

## The 21st ifva Open Category Jury Meeting transcript

Jury Members: Nansun Shi (Shi), Sylvia Chang (Chang), Vincent Chui (Chui),  
Eric Poon (Poon), William Cheung (Cheung)

ifva representative: Kattie Fan (Fan), Szeto Chung Yan (Szeto)

Fan: Thank you for attending today's meeting. This year, ifva received over 800 eligible entries, with almost 200 works in the Open Category. After the pre-selection and first round, we have picked out 10 finalist works, from which we will choose one Gold, one Silver and one Special Mention winner. The criteria for selection is independent spirit, content, creativity and form.

Chang: Let's nominate three works and start our discussion.

Shi: Let me go first. I think *SOD-032* is outstanding, and the director attempted something new. The execution is good and gives audiences a new experience. From the short films I've seen, I haven't encountered such a film. It would be better if it was shorter. It deserves commendation, although maybe not the Gold Award. *The Sea Within* has another kind of style. It is calm and composed. Even though it looks ordinary, you can tell the director is skilled. The two actors are quite good. *Leave Them High And Dry* is alright. There are not many flaws, but also not very outstanding.

Chui: Let me nominate three works. Even though the story of *The Sea Within* is minor, audiences can gain an understanding of fishery in Hong Kong. The treatment is quite good. The lead actors are the director's parents, and their performance is documentary-like, which makes it interesting. I should declare that I had organized screenings for this film. Nowadays technology renders filmmaking more convenient, so there are many works that takes the filmmaker's personal experience as the starting point, but this work resonates with the audience and is quite good. The second work I nominate is *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)*, and it is even better when seen on the big screen. It is an honest work, and the director is brave in facing his own identity. The segments they choose to show are interesting. For example, one part shows him giving a speech in English, which seems to suggest that the Chinese community does not care about him. The director is courageous, even though the work has flaws. When the mother appears, it gives the work another level of meaning, and shows the director considering this issue from another angle in a self-reflective way. Even if the work does not get Gold, it should at least be Special Mention. The third work I recommend is *The Food Fascists*. The technique is practiced and the story is layered. I understand that watching it the first time, some people may feel that there is too much information. Perhaps it's too ambitious, but it is a layered work.

Shi: The production is good and better than average. It is not that the story is not layered, but it is not good enough. For example, the scene where the character skins the onion is not done well. Watching it the first time, audiences can already understand its meaning, which includes the killing of animals, refugee camps, the gap between the rich and the poor, and exploitation. Perhaps the script is not good enough, and the storytelling is not clever enough.

- Chang: The director has his own unique point of view, but the storytelling is kind of stiff.
- Shi: The production of *The Food Fascists* is good, but the director's technique is not clever enough. When the film begins, it is predictable, but the treatment of details is good. Among the finalists, the production on this film is not bad.
- Cheung: I want to lobby for *The Food Fascists*. I agree with Chui. The whole work is layered, and criticizes human desire step by step, which is its theme. It is layered in the sense that it uses food to criticize people's desires, and in the end states that humans destroy the food chain. I think the script is thoughtful, and perhaps there are too many messages, but is this arrangement inappropriate? I don't think so. I had a strong impression of this film in the first round, and I appreciate the actors' performance, which shows people with different value systems. Even though for a short film it is a bit bloated with messages, it is a thoughtful work.
- Shi: The director's thoughtfulness is obvious, but the storytelling is a bit too clumsy.
- Cheung: *The Sea Within* is also very good, and reminds me of Allen Fong's style, which is uneventful and not very dramatic. The work describes Hong Kong's disappearing fishery culture. Society is changing, and the lead characters face different problems, like why they have to live on land. This is an honest work. As I age, I have come to dislike films with too many gimmicks and rather prefer real stories. Many of the entries are about what Hong Kongers have lost. For example, *Midnight in Mong Kok – A Documentary* is about how Hong Kongers face these changes through protests. Some express it with nostalgia, and *The Sea Within* is one such film. Even though *Leave Them High And Dry* is predictable, the visuals and composition are unique, and the script is sincere. I think there are two main trends this year, one is expressing social discontent through documentaries, and the second is nostalgia and longing for things that are lost. As a pseudo-documentary, *Leave Them High And Dry* has good form, but the ending is not good enough. I don't really agree with *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)*, which is a type of self-expression pushed to the extreme. It's not that I question its honesty, but does it have to confront the audience like that to make the director's point? I prefer more detached or self mocking treatment.
- Poon: I think *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)* is quite something. The director uses their own case to tell the story of a man born with a woman's heart wishes to become a physical female. In the end, he is still a third gender person. The director exposes themselves and throws out a big question mark. The part with the mother brings out another dimension, but that part makes the audience feel uncomfortable. I also like *The Sea Within*, *The Food Fascists*, *Leave Them High And Dry* and *Extras*. *Extras* uses the story of an assassin to talk about Hong Kong's situation. When I viewed it the first time, the Causeway Bay bookstore incident had not yet occurred, and audiences may wonder whether the story is too far-fetched. Both *The Food Fascists* and *Extras* are about how politics swallows people up in a world full of power and violence. There ought to be more descriptions about the two characters in *Extras*, but on the whole, it is okay. *Leave Them High And Dry* feels a bit like a RTHK production, and the good thing about it is that it puts an appropriate

amount of real stuff into a drama. The beginning starts with some real SEN (special education needs) parents dialogue segments, which brings out the dramatic portion with actress Rain Lau, and makes the whole film more believable. I learnt something from watching this film, which is how to combine documentary with fiction. As long as you put the real segments in the right places, this sets up the dramatic stuff that comes afterwards.

Chui: I feel that this arrangement does not bring me inside the story. It is precisely Rain Lau's appearance in the SEN parents meeting that makes it hard for me to get into the scene, because her performance is so different from the real people. In *The Food Fascists*, there is a certain direction to the actor's performances. I agree that *Leave Them High And Dry* is sincere, but I disagree with the part that attracts you.

Chang: The headmaster's performance is the most real in this film.

Chui: The beginning of *Leave Them High And Dry* does feel like a RTHK drama, but the latter part is too stylized. For example, there is a scene with Rain Lau and a teacher that is very stylized, and there is little motivation for it, so it's not a good idea because it does not match the style of the rest of the film, including the performance, and is distracting.

Chang: I agree.

Shi: The framing is strange.

Chui: It'd be different if the whole film was stylized.

Shi: That's right. Now it's neither here nor there, which is less than ideal.

Chang: *The Sea Within* is technically mature and stable. It is touching and I like it. I also like *SOD-032* a lot. It is very young and full of energy, and is original and dares to try new things. I think the director of *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)* is brave and honest. However I don't like the part with the mother, which seems beside the point. She does not seem to understand her son at all, and seem to be providing some sort of answer for the whole film.

Chui: I don't think the mother is the answer.

Chang: Does the mother's words really help her son?

Chui: I don't think it's a question of whether or not she is helping her son.

Cheung: I think it's to help the audience, to comfort them.

Chang: Yes.

Shi: I agree that this film's treatment makes people uncomfortable. You don't need to see everything in order to be honest. There should be more clever ways.

- Chang: That's right. All they are doing is exposing their story completely in front of the audience.
- Poon: Even when viewing on the computer screen, the film is still impactful.
- Shi: I think the film is indulgent. They used confrontational images more than once.
- Poon: Luckily they are not completely absorbed into it, otherwise the film would become something else. The appearance of the mother does bring comfort to the audience.
- Shi: This is a very personal work. In reality, many transgendered people would even get married, there are transgendered celebrities now. The character is still changing. I don't like the work, but it is alright.
- Chui: I would not say I like the film, but as an independent film, it impacts society. It is good that it has a chance to be shown in public.
- Cheung: I still think it goes overboard, and I don't like it. Many works about transgendered people do not need to use physiological means to confront the audience. The director is honest. I want to say a few words for *SOD-032*. I like this style of treatment, which is fun. It uses a lot of collective memories of Japan and Japanese cultural symbols, which is unique. Compared with other more serious works, this one stands out because it is original and smart. Even the background in the classroom uses lines from Japanese porn.
- Chang: The use of Japanese mixed with Cantonese does not feel awkward, which is quite a feat.
- Shi: The performance of the two girls is good.
- Chang: I agree. Very nice!
- Shi: Even though it's not the best work, we have to give it a prize.
- Chui: It even uses a Japanese title that no one knows how to pronounce.
- Cheung: There are a lot of elements from computer games, mixed in with a lot of other stuff.
- Chang: It reflects what Hong Kong kids grow up watching.
- Chui: I remember reading in the artist's statement that the director really likes Japanese culture, but because they do not have the money to go to Japan to make this film, they choose to make a Japanese film in Hong Kong. Even though the technique is home-grown, the film is still worth watching. However the story is too flimsy. It starts out very grand, but in the end it's just a story about a stay-at-home guy.
- Shi: But it's an interesting work.
- Chang: Perhaps because they are young, they think of love as being very important.

Chui: I agree with giving them a prize.

Shi: We have to give them a prize, even if it's not the Gold Award. This film is really outstanding and interesting. The execution is also fine. Some of the details are not up to standard, like actress' uniform.

Fan: There are four works which no one mentioned. Why don't we discuss them?

Cheung: I think that *Midnight in Mong Kok – A Documentary* is an honest depiction of the whole movement, but it is lacking in vision, and so does not deserve an award.

Chui: I agree.

Poon: Nowadays there are many documentaries about Occupy Central, but it is hard to document the social movement completely in 20 minutes.

Chui: The whole event is too recent, and there isn't enough time to digest it.

Fan: How do you feel about *Everything's Gonna Be OK?*

Cheung: I picked this film in the previous round. This work is too tidy and the narrative technique is good. I feel that it is a bit like the film *8 1/2*.

Chui: It is a bit confused.

Cheung: Not really. It begins with the guy waking up and the nurse telling him that "Everything's gonna be ok." Then he begins his journey of imagination, and goes between reality and fantasy. I like the flow of the story, which is well executed, but it is not very independent.

Chui: As a work about imagination, the imagery is not imaginative enough.

Fan: How about *Being Rain: Representation and Will?*

Chui: The director of this film has just completed a feature, which has just begun to be shown. By comparison, this is a playful work, and in the end its director discovered that the political situation developed faster than he thought. So it is good enough that this film got a chance to be seen.

Shi: The middle part is quite suspenseful, but the ending is awful.

Fan: *A Mother Lover?*

Chui: I think *A Mother Lover* is short and sweet, and the visuals are quite good. The story is simple and does not require too much dialogue to present the relationship between the main character and the woman. This work left a strong impression in the first round, and the purpose of selecting it as one of the finalists is to give the director some encouragement.

- Fan: Can you nominate your choices for the Gold Award?
- Shi: *The Sea Within* for Gold, *SOD-032* for Special Mention. I don't have any idea about Silver yet.
- Chang: Why can't *SOD-032* be Silver?
- Shi: I think the film has a lot of flaws, so I am undecided.
- Cheung: I pick *The Food Fascists* as Gold, *SOD-032* as Silver. *The Sea Within* deserves an award too.
- Shi: I agree. Taking everything into consideration, *The Sea Within* is better than *The Food Fascists*.
- Chang: Their depth is different.
- Poon: If you are to compare the two, then for *The Sea Within*, less is more, but for *The Food Fascists*, more can be more. I think the director is trying to say that food is politics, and is being allegorical.
- Shi: I think the film is too obvious. I appreciate the stillness of *The Sea Within*.
- Poon: The identity of the main character makes me like the film. It is well imagined, but the mood of the film is too unhappy.
- Shi: Using the director's real parents can be good or bad. Here, the effect is very good.
- Chang: Their performance is natural and sincere, and quite touching. Even though their lives are not easy, they show their relationship in an honest way.
- Chui: At the beginning they are distant, and then their relationship changes. The visual treatment is smooth.
- Poon: Watching it on the big screen yields a different feeling.
- Chang: The only thing I don't like is the voice-over at the end, which jolted me. But on the whole, it's very nice.
- Poon: *The Sea Within* has dramatic tension, like the scene where the mother throws the food away and the father calmly comes back home. *The Food Fascists* is quite different.
- Chang: *The Food Fascists* pushes the audience.

- Shi: In terms of completeness and technical ability, *The Sea Within* is better than *The Food Fascists*. But compared to *The Food Fascists*, *The Sea Within* has fewer unacceptable flaws.
- Chang: I agree. *The Sea Within* only brings you into its world and lets you fill in the gaps with your imagination, but *The Food Fascists* forces you to listen to its message. If you are opposed to the message, you will not want to see it and won't enjoy it, whereas *The Sea Within* leaves more room for imagination and inspires your thinking.
- Shi: Why don't we have *The Sea Within* as Gold, *SOD-032* as Silver, and Special Mention for *The Food Fascists*.
- Cheung: I hope *The Food Fascists* will get Gold or Silver.
- Chui: We can have one more Special Mention for *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)*.
- Poon: I agree.
- Shi: You suggest two Special Mentions? Why don't you tell me your nominations?
- Chui: Gold for *The Sea Within*, Silver for *The Food Fascists*, Special Mention for *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)*.
- Cheung: I pick *The Food Fascists* for Gold, *The Sea Within* for Silver, *SOD-032* for Special Mention.
- Poon: My vote is same as Chui.
- Fan: So *Extras* and *Leave Them High And Dry* will not get any awards because no one nominated them. Do you agree?
- Shi: Ok.
- Chui: I think the plot of *Extras* is good, but the characters' emotions are not connected well. It's not that *Leave Them High And Dry* is not good. It is worth being screened, but it does not deserve an award.
- Shi: With *Extras*, it is a matter of audience involvement. Perhaps the characters are too stereotypical. The two small fry characters should allow me to see more.
- Fan: Let me recap. Shi, Poon, Chang and Chui chose *The Sea Within* as Gold, Cheung picked *The Food Fascists* as Gold. Chang chose *SOD-032* as Silver. Poon and Chui voted *The Food Fascists* for Silver.

- Shi: I can vote *SOD-032* for Silver and *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)* for Special Mention. Even though this film is flawed, it can help a lot of people.
- Cheung: So Gold should be going to *The Sea Within* but I still hope to lobby for *The Food Fascists*.
- Chui: Two Silver?
- Fan: In the past, we have had no Gold and two Silvers, but as the organizer, we hope to have one Gold, one Silver and one Special Mention if possible.
- Shi: How about one Gold, one Silver and two Special Mention?
- Chang: I really feel that *SOD-032* is the most outstanding film. Even though it is a light work and does not deserve Gold, it should still get an award, which will encourage other Hong Kong artists to try new styles and subject matters.
- Cheung: I vote *The Food Fascists* for Silver.
- Shi: Can we have two Special Mentions?
- Fan: Do you all agree that *SOD-032* get one of the Special Mentions?
- Chui: Yes.
- Fan: How about jurors who want this work to win Silver?
- Chang: I do not want two Special Mentions. I would rather have one Special Mention for *SOD-032*.
- Cheung: I support *SOD-032*.
- Shi: Does anybody want two Special Mentions?
- Chui: I agree with two Special Mentions.
- Poon: I agree.
- Cheung: I just want *SOD-032* to get Special Mention.
- Shi: So it's three to two.
- Chui: Do we vote or what?
- Fan: Voting is a reference, but the ideal way is to get a consensus through discussion so that everyone is satisfied with the results.

- Poon: *SOD-032* is a happy work, and we hope that the director will keep on making films. At the end of *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)*, the director says that they will continue, and we should support them and see if they create better works in the future. Both works deserve encouragement.
- Chang: They are all deserving of encouragement. I think that the best way is to keep the one Gold, one Silver and one Special Mention arrangement.
- Chui: I choose *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)* as Special Mention. If *SOD-032* receives more public screening, people will like it. I like the work too. But I feel that two Special Mentions are okay.
- Chang: Nowadays people need cheering up. *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)* is a dead-end with no exit. I worry what young people with similar experiences would feel.
- Poon: Students in gender studies would have a lot of discussions about this. The work is interesting. He should continue to make films.
- Chui: Chang is worried about audience's reactions. If so, I would pick *SOD-032* for Silver, because it attempted new things. Special Mention should go to *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)*.
- Cheung: Will this overthrow what we discussed before?
- Fan: First of all, do we all agree that *The Sea Within* gets Gold? If no one objects, then we should concentrate on discussing Silver and Special Mention.
- Chui: I think that *The Food Fascists* has received sufficient encouragement. I don't want to sacrifice *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)*, and would rather give Silver to *SOD-032* and give Special Mention to *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)*.
- Fan: To sum up: Gold goes to *The Sea Within*. Then we have three choices. One is *The Food Fascists* gets Silver, *SOD-032* gets Special Mention. The second option is *SOD-032* gets Silver while *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)* gets Special Mention. The third option is *The Food Fascists* gets Silver, while *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)* and *SOD-032* get Special Mention.
- Poon: Silver can go to *The Food Fascists* while *From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)* gets Special Mention. I am not fond of *SOD-032*.
- Chang: I enjoyed it.
- Chui: I think 3 is the best option.

Shi: This way all the works we like get awarded.

Fan: Does Chang agree?

Chang: Majority rules.

Shi, Chang: Option 2.

Chui, Poon, Cheung: Option 3.

### **Open Category**

#### **Gold Award**

*The Sea Within*

Wong Wai-nap

#### **Silver Award**

*The Food Fascists*

Yip Man-hay

#### **Special Mention**

*SOD-032*

Cheung Ho-lam

*From Beavis (M) to Beatrice (F) (Oct 2015 Edit)*

Wong Suet-ling Beatrice