

The 16th ifva Youth Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Chan Wing-chiu (CHAN), Kit Hung (HUNG), Adam Wong (WONG),
Heiward Mak (MAK), Chu Fun (CHU)

Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Kattie Fan (FAN)

CHU: Many works are quite meaningful but are technically deficient, or the cinematography is not so beautiful. *My Story of Being A New Immigrant* is one such work. It talks about new immigrants and uses subjective point-of-view shots, but because of its technical deficiency, it is not able to express what it tries to say. Some works may receive technical support or assistance from others, and are able to achieve more.

HUNG: ifva's rules state that half of the entrants must be 18 or under, so some works may get help from people with more experience.

CHU: I guess *My Story of Being A New Immigrant* did not get much assistance, and I feel the directors went about it on their own. Perhaps they did not have formal training, and consider certain techniques very creative. In this film you never see the protagonist's face, but just the hands. This makes it quite unique, although the end result is not very pretty.

HUNG: What works do you think obviously had help from adults?

CHU: *Get to know me. got to know myself* obviously does. You can see from the credits that *White Box* is from a certain school, so the film makers probably received technical assistance or learnt certain impressive effects in class, which allows them to make the work more beautiful. On the other hand, *Sept Chiens Andalou* does not use many effects, but it is a meaningful work that expresses the students' dissatisfaction with school life. It uses a stream of consciousness approach that eschews conventional story-telling. I graduated with a Communications degree myself, and I took a cinema and television course in my first year, and the teacher showed us *Un Chien Andalou*. I didn't understand it then. Now I see these students using a low-tech method to express their ideas, like being trapped in school, and they do so without getting very strong support from their school. *wild kids* is also a very meaningful work, and when I looked at the end titles, I realize it is because the parents are absent that the kids turned out that way. When I watched *wild kids* I laughed a lot, although this effect was not intended by the directors. I laughed

because many of the actors probably helped out as a favor, and their acting skills were not that good, so the effect was funny. Also some of the scenes were humorous, like the one involving the sick dog, which was meaningful. On the whole, **Besides Dreaming** is quite complete and the photography is pretty. I think one of the directors probably lives there and that's why they made this film. Some of the techniques used were very good and comprehensive, like the contrast between the drawing and reality. **China in Expo** is a very good documentary. It is raw and unpolished. I get what it's trying to say. I am not sure whether the film makers intentionally made it look this raw. Unlike a TV documentary, it leaves it to the audience to figure things out. **The Storyteller** is very pretty and the storytelling is good. You have to pay attention when you watch this, or else it would be easy to get lost. **Paper/plane** seems to lack an ending. I was expecting a more shocking conclusion, so I felt something is missing. I like **The Gain** when the protagonist says, "don't force me to accept reality." This film probably did not get much assistance, so the production is just so-so. The voice-over mispronounced the protagonist's name, so I deducted marks for that.

WONG: I come into contact with many young people who make films. From my experience, entrants of this edition do not get a lot of support from others. The most important consideration is whether the most distinctive element in a work is instigated by adults. I don't feel this applies to any of the finalist works.

MAK: I don't feel any of the works have adult participation. Because it was associated with a theatre group, **wild kids** may have adults making adjustments to make sure that the work reflects the theme of "not leaving kids alone", and they might have given their opinions. However, looking at the technical details, it is apparent that they did not get much adult help.

HUNG: However, some of the shots like the one with the policeman and the opening of the wallet feel mature and adult.

WONG: It is hard to judge whether they have adult participation, and we must not let entrants feel that it is wrong to get help from grown-ups. Young people should get help from adults as they grow up, and the question is how they absorb the information. As they learn about film making they will also reference other people's works, so it is hard to say whether a work is influenced by other films or if it received direct adult assistance.

- MAK: In previous years you see many works that are influenced by popular films and television. However there are no such works this year.
- HUNG: Perhaps they had all been eliminated.
- MAK: A lot of times when you see more mature elements in a work, it is because the makers are influenced by media such as film and television. This year, the two works from Shau Kee School of Creativity shows obvious departure from mainstream styles.
- WONG: My essay talked about works from Shau Kee too. Their works are different from the rest. This has been the case for the last couple of years.
- HUNG: ***Sept Chiens Andalou*** has the most video effects, but they are not executed well, so they have a low-fi feel. However the idea is good. When viewing a work I care more about the content and how original it is. Technically I only require that the work communicates well with me. It does not have to look beautiful.
- CHU: Many of its elements are simple but well done, like the scene where they are running up the stairs.
- HUNG: ***Sept Chiens Andalou*** has many classical elements, like the door that could not be opened, but it is done with originality and freshness.
- MAK: I think that its casting and acting is also interesting. It is divided into seven parts, each with a different director and cast. That's the best thing about this work. All the stories revolve around the school, like male and female toilets and gender, all of which are oppressive elements imposed by the school on them. They use those classical elements well, and the shot division is good. It is clear that they did a storyboard and were well prepared. Even though the end result is very raw, they probably did a lot of preparation beforehand.
- CHAN: Among the ten works this is the most joyful. It is clear that the students had a lot of fun making it. This year most of the works are solemn, and the issues they care about are also heavy, and one feels weighted down after watching them. We don't get the trashy works as we did in previous years. The only exception is ***wild kids*** with its use of canned music, which makes it even more precious. Most of the works are overly serious, and this is reflected in the makers' attitudes.

CHU: Perhaps they feel that for a competition like this one, they have to have socially conscious themes. Only **Sept Chiens Andalou** takes the point of view of today's youths, and the work retains a sense of youthful innocence. The other works are too ambitious.

HUNG: You can see some of the film makers trying hard to be adults, which is great. **wild kids** does not have this element. In **Besides Dreaming** the protagonist looks like a secondary school student, but he is already working in an office wearing a suit. It is as if they know that when they grow up they will try to reclaim their lost dreams, which is interesting.

MAK: The script of **wild kids** is typical and predictable, but the treatment is innocent, like feeding the dog medicine. The incidents are taken from everyday life, but are filled with childishness and youthful spirit. Its low-tech approach prevents it from becoming too stereotypical. The directors obviously have a feel for this subject matter, and uses music to enhance their point. This is an above-average work capable of delivering what the directors want to say. While watching **Besides Dreaming** I was close to tears.

WONG: **Besides Dreaming** is a bit sentimental and takes for granted that old things are good and new ones bad. Actually building houses in villages is no simple matter, and adults face many problems in life that are more complicated than that presented in the film. Here their sense of sadness is seen as matter of course. However I agree that among the finalists this is the most touching work.

MAK: I think we find it moving because of events in the past little while.

CHAN: In many of the works we see these young people trying to dialogue with the times, including the film makers behind **Besides Dreaming**, **China in Expo** and **wild kids**, which looks at the world from a child's perspective. Adults would not make these kinds of films. I agree that it takes things for granted, but that is also a reflection of the times, and I really treasure the fact that they are using the camera to record the here and now. **China in Expo** is very courageous and patient and I admire it a lot.

CHU: I admire the film makers' patience.

CHAN: They must have been standing in queue for three days or more, so their efforts should be treasured.

WONG: Will we be discussing the works on by one later?

CHAN: Is that necessary? If there are works that have not been discussed you can bring them up.

HUNG: I think *The Gain*, *Paper/plane* and *Sept Chiens Andalou* are works that have the most distinctive styles. *The Storyteller* also has style, but it is more pretentious. *The Gain* also referenced other works, but is quite enjoyable.

WONG: The least pretentious works are *wild kids* and *China in Expo*. I would whole-heartedly recommend the Gold Award winning work from last year, but this year, I feel many works are flawed. You can see the passion in *China in Expo*, but when I watched it the first time I felt it was very cynical and condescending by telling people that they should line up. At the same time it is very conscious of this attitude, and tries to incorporate other points of view and offers other ways of looking at the issue. As a work by a person under 18, it is very good. Nevertheless the viewpoint is not brand new or very shocking.

CHAN: My opinion is just the opposite. There are two directors in *China in Expo*, one is adult, the other is a youth. When I watched it on the big screen today, I felt they deliberately put the interview with the Mainland Chinese guy in front, in which he says that this is the situation in China now, but you should give it time to Chan Wing-chiuge. This caused me to be more tolerant towards this film. When filming people cutting in queues, they are not mean-spirited about it, but rather take a wider perspective. In terms of editing, it does not just try to dig out the bad stuff about Chinese people. For example, the shots of garbage are not that severe.

CHU: I have seen worse on news programs. Perhaps the film makers already did their best to look for garbage.

CHAN: Maybe they did not have enough footage. However it is still the case that they are documenting the times. *Paper/plane* is beautifully filmed and pleasing to look at, although it is not that touching. It captures a youthful sense of ambivalence with carefully composed shots. Perhaps the director had been well-instructed by his teachers.

WONG: The director is a student of mine. His previous work is also called *Paper/plane*, but this is not a sequel. I think the previous work is better. It is about a boy who dares not

express his feelings, and a girl who cannot communicate with others, and the two characters come together through paper aeroplanes. This theme was better expressed in the previous work, and this current film is more ambiguous. This film maker's grasp of cinematic language and art sense are good, but its technical deficiencies made what he wanted to express less clear.

HUNG: In terms of style *Paper/plane* is the most original. I was especially impressed by the scene in which he sits down, and then you cut to a shot of the exterior. This happened more than once.

CHU: Also the part where he tells other people not to be so loud, when in fact they are very quiet. You see the other people's reaction, which is quite shocking.

CHAN: This film captures your attention with its very first shot. It seems unassuming at first, but becomes more attractive as it goes along, and you don't want to look away. It is quite a modest work; it doesn't talk about any grand themes, but nonetheless is very meaningful. You leave the theatre feeling fulfilled. When I watched *Besides Dreaming* for the second time I still felt moved, and that feeling is hard to describe. The girl does not seem like she is acting; her performance is raw and sincere.

CHU: At first I thought this film was too raw, but gradually I accepted it. It's just like the protagonist who does not know whether he is in a dream or reality.

HUNG: The dialogue is very obvious. It is mawkish yet heart-felt.

CHAN: That is why I like *Besides Dreaming* a lot. It is powerful and worth watching again. That 360 degree shot really touched me. That is the power of cinema. There is a lot that *White Box* wants to say, but the different segments do not hold together too well, and you suddenly feel like you're watching another film. I had a great deal of fun watching *Sept Chiens Andalou*. Many shots are very symbolic. This school has participated in this competition many times. This work is a vast improvement over its previous efforts. While watching the *The Storyteller* again today I felt it was lackluster.

CHU: It is well made, and the characters and locations are good, yet the story and content lost me.

HUNG: All its shots are well thought-out.

- WONG: It is unrelentingly pretentious, which gives the work a certain integrity.
- CHAN: On the big screen the work lacks power, while on the computer screen it is more palatable. The first part of *The Gain* is interesting, but the second half is incomprehensible. *get to know me. got to know myself* is far too long.
- MAK: What bothers me most is its music. It really affects how I read this work, and prevents me from becoming immersed in its world. I know that this work is sponsored by Skyhigh Creative Partners, and its intentions are sincere. But every time when the protagonist finishes speaking he would look down. The director could have edited out this part, but he didn't, which leaves me wondering why. I imagine that there is a lot the director wants to say. I also wonder if what he's saying is real.
- CHAN: I don't think you should read too much into it. It is just a process of self-therapy. It doesn't have very deep meaning.
- MAK: I don't think it is very deep, but as a director I'd like to know why he needs therapy. It is worth considering the intention behind it. I think this work also dialogues with the times. Why do our youths dislike expressing themselves? Why do they choose this means of expression?
- CHU: When watching this work I felt it was too long. I wondered why I had to spend so much time getting to know this person. When he said that he does not dare to speak to other people and has to rely on making this video to communicate with others, I felt this provides a justification for the film. I think he intentionally made the editing fragmented. What his school-mates say is repetitive, and the interviewees do not seem to say what they really feel until the end, when they have to face the camera. If one has to rely on this film to get to know this person, the impression is not very complete.
- WONG: I find it too straight forward. It's a bit like those TV specials on pop singers. I included this work among the finalists because it is a good attempt by a young person using video to express himself. However the work does not have too many levels. At first I was even a bit put off by it because I felt the director is too full of himself—why should I spend all this time to get to know you through this rather obvious work?
- HUNG: On our last meeting, we mentioned that at least we see the author reflected in this work, which is something lacking in many others.

- CHU: The editing is beautiful.
- WONG: His choice of locations shows he has a good artistic sense, but his self presentation lacks direction.
- CHAN: The self that he presents may be fake. The first half deliberately creates a certain image, and there is contradiction between the interviews and his self introduction. The most contradicting work is ***My Story of Being A New Immigrant***, the film is like cross cutting between stories about three different people. I don't know if this reflects the fact that the lack of agreement between the authors and their teachers.
- HUNG: I agree with Chan Wing-chiu that a work should capture you from the first shot. With this film, the beginning part where he recites a poem seems different from him as a person.
- WONG: This is a work worth encouraging, although it is not too successful. It is also an unbalanced work in terms of style and content, and there is a lack of consistency between talking about the individual and the big city. Sometimes it talks about the city as a whole, and other times it talks about his personal experience of growing up, which is strange.
- MAK: His use of a male voice-over and a female protagonist is also strange. I think he must have a reason behind it.
- CHAN: This film is based on a book. Perhaps he is citing text from the book. When making the film, the film maker diverged from the book. Also why is the girl in pigtails? Do all girls from the Mainland have pigtails? Let's choose our top five works now.
- WONG: Actually this is a matter of taste.
- CHAN: I understand. I choose ***Sept Chiens Andalou, wild kids, Besides Dreaming, China in Expo*** and ***Paper/plane***.
- CHU: Mine are the same.
- MAK: Me too, but I exclude ***China in Expo***.
- WONG: I choose six: ***The Gain, The Storyteller, Sept Chiens Andalou, wild kids,***

Besides Dreaming and *Paper/plane*.

HUNG: I choose *The Gain*, *Sept Chiens Andalou*, *Besides Dreaming* and *Paper/plane*.

KWONG: Can we pick the Gold Award winner now? Or eliminate those without votes?

CHAN: *Sept Chiens Andalou*, *Besides Dreaming* and *Paper/plane* got the most votes.

KWONG: Why don't we concentrate on these three? In the past we have had two Gold Award winners, or two Silver Awards but no Gold.

WONG: I don't think that's worth doing this year.

MAK: If we do not give out a Gold Award, the entrants may feel deprived.

HUNG: In my mind, it's a choice between *Sept Chiens Andalou* and *Paper/plane*.

CHU: For me it's between *Sept Chiens Andalou* and *Besides Dreaming*.

WONG: I like *Besides Dreaming*.

MAK: *Besides Dreaming* is a film of the times, while you can see the director's skill in *Paper/plane*. There are many people involved in *Sept Chiens Andalou*, so even though it is good, it is hard to judge. This award should encourage a director's development, so it is worth giving it to *Paper/plane*.

WONG: I think we should talk about the works first, and not talk about the effect of prizes on entrants until the end.

CHU: Among the entries in the Youth Category, *Sept Chiens Andalou* is the one work that is true to its youthful identity. A work like this would not be among the finalists in the Open Category.

CHAN: I agree that we should focus on *Besides Dreaming* and *Paper/plane*. *Sept Chiens Andalou* has more flaws, and besides, in the past there had been works like this. Most jury members were moved by *Besides Dreaming*, and this is important. On the other hand *Paper/plane* shows a mastery of video as a visual medium. It has a uniform style, and it is obvious that the director is in full control of the work.

HUNG: For me, the most touching part of ***Besides Dreaming*** is when the protagonists are talking about planning trees, and that they have somehow given up on their past dreams. I was not moved by the stuff about city planning, and I found the ending melodramatic. Their stiff acting styles also put me off. It does have a touching ending, but that part does not require acting technique, only visuals.

CHAN: It is hard to make a good drama, especially in the Youth Category. ***Besides Dreaming*** is a narrative film that is complete and has vision, plus it is very moving. This is rare for a Youth Category entry.

WONG: Its flaws are greater than ***Paper/plane***, which does not have much of a burden, and does not care about plot development.

MAK: The acting in ***Paper/plane*** is subtle and true to life. Both the lead actor and actress are good, and the director has good control. The visuals and music are both complete, and his technique is mature. We find ***Besides Dreaming*** moving because of the general atmosphere around us. If we talk about the film itself, there is a lot we need to bring up.

WONG: ***Besides Dreaming*** depends on a lot of pretext for its emotional effect. For example, it assumes that working life must be sad, and in the village, the girl is an embodiment of nostalgia.

CHU: This is an artistic choice on the part of the director.

WONG: I think there is something strange about the character design and performance of the girl.

CHAN: Like in past years, our selection comes down to the choice between an emotionally moving film and one that is more artistically accomplished one. Every year we have the same discussion.

HUNG: ***Paper/plane*** is very fine, and the editing is flawless.

MAK: I agree with Adam that it has moments of ambiguity, but I like the open ending of ***Paper/plane***.

WONG: On a micro level, his directing skills are great, but being able to communicate the

main theme is also important. On that score he is a bit lacking.

CHU: To me it's not important if it is open ending. I think the ending is not sufficient, and there is no resolution to the relationship between the male and female protagonists.

WONG: The film does not depict the female character well. There should be parts that focus just on her.

CHAN: Should we zero in on *Paper/plane* and *Besides Dreaming*, and forget about *Sept Chiens Andalou*?

WONG: I had fun watching *Sept Chiens Andalou*, mostly because it is a light-hearted work. But it is far from masterly, and cannot be compared to the classics. Dadaism was revolutionary, while *Sept Chiens Andalouis* only an imitation. It has to rely on mental disorder to explain the irrational story-line. It is a good attempt, but not worthy of a Gold Award.

CHAN: To sum up our discussion so far: *Besides Dreaming* is more complete, while *Paper/plane* is visually stronger.

WONG: Actually *Besides Dreaming* has many flaws too.

MAK: I think *Besides Dreaming* says too much and is too obvious, perhaps because the director is too emotionally attached to the subject. Do they have to have the girl say those lines at the end? It was emotionally moving enough prior to that point.

WONG: That 360 degree shot was just trying too hard.

CHAN: I think the director miscalculated. The dialogue is effective, but the 360 degree shot distances people. Also the shot where they drop the plant is too deliberate. But you tend to forgive it.

WONG: If we are to consider being encouraging, you can see that the director of *Besides Dreaming* has put a lot of effort into learning different techniques. Given time, he would become more mature. The shot in which the picture is dropped is very good.

CHAN: It hints at the fact that the protagonist has grown up.

- MAK: From a production point of view, this work is hard to Heiward Make.
- CHU: The choice of locations is good, like the one with the big tree. All the scenes are carefully thought out.
- CHAN: That's right. All the shots of ***Besides Dreaming*** are well designed, and the contrast between the picture and reality is good.
- HUNG: The director must have intense feelings about this topic. ***Besides Dreaming*** is a bit repetitive, which shows a lack of confidence on the director's part, but nonetheless he is sincere.
- CHAN: Much of the technique in ***Besides Dreaming*** is commonplace, but put to good use. ***Paper/plane*** attempts new things, but doesn't quite get there. ***Besides Dreaming*** is more down-to-earth, while ***Paper/plane*** is more esoteric.
- MAK: Another reason I like ***Paper/plane*** is that it has a sense of doomed youth, a youthful ennui.
- HUNG: Everything in ***Besides Dreaming*** is clear and obvious, while ***Paper/plane*** makes me think about it for days afterwards. I would be happy if both works win something.
- CHAN: Should they both get the Gold Award? What happens to the prize money?
- KWONG: They would split the \$50,000, and part of the prize could go towards buying another camera, or just give the camera to one of them.
- WONG: My impression is that ***Besides Dreaming*** is the more superior work, but because I had seen the previous version of ***Paper/plane***, I may be biased.
- CHAN: ***Besides Dreaming*** is more emotionally moving.
- CHU: Viewers may find ***Besides Dreaming*** easier to understand, while ***Paper/plane*** requires that they think about it after they leave the theatre.
- MAK: I feel ***Besides Dreaming*** is a bit old fashioned but touching, and I would be happy if ***Paper/plane*** won a prize, be it Gold or Silver Award. The two are very different works, and you have to judge them by different standards. Both are flawed; while one

is easier to digest, the other has higher artistic merits. The qualities of artistry and originality are both important for ifva, so I suggest giving two Gold Awards, since the two directors are worth encouraging. Of the ten finalists, I don't think any of them automatically deserve the Gold Award, and if the award is supposed to offer encouragement, then both directors are worth encouraging.

CHAN: Then let's give them both the Gold Award.

HUNG: Because this is the ifva, I think *Paper/plane* deserves the Gold Award, since *Besides Dreaming* is ore accessible.

WONG: Being accessible or not should not be the most important consideration for this competition.

CHU: But it is important that a work is able to communicate with the audience.

CHAN: The most important thing is that these works are up to par. Does giving them both Gold Awards fit in with the sprit of ifva?

MAK: Being accessible and having good taste are both good qualities.

WONG: ifva is not a type of style.

CHAN: *Paper/plane* uses film language to tell a story, which should be looked upon with favor at ifva, for this kind of works tends to be overlooked on other occasions.

WONG: But you can also say that, ifva ought to encourage expressing how you truly feel, and works that appeal to both the high and the low.

HUNG: However, *Paper/plane* would probably not get an award at other competitions.

WONG: That's hard to say. I would not make such a political assumption until the very last step.

CHAN: The most important thing is that there is no very outstanding work this year.

WONG: I don't object to two Gold Awards.

(Chan Wing-chiu, Heiward Mak and Chu Fun also agree.)

WONG: Kit, do you agree with Gold Awards?

HUNG: I like *Paper/plane*, but I understand your points of view.

KWONG: I suggest that you give up to three special mentions, since we want to offer more encouragement to the entrants of this category. But unless you insist, we don't suggest giving more than three special mentions.

CHAN: *Sept Chiens Andalou* should definitely be one of them.

KWONG: You also mentioned *The Storyteller*, *The Gain* and *China in Expo*.

MAK: I recommend *The Storyteller*. It is beautifully filmed, consistent and unrepentant.

WONG: Not everyone can be pretentious, and it does it with style. I also want to give special mention to *wild kids*.

CHAN: I suggest *China in Expo* and *wild kids*.

CHU: I vote for *wild kids* and *The Storyteller*.

MAK: Me too.

WONG: Me too.

KWONG: *wild kids* received the most votes.

HUNG: I vote for *The Gain* and *China in Expo*. I think *wild kids* has adult participation, and it lacks truly youthful elements. I think the part with the dog is designed to look like it was done by a youth. There is a shot that uses a dog's point of view, which is too precise to have been done by a youth.

WONG: The script of *wild kids* is very good.

CHAN: We should first eliminate those that have no Chan Wing-chiu.

WONG: I also like **The Gain**, but if I were to rank it, it would come in 4th.

CHU: I also like **The Gain**, but compared with the other two, I prefer the others.

HUNG: I rank **The Gain** the first, but that does not matter.

WONG: Then let us eliminate **The Gain**. I would rank **China in Expo** even further back.

HUNG: I like its passion.

MAK: There is no argument expressed in **China in Expo**; it just has one point from beginning to end. There is no development. Even though they edited in an interview about how Mainlanders view this issue, that is just one point of view. There is no standpoint, they just documented certain things.

HUNG: I don't think works like **The Storyteller** is worth encouraging.

CHU: As a Youth Category work, it is quite an achievement. It is beautifully filmed.

HUNG: But there is no content.

WONG: He has, but he does not want to tell you what it is.

HUNG: The visuals do express the distance between two people, as well as the intimacy between two girls.

CHAN: It is a matter of taste. It's hard to discuss.

HUNG: Then I switch my vote to **wild kids** and give up on **China in Expo**.

CHAN: Then we can eliminate **China in Expo**.

KWONG: So **Besides Dreaming** and **Paper/plane** get the Gold Award, **wild kids**, **The Storyteller** and **Sept Chiens Andalou** get special mentions.

Youth Category

Gold Award

Besides Dreaming

WONG Man-ki, LEUNG Yu-fung, YIP Ka-yan, LIU Kwok-ching, YU Chui-sang

Gold Award

Paper/plane

LEUNG Yuk-hang, CHIN Matthew Frederick, LEE Ho-yan

Silver Award

Withhold

Special Mention

The Storyteller

CHOI Nga-man, SO Chung-hay

Special Mention

wild kids

CHAN Sung-hei, CHAN Tik-man, CHAN Ka-yan, CHUN Fung-ying

Special Mention

Sept Chiens Andalou

WONG Chui-yee, TSOI Wing-fung, TAM Miu-yin, Milky, LAM Man-chun, TSANG Ho-yeung, LO Chun-yin