

## The 12<sup>th</sup> ifva Open Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Patrick Tam (TAM), Wong Chun-chun (WONG), Daniel Yu (YU),  
Makin Fung (FUNG), Ellen Pau (PAU)  
Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Chelsea Man (MAN)

KWONG: First of all, I would like to thank all of you for joining the 12<sup>th</sup> ifva Open Category Jury's Meeting. The aim of today's meeting is to select works for this year's awards. We have almost 400 works received this year and there are totally 12 finalists after rounds of jury meetings. For this year's competition, we suggest to have a Gold Award with cash prize of HK\$50,000 and a Sony HDV camcorder, a Silver Award with cash prize of HK\$30,000, and a Special Mentions Award with a certificate as reinforcement. Of course, you can have your own choice in the jury panel. If there are no Gold Award, two Gold Awards, two Silver Awards, so on and so forth, the cash prize will be given pro-rata. The objective of the ifva competition is to encourage media creativity by using media as a means of expression. You are suggested to judge the works by criteria such as contents, creativity and use of techniques. Today we will first go through each of the 12 shortlisted works one by one. Next, we will nominate and then vote for the works for the awards after some discussion. Please feel free to start the meeting if there is no question.

YU: What does the marks mean on the marking sheet?

KWONG: This is to make the evaluation easier and let you roughly have an idea how good or bad the works are. According to our experience in the last few years, the marks not necessarily mean anything. Even some works scored high marks, they are not the best works in everybody's mind.

### Anna

TAM: I think it is Godardian, but not really in depth. It is quite an easy production, without difficulties. It is quite a dull work.

FUNG: I agree.

YU: I like this work very much. It is not difficult to produce, but with very nice shots.

WONG: I think it's ok.

TAM: I think this is not a creative work. Such idea has been worked on by lots of people already and the idea is not especially exciting or original.

FUNG: I think not many people would do this.

WONG: Also this is a very economic way of work – no actor needed.

TAM: So clever!

(Everybody laughs.)

YU: I think it has a kind of mood capturing Hong Kong. This is good.

TAM: But this is not difficult to do. The subject matter itself is interesting. The story goes with transition from blindness to imaginative dreams, and from seeing Hong Kong with open eyes to an alienated feeling of Hong Kong, but the feeling does is

not conveyed in illustration, but is more than a statement or monologue. This work is rather shallow.

### **Tomato School**

- TAM: Can I have some background information about the director?
- KWONG: As I know, he studied Architecture in London, UK. He intends to capture the urban space with moving images. If I get it right, there is really the Tomato School in the UK and he is shooting promotional trailer for them.
- YU: I think this work demonstrates very good skills. Just that maybe I am too remote and can't understand it. Also I have difficulties in comparing this with other works.
- WONG: Very good skills.
- FUNG: He belongs to the technical school. I select his work because it conveys skills and content – lots of work in the technical school actually do not have contents. In the first round, I have seen lots of work like that, but this one is comparatively more complete with skills. Therefore it is here.
- TAM: What do you mean by technical school?
- FUNG: He is merely playing around with technology, with composition, etc. He merges a lot of layers in a city. He does make a very pleasant work, not in a blunt way and not merely for the sake of technology. However, its content is not strong enough. As there's no other work in such style available, I have selected this work then.
- TAM: I personally quite like this work. It's striking. I think having those effects is not a easy thing, but he set the pace very accurately. My only complaint is that it is too short, and I am not contented. This work is about modern living in which people are being controlled and monitored. It does create such feelings but is under-developed. I've no idea whether this can be viewed as a complete work. If this is just a fragment, I'd think this is brilliant.
- KWONG: So you mean this work should be lengthened? Which part should be lengthened then?
- TAM: I don't know. For example, there should be a process of development in an avant garde piece of work. It would be a pity if a piece of work is too short and ends abruptly and ambiguously. He is not a film student but studying architecture, that's why he may not be aware of that. So he has the feelings but doesn't know how to fully develop and explore his ideas through sound and images. What a shame. However, I give 8 marks for this work, which is my second most favourite work here.
- WONG: I give 8 marks for this work too.

### **Moment**

- TAM: An average work.
- WONG: I've also marked it as average.
- YU: Nothing special.
- TAM: I think this work is very similar to "*Within a Letter of Love*", ie, like scratching an

itch across the boots and very shallow but processed in a clean and neat way. ***Within a Letter of Love*** is a work created by my undergraduate student but I think it is not good enough. Indeed both works are very hackneyed and the acting are not natural enough too.

### **Within a Letter of Love**

TAM: I am not convinced by the kind of adolescent love feelings. It's very stereotyped.

WONG: This is really boring.

### **Lovers' Lover**

TAM: I like this work best. I didn't take part in it, but I don't want to talk too much about it. She is my student and I am her advisor. I find this work very mature, natural, with very good acting and casting. Also I think she manages to capture that kind of feelings and does the whole work at ease. But I think you'd better exclude my opinion.

WONG: I like it. It's very fluent. The story is pleasant, technically or dramatically. I find this work a bit like "Twelve Night" by Aubrey Lam. Also, the cast is very good and the casting really contributes to the good work.

TAM: I think she is capable of mastering film language. For example, she is not constrained by the narrow space and can make good use of it. This is quite difficult indeed.

YU: I think it's ok. The shots in the opening scene is really powerful and striking...

TAM: Daring!

WONG: But the middle part is dragged.

YU: Yes, it's ok overall, of very high standard. But it's dragged in the middle. The script should be more concise.

WONG: I think the work can be a bit shortened. I think the film would best end at the taxi scene when the lovers' lover is discovered.

YU: Indeed only the middle part is too long. Overall, the story and the script are ok, but the treatment is not strong enough.

TAM: 30 minutes is very long indeed, but she manages to set the pace and the flow of the whole work. Other works are very conscious how to show off in front of the lens pretentiously whereas this work is very natural and is capable of capturing feelings of people nowadays and their views on love matters. I can't make this as I don't have such sense.

YU: I feel the work is not good-looking enough. The shots are rather simple, rather realistic and ordinary. I think now the set is a limitation and I would suggest to have a better setting for it.

TAM: Indeed there is very good casting and acting – I didn't mean the actors or actress, but the sense of direction of the director. As an artist, I think she has got a balance among everything.

### **About Romance or Something Else**

TAM: At first glance I expect something. Except the 13 minutes of documentary, I can't figure out the reason for the long take. At the beginning, there was a mirror image about taking part in love. I didn't see any transition in that character and I was not convinced. I think this work is just a gimmick but nothing else.

YU: The long take is used as a gimmick, but the whole work has only one gimmick.

TAM: Comparing to other works, the actors are somehow natural.

YU: The leading actor is ok.

TAM: Yes, he's pleasant.

FUNG: Let me make a remark here. Ellen and me selected this work because of the shot after that long shot. The character is listening to walkman, somehow like an illusion, somehow realistic. We think that the ending is interesting, but the composition before that, as Patrick says, is very loose.

YU: The long take should be used only if it's necessary. The part in the toilet does not mean anything and can be cut with dissolve lens. The director should adjust the story and razor the part which has no meaning.

TAM: That means the part with no necessity.

WONG: Is he a student?

FUNG: He is a student at the Baptist University.

KWONG: Also in the post-screening discussion, he mentioned that the exploded part at the end is just a technical mistake – lot of people thought that he made it deliberately.

YU: Instead, that is the most interesting part, but that is a wrong shot, a mistaken shot. He shouldn't send us the NG-take and uses the subtitle to hide away his mistake. I don't like this. Never mind. Anyway, we all agree that the work is more a gimmick than anything else.

WONG: I would like to emphasize again that this work should be shortlisted. The objective of the ifva competition is to encourage non-professionals to try to deal with the problems faced – they have no limitation, but professionals do. Although that long take is not a good one and it seems everyone can make it, we promote creativity and not anyone would have the courage to make a film for a competition. Therefore, it should be shortlisted.

FUNG: So this should be encouraged.

### **Upstairs**

WONG: (To Yu and Fung) It's your favourite.

TAM: I think the whole film is bad and I give only 4 marks for it. I think it's about mental illness, but the whole thing is hackneyed. Technically it's good, very neatly and carefully done. He seems to have spent a long time writing up the story, but the very pretentious acting fails to engage me in the kind of pain and suffering. Very bad acting, especially for the male characters.

FUNG: The most interesting thing about this work is that the director employs the multi-perspectives approach popularized in Hollywood after "The Butterfly Effect". Does the female role really exist? Details are conscientiously planned and you

can't find a seam in it. To certain extent, it is quite "Hollywood". Also in the middle there is a female mental patient in the street. I think this is all calculated. The artist attempts to add some rises and falls and side plots to balance the story. I most appreciate its point of view. This a student work, and the film is mostly shot at night instead of daytime.

TAM: Indeed the artist has paid a lot of effects in the technical aspects. Issues such as dreams and fantasy of mental patients can be very emotionally touching. But I think this work lacks the intensity of emotional vibration and therefore fails to convince me by the acting, etc. The female character is alright, but the male character who often hides away, doing monologues plus very painful facial expressions is poorly superficial and pretentious. I really can't stand this kind of presentation. Maybe the director indeed cannot direct him in acting too.

FUNG: I agree indeed. I wonder why there is a kind of Hiroyuki Sanada-style acting and actors. Well, I have never thought about mental illness when I watch this film.

TAM: One of the shots is nice and creates some very little feelings, with the man on the bed and the mother being sort of very understanding and putting a toilet roll on the bed. But other shots such as stripping off in the street, in theory should be very powerful, but mean nothing to me. I can't get into it.

YU: I'm fine. I think it's really hard to join them if you don't agree with the actors.

TAM: This is not a problem of agreeing or not. It is more than a matter of the actors, but the whole thing – what are the suffering and the pain indeed in the story? How to illustrate such things? I think it is not detailed and in depth enough. I think the kind of pain of everybody in the film is over-exaggerated. Also I think the point of views mentioned by Makin is not very accurate and nothing special at all.

YU: I don't know much about mental illness. This work makes me think that such problem is really serious in our society. From a commercial point of view, the ambiguity you mentioned would be quite attractive. The use of lens is not bad too. Of course, the actors are incapable of delivering the play, but after all, they are non-professional actors.

FUNG: The artist also creates a sense of suspense.

TAM: The director shows his sincerity, but his ambition doesn't match his ability. I think his work is too conscious and pretentious. I want to be thrown into the film but I can't.

FUNG: It's overdone.

WONG: I also find it pretentious.

YU: Yes, it's overdone.

TAM: For me, *Within a Letter of Love* and *Moment* are of the same level overall. Techniques are not the most important, but sincerity, feeling and emotion.

### Face/ lift

Wong: This is quite a creative work – not to mention the execution, she can't execute it. But I like this more than other works such as *Within a Letter of Love*. This work arouses my curiosity and makes me think about what it is about.

Tam: She is my student too, but I have never seen this work before ifva. I can't get

into its state. I have no idea what's going on. I think she just can't take control of it.

### **Toilet Paper**

- YU: Very playful, but that's it.
- FUNG: The second part is fun, but at the beginning the colourful scene inside the hosue is not very interesting – it's almost disgusting and lacks the comic feelings that it should have.
- YU: The visual representation of the toilet is too realistic.
- Tam: But I like its energy, that is, the artist's impetuoussness and confidence. The problem is that it's dragged too long.
- FUNG: This is a work by a student at the Polytechnic University for last year's Fresh Wave Short Film Competition. There was length limit of the film in the competition and this work just fulfilled the criteria.

### **Little Girl Lost**

- WONG: Not bad.
- TAM: It's a cliché.
- WONG: Very pretentious, and all the relations are not going smooth.
- KWONG: Ellen found this work touching previously.
- YU & TAM: I don't have such feeling.
- WONG: Maybe it touched her in some personal aspects.

### **The Easter Egg**

- WONG: It's ok.
- FUNG: I select this work because it's interesting.
- TAM: But it's boring to mention the salty duck egg (a Cantonese slang for someone who is dead) all the time. The kids are not natural in acting and look like RTHK drama.
- YU: The character of mother is not doing well. Also there is a very grand shot of the tree, which doesn't match with other shots at all. This shows the poor coordination between the camera-person and the director.
- FUNG: That's a careless mistake, but it's an interesting work as there are all outdoor scenes of kids and streets shot on location.
- TAM: But the kids are not doing well, not very special too.
- FUNG: I can't understand why there is the character of mother at the end.

### **TAGSPOTTING**

TAM: An average work, with nothing special. There is no information in it and it's not in depth enough.

YU: There are not much techniques involved, just that the subject matter is extraordinary.

WONG: You can see this kind of work in television.

FUNG: The difference is that the way they are not doing this kind of subject matter. Television drama would be better analyzed – I don't know whether it's good or bad – but there's no such analysis in this work. It just presents a story.

TAM: It attempts to present different perspectives on the same issues but not in depth at all.

KWONG: Now you can nominate a few works for the Awards: 1 Gold Award, 1 Silver Award and 1 Special Mentions Award, as we suggest. So please nominate 3 works.

TAM: **Lovers' Lover** and **Tomato School**, and if possible, **About Romance or Something Elseb** as well as **Toilet Paper**.

FUNG: You can nominate more than one work for each award.

TAM: Can I select only two in total?

KWONG: Yes, you can.

TAM: So I don't have the third one.

YU: **Anna**, **Upstairs** and **Lovers' Lover**.

TAM: So I'll have **Anna** as the third one.

FUNG: **Upstairs** and **Lovers' Lover** – I've not decided on the third one, either **Anna** or **Tomato School**.

WONG: Not in particular order: **Tomato School**, **Lovers' Lover** and **Toilet Paper**.

PAU: **Little Girl Lost** is of not the top three and **Anna** is very bad in the audio part. So I'll have **Tomato School**, **Upstairs** and **Toilet Paper**.

KWONG: **Moment**, "Romance or Something Else", **Within a Letter of Love**, **The Easter Egg**, "Face/lift" and **Little Girl Lost** have no vote. So please nominate one of the following 5 works for the Gold Award: **Anna**, **Tomato School**, **Lovers' Lover**, **Upstairs** and **Toilet Paper**. Then we'll discuss and vote again.

TAM: **Lovers' Lover**.

YU: **Upstairs**.

FUNG: **Upstairs**.

KWONG: Alright, there're two works nominated for the Gold Award, **Lovers' Lover** and **Upstairs**. Do you want to lobby each other?

PAU: Let's vote straight away.

YU: I think **Upstairs** is very interesting as a whole. The artist manages to keep a boring story in control and makes it very engaging. I am impressed by the last

shot in which the female character comes out and you can't really hear things clearly. From this I think the director is capable of making commercial movie and I really support this kind of directors. There is no big difference between this work and **Lovers' Lover**, maybe only 1 or 2 marks indeed. I'd like to promote film-making to a wider range of people and I do hope that some other people can be as successful as Pang's Brothers. This is what I think.

FUNG: I agree that the work itself is boring and clichéd, but the artist works very hard in attempt to obtain a balance among many things in order not to fall in the kind of the form of RTHK-like production. Indeed the work is not clichéd, and is better than the RTHK production. I think this is its newness.

YU: I think he is accomplished in photography, with a tremendous momentum. He is able to capture the mood of darkness, although there are some defects.

TAM: I think it's incomplete and very superficial in dealing with mental illness. Unlike **Lovers' Lover** which is expressive and genuine by capturing the feelings, the actors here are pretentious and self-conscious.

WONG: I agree that **Upstairs** is pretentious. I can see that the director works very hard and thinks about all the things carefully, but does he execute the things well? I won't take his accomplishment as for the Gold Award.

TAM: His work is awkward and I don't feel the kind of creativity or freedom in it. The mise-en-scene is not very impressive for me. He can create the mood in many ways. However, although **Lovers' Lover** is set in a single room, the artist is not constrained by that. She has mastered film language and works things out freely – this is good. Also the director takes up the key role and make the overall work done. Casting and acting are all very natural.

PAU: But is it something new?

TAM: I think it's new as she captures the adolescent love life. In term of newness, I will take **Tomato School**, but I think it is not well-developed. Maybe it's because he is an architecture student, or he doesn't want to make a narrative work. But I find his visual sense, use of space and style of expression very interesting. What a shame that it's too short and under-developed and therefore it's not the first. But I think he would be the second.

PAU: For me, it is more less the same whether we have the Gold Award either for **Lovers' Lover** or **Upstairs**, because both of them are not very outstanding. What are we commending for?

WONG: Indeed I want to ask what ifva is commending for? The Gold Award stands for ifva's praises for something which would be the core and our starting point. If we are promoting creativity but not technique and execution, for example, **Lovers' Lover** and **Tomato School** should not be shortlisted, and in this case maybe **About Romance or Something Elseb** would be the best. Again, if we're selecting directors for commercial movies, we'll have something else.

TAM: Yes, what's ifva's focus?

KWONG: As mentioned at the beginning, we promote creativity and the essence of independent production. Of course, content, skills and forms are all important. Indeed every year the jury panel would adjust their emphasis according to the combination of works then. For example, one year in the Asian Force category, the jury panel opt for directors with great potentials and who tends to continue creating works.

YU: Indeed we all think that **Lovers' Lover** is very good.

PAU: Well, I think we need not to have the Gold Award this year as the works are not very outstanding at all. I think we can have the first and the second runners-up. We really haven't got a very outstanding work for the Gold Award.

TAM: Who's got the Gold Award in the last few years?

KWONG: This year is not the same as last few years, as we have different pools of works.

YU: Yes, I also think that we can't compare this year with last few years.

TAM: Is there any good work among the unselected ones?

PAU: I think by average this year's works are quite weak.

FUNG: This year's work is weak in creativity. Also the works can be divided into 2 categories: technically accomplished or not. The level of creativity is more less the same.

YU: This is my first time to be a jury. I think the standard is ok, because they are not professionals anyway.

PAU: Saying that **Lovers' Lover** is made by a young person would get extra marks. But if the work introduces a new perspective introduced instead of the mainstream one, there would be bonus points.

WONG: I think **Lovers' Lover** is in the mainstream.

TAM: It's mainstream, but not submitting to it. The way it deals with love is not mainstream.

YU: She is brave enough and capable enough, just like the kind of **Before Sunset Before Sunrise**.

TAM: Being at ease is the best thing of the film. It's energetic and not awkward. This is rare too see.

YU: I don't think we should have no Gold Award.

TAM: I think we should have the Gold Award.

WONG: No comment.

FUNG: No comment too. To be or not to be, that's the question.

PAU: Just that I think this year's standard should be reflected.

TAM: Be more positive, and think about giving more encouragement. From the perspective of creativity, **Lovers' Lover** is good enough. Criticism is an easy thing, but producing the work is rather difficult. She manages to make the work at ease, without resources and working in such a space. Comparatively, this work is not pretentious and complete. One can see her ability to master all the key things such as casting. As a filmmaker, we can see her potential. I hope she would be encouraged and continue her development in another work.

KWONG: Let's vote now: **Lovers' Lover** or **Upstairs**.

(Voting: **Lovers' Lover** Vs. **Upstairs**: 4:1)

Kwong: Alright. Here comes the result: the Gold Award goes to **Lovers' Lover**, and Silver

Award to **Upstairs**?

TAM: I think it should go to **Tomato School**.

PAU: I agree.

KWONG: Other than **Tomato School**, any other nomination for the Silver Award?

YU: **Upstairs**.

KWONG: So are we having 2 Silver Awards or selecting 1 out of two? Let's vote!

WONG: Is it possible if I don't vote?

PAU: Indeed the 2 works are of different genres and therefore difficult to be compared.

WONG: **Tomato School** is really different.

TAM: If you abstain, we'll have 2 Silver Awards then.

FUNG: I propose for 2 Silver Awards.

YU: Ok for me.

WONG: Let's have 2 Silver Awards.

PAU: Ok for me.

TAM: Frankly speaking, **Tomato School** is really too short.

KWONG: Alright. Let's nominate for the Special Mentions Award.

YU: **Anna** .

WONG: **Toilet Paper**.

FUNG: Both.

YU: Both for me too.

PAU: Both are ok.

TAM: Are we having too many works then?

WONG: Let's vote.

PAU: I think indeed **Tomato School** is complete. It's about 24 hours, day and night. For the artist, it's complete.

WONG: But we find this not enough.

TAM: What a pity.

PAU: I think we can have 2 Special Mentions Awards indeed.

FUNG: I agree to have **Anna** which has more the essence of independent production than **Toilet Paper**. **Toilet Paper** is not fulfilling such criteria.

TAM: I also opt for **Anna** .

YU: I opt for only 1 Special Mentions Award. ***Toilet Paper*** is not creative enough.

FUNG: It's like the commercials of KMB (Kowloon Motor Bus).

KWONG: Any general comments for this year's entries?

TAM: They can be more creative.

YU: They can be more conscientious and careful. Do not shoot scenes that you have seen already. It's ok to be influenced by others, but not to copy.

TAM: I hope to see a feature film using the form of presentation like ***Tomato School***.

PAU: Only Peter Greenaway can make it then.

Tam: What a shame that ***Tomato School*** is not well developed.

### **Open Category**

#### **Gold Award**

*Lovers' Lover*

MAK Hei-yan

#### **Silver Award**

*Tomato School*

Benjamin LAM Ho-yin

#### **Silver Award**

*Upstairs*

CHOW Kwun-wai

#### **Special Mentions**

*Anna*

Philip HO Pak-hung