I had a hand in selecting this work, and at the time I did not know that it is the same director as *Ex*, although I knew that the same person directed *Hole*. It is easy to be attracted by such a handsome looking work. It has a different aesthetic compared to other works. It does not try to tell a straight-forward story, but only tries to convey a feeling, which is laudable, even though the standard is not too high. It chooses a not too difficult approach, but scored highly. There is not much to fault with this work. **6**, as its name suggests, is concerned with short term memory.

Chong: At first I did not know the artist's intention, and wondered whether there was something wrong with the projection. Watching it the second time was better than the first. I can find no flaws with it. It is an interesting work.

Mak: The work differs from the artist statement. The text is richer than the work itself.

- Chow: I feel that the film fails to deliver what is written in the statement.
- Mak: The artist says, "Goldfish's memory only lasts for a few seconds, but human can remember for a lifetime. Sometimes, people's actions towards me are like rape. I have never thought that people are capable of destroying another person's fate utterly. But my dear, with your super-human abilities, you can do so much." If one looks at the work on its own, it manages to showcase the artist's abilities well, and achieves what a short is supposed to. It is rough around the edges, and is not a difficult film to shoot. The music and editing are good, but it is hard to get from the work what the artist statement says. However, I think that this does not really matter, as long as the work conveys a certain atmosphere. It does not need to tell a story or be a documentary. This work lacks novelty; it merely presents what all of us must have done when we were young in a romantic way.
- Ong: If the film's title is **6**, and I forget it as soon as it's over, does that mean it's a success, or the opposite? You mentioned that its technique is fine. I think including it among the finalist is already sufficient encouragement for this kind of work.
- Chong: There are some interesting things in this work, like the part about goldfish memory only lasting 6 seconds, the dress and rape. The juxtaposition of these elements is interesting.
- Kwong: The next work is ***Yao Dao Police Call***.
- Mak: A very good work. Is Yao Dao their school?
- Chow: Yes, this school submitted a series of works, but this one is different from the rest.
- Chong: What are the rest of them about?
- Wong: One of them is about first aid. This work also serves a topic. It's about campus bullying.
- Ong: When you say the work is good, what's so good about it? I don't really get it.
- Wong: The filmic technique is excellent. The filmmaker has a good grasp on film language and his instincts are sharp.

Ong: As a work that talks about campus bullying, shouldn't they try to warn people against bullying?

Mak: The good thing about this work is that it does not serve the topic. Even though it is a school project, they enjoy the process and are really into making it. Usually for these kinds of projects, the actors would be unconvincing and even laugh during a scene, but in this work, all the actors play their parts well.

Wong: The actors are great. I think that's on account of the director, who knows how to communicate using body language. I think this young director's grasp of film language is remarkable.

Mak: The chase scene on the bridge is great!

Chow: I agree that the editing and camera angles are very good. I also paid attention the music and dialogue recording. Even though there are some rough patches, they are smooth on the whole. The actors are also fine. Instead of giving clichéd advice on how to deal with campus bullying, they also show that aside from the bully and the bullied, there are other bystanders that made the act of bullying possible. Compared with the other works from the school, I like this one the best, because it is better than all of them by far.

Wong: The other films may have been directed by the same person because the technique is similar, but this one is more ambitious. The four characters work well dramatically, with one person standing by and smirking while another two do the bullying, and one of the bullies is kinder than the other.

Chow: The dramatic progression is also good.

Wong: However the work does not explore any real issues. The director merely takes the opportunity to make a good drama using fluent film language. For the competition, they could have left out the text at the end.

Mak: Or they could have chosen a better font.

Wong: Perhaps the director thought that it was not what he wanted to say anyway, so he didn't care. I look forward to seeing what this director can come up with next if he did not have to follow a fixed theme. A few years ago there was another work that

won the Gold Award called *Where*. It dealt with the pressures of exams, and was filmed like a ghost film. The entire film had no dialogue. I even invited the director to give a talk to my students. His previous works were also funny.

Kwong: The next work is *Hole*.

Mak: It is clear that the director has certain views about herself and sex. However she seems to be under some unseen constraint, and could have gone further.

Ong: A participant in previous year called Wong Choi-fung used her own pregnancy as the topic of her work, in which she touched her own body and did other things that was more daring. By contrast, this film's exploration of sex is relatively more clean and palatable. Making films on a taboo topic but using such a tame way of presentation makes this work unremarkable. There is some display of technique, but there is little else the audience can get.

Kwong: If there is nothing else to add, we'll move on to *I am not a Superhero*.

Ong: The director must be very familiar with superhero films to be able to display such a good grasp of camera angles and timing. I like its humor, like the scene with the thieves in the parking lot. Played by amateurs, the scene is better played than many films with professional actors. The ending brings out the message that there is more than one superhero in the world, which is brilliant and gives the audience food for thought. It exceeds the level of most TV soaps. This way of expression is unconventional, albeit a bit didactic, but one can see that the director had reflected upon this topic. That's why I gave this film very high mark.

Chow: I really like this film, and wrote the comments for it. I said its photography, editing, action scenes, CGI and sound effect are all excellent. Superhero films can be very clichéd, but this work blurs the line between good and evil. I particularly like the drug dealer character, which shows that evil and poverty are not character failings but have to do with the social structure, and it is interesting that he could show this on film. In the end, the film brings out the empowering message that everyone can be a superhero. This director also made a film last year featuring the same lead character, which was a sci-fi story about an assassin who works for a certain association. The story was unconvincing because the lead character looked too slim and weak to be an assassin. That film had an old guy who was sent by the organization to take care of the main character, but was in fact spying on him.

However, the actor playing the old guy was actually not too old. This film employed similar technique as the director's previous work, but it is a great deal more convincing. That's why I feel he has really improved.

Wong: Compared to the previous film, this one has a more definite theme, and among the finalists works, it is the most sincere and has something substantial to say, which the director expresses through the superhero genre. I don't agree that this film is more convincing, because I find it equally unbelievable.

Chow: I'm saying that even though it is a fantasy film, it is comparatively more credible.

Wong: If he wants to improve, he should watch more cult films and try to learn from it, rather than big-budget films, since he could never achieve that kind of realism. That's why he should strive for being alternative. For example, the drug dealer old guy is miscast because he's not really that old, nor does he look like a heroin dealer. If he had employed a more over-the-top approach, the work would be more fun to watch.

Chong: That's why the robbery scene in which the young people wear masks is more convincing.

Mak: Among all the works, I like this one the best. I think the director has heart, his execution and direction have been well thought out. I look forward to seeing him make an even better film next year.

Wong: Perhaps he would enter the film industry sooner, because this director has really good film sense.

Chong: I think the lead character is the director.

Wong: His image matches the film he makes. I remember last year, some jurors remarked that he was like a kid trying to be a hero.

Ong: There's nothing wrong with that. In Japanese comics, heroes are always kids under the age of 18.

Kwong: The next work is *Light War*.

Ong: The product placement is too long!

Mak: The good thing about this work is that they have fun doing it. If not, they would not have gone to so much trouble. A lot of similar works are shoddily made.

Chow: I like this work because it made ETV seem fun, so it deserves encouragement.

Mak: What year are they in?

Kwong: Form 1.

Chong: When I first watched this, I wondered if the other jurors played a joke on me. But in the end, I understood why they chose this work. It does deserve encouragement.

Kwong: The next work is ***Dead End***.

Wong: The work is complete, but clichéd.

Ong: As an independent short, it does not offer anything new.

Chow: However the artist statement is quite something, and says that it uses Tarantino's films to express herself. Two points touched me, one is good and one is bad. The first is that the lead character speaks English with a native accent, but his mother speaks Mandarin, which I don't understand. The good point is that the part where he hangs himself sent shivers up my spine.

Wong: But you could have expected that from the start.

Kwong: The last work is ***Journey of Headwind***.

Chong: A pretty looking film, and the lead character is very good.

Wong: It is hard not to include it among the finalists, but the story is too fake and did not move me. However it is clear that the directors spent a great deal of effort in making it, and it is a tidy looking work.

Ong: The making-of is better than the actual film. The MV style editing and original music in the end deserve extra points. However, the story is too soap opera-like. Young

people should have done a better job making films about young people, but the directors chose a not very novel way to do it.

Chong: The story is very predictable.

Chow: I like the MV part at the end, which reiterates the story. The editing and music is good. However, the work is less impressive on the big screen than on DVD.

Ong: Speaking of deafness, there was a Taiwan film called *Here Me*, starring Eddie Peng and Chen Yan-xi, which was quite fresh. By contrast, ***Journey of Headwind*** does not tell us what difference wearing a hearing aid makes to the character's daily life and how it affected her singing, etc. The audience does not know what difficulties she faces.

Mak: People have misconceptions about young people. Actually it depends on what they absorb as they grow up. They want to make films about their own kind, but the results depend on what they want to emulate. Obviously the filmmakers are influenced by Korean, Japanese and even TVB soap operas, which is something we should reflect upon.

Chow: However, sometimes what they absorb and what comes out can be different things.

Mak: This work is beautifully shot, but the friendship between the protagonists is a bit fake. The music is good, but it made me more aware of how melodramatic the film is. The film's execution is good, but it fails to move me.

Wong: This is an interesting phenomenon. Some works better than this one in terms of execution, but we do not include them among the finalists, while this work, which is clearly influenced by other works that came before, made it to the final round.

Chow: Deep down, we like works that are not too well-polished. If it is too much like a TVB drama, we don't let them in. Even though this work is influenced by TVB, it also has some rough edges.

Kwong: Having discussed all ten finalist works, we can now nominate the Gold Award. Or you can each choose 5 works that you think deserve prizes, and then we can pick the award winners from among them.

Mak: I already have an idea.

Kwong: Then we can nominate the Gold Award winner directly.

Ong: I vote for *I am not a Superhero*.

Chow, Mak, Chong: Me too.

Kwong: Are there other nominations for Gold Award besides this one?

Wong: ***Yao Dao Police Call***.

Kwong: You can now discuss why you think the work you chose deserve the Gold Award.

Ong: I think it is quite difficult for a director under the age of 18 to make a film with limited resources that has few major flaws. I appreciate that he has reflected upon the superhero film genre and made a work that is relevant to society. The execution is also smooth. The heroin dealer character has the effect of galvanizing the main hero, thus elevating the whole story, which is something that even Hollywood films may not be able to achieve. This work is more complete and serious than the other finalist works, that's why I nominate it for the Gold Award.

Wong: In my mind it deserves the Silver Award. I can't accept such a big flaw in a Gold Award winner. I think it tries to imitate genre films, but falls short. This kind of flaw I cannot accept, which also includes the character's image and the fact that the way they talk seem out of place with the situations. These are all obvious failings. What Ong said about the work, I can only see those points as reasons to forgive its flaws. I feel we should encourage this work, but to me it is not up to the standards of a Gold Award.

Kwong: Why do you think ***Yao Dao Police Call*** deserves a Gold Award?

Wong: This work also has flaws, but they mainly have to do with the titles in the last few seconds. Aside from that part, the work is very complete and powerful.

Chow: I think ***Yao Dao Police Call*** should get the Silver Award.

Chong, Ong: I agree.

Mak: I am a little bit swayed by Adam, and am considering the gap between what he is trying to emulate and what he has achieved. However, it seems like we are not holding these two works up to the same standards. **Yao Dao Police Call** is a piece of homework, but exceeds the level of homework.

Wong: Even if we do not consider it as homework, it is still very good. If not for the text at the end, I would not have known it is homework.

Ong: I don't think **Yao Dao Police Call** deserves the Gold Award. Even though it contains many fun elements and its execution is good, it falls within the range of a student work. I don't think there is anything outstanding about it.

Kwong: Let us vote to decide. To repeat, the Gold Award winner gets HK\$20,000 and a trophy, Silver Award winner receives HK\$10,000. Those who agree that **I am not a Superhero** should get the Gold Award raise your hand.

(Ong, Chong, Chow and Mak raise their hands.)

Kwong: Four votes. So the Gold Award this year goes to **I am not a Superhero**. Are there any nominations for Silver Award?

Wong: Ong, are you opposed to **Yao Dao Police Call** getting the Silver Award?

Ong: I also like **Kidnap**, but I don't think it reaches the level of a Silver Award.

Kwong: So **Yao Dao Police Call** is the Silver Award winner. There can be a maximum of three Special Mentions.

Ong: I nominate **Kidnap**.

Chow, Wong: Me too.

Chong: I nominate **Instagram**.

Ong: I have a dilemma. How to choose between **Journey of Headwind** and **Ex?**

Wong: I suggest only giving one Special Mention instead of three.

Ong, Chong, Mak: I agree.

Chow: I vote for ***Kidnap***.

Chong: I agree.

Kwong: So the Gold Award for this year's ifva Youth Category goes to ***I am not a Superhero***, the Silver Award goes to ***Yao Dao Police Call***, while Special Mention goes to ***Kidnap***.

### Youth Category Award Winners

#### Gold Award

***I am not a Superhero*** / Jonathan Tam

#### Silver Award

***Yao Dao Police Call*** / Wong Chun-pong

#### Special Mention

***Kidnap*** / Mok Chui-shan, Yip Tsz-ching, Kiang Tin-long, Lee Suet-ying, Yip Yuen-ting, Wong Ka-chun