



Austin Asian American
Film Festival

Press Release



Taiwanese American artist I-Ping Chiang was inspired by the Southern Taiwanese city of Kaohsiung's "Love River" or Ai He (愛河), a symbol of great cultural and economic significance in Taiwan.

Austin Asian American Film Festival Announces "Prismatic Taiwan" A Queer Film Series

Co-presented by Taiwan Academy Houston, OFTaiwan, and Taiwanese American Citizens League; Sponsored by the Taiwan Ministry of Culture

AUSTIN, TX – The Austin Asian American Film Festival (AAAFF) is thrilled to co-present a virtual, six-film series celebrating the past and present of queer Taiwanese cinema. The viewing period for all films—including exclusive filmmaker Q&As—will be September 4-13, 2020. Access to the films will be available on the festival's newly re-designed website, aaafilmfest.org.

The legalization of same-sex marriage in Taiwan (which took effect in May 2019) inspired the AAAFF team to examine the evolution of LGBTQ subjects throughout the country's cinematic history. The resulting lineup of films (many of which were never released or remain elusive in the United States) spans 1970 to 2016, and includes such key filmmaking figures in Taiwanese cinema as Tsai Ming-liang, Mickey Chen, and Zero Chou.

The series slate serves as a documentation of history as it unfolds, containing contemporaneous portrayals of queer subcultures across various eras—from the gay club scene in the early 1980s (Yu Kan-ping's *OUTCASTS*) to the online culture of the early 21st century (Zero Chou's *SPIDER LILIES*). Taken as a whole, these films give viewers a firsthand look at the decades-long fight for acceptance waged by Taiwanese people across the LGBTQ spectrum—as subtextual portrayals of hidden desire (as in Mou Tun-fei's *THE END OF THE TRACK*) give way to direct confrontations with society (Mickey Chen and Mia Chen's *NOT SIMPLY A WEDDING BANQUET*) and family (Huang Hui-chen's *SMALL TALK*).



THE RIVER, dir. Tsai Ming-liang

The series will also include a live, virtual roundtable discussion event with Asian Cinevision and director Zero Chou on September 5th. Entitled “Creating Transnational Queer Asian Spaces,” this event will explore the meaning and importance of transnational organizing group, as well as what it means to organize online, and what practices have and have not worked. Panelists include leaders from LGBTQ activism groups such as Taiwan Equality Campaign (Taiwan), Queer Asian Social Club (USA), and more.

“We’ve had to embrace the new in 2020,” says AAAFF Executive Director Hanna Huang. “Along with Prismatic Taiwan and other programs having to adjust to the new normal of online, our new look and logo also exemplifies our vision of uplifting Asian and Asian America cinema and the complex intersections between navigating these identities in the three overlapping 16:9 screens.”

“Prismatic Taiwan” passes (access to all six films from September 4-13) may be purchased at a special, discounted rate of \$12.99 during AAAFF’s presales week, August 28-September 3. During the series watch period, series passes will be available for purchase for \$14.99, and individual film tickets for \$3.99 each. More information will be posted soon at aaafilmfest.org.



SPIDER LILIES, dir. Zero Chou

Series Lineup

The End of the Track 跑道終點

Director: Mou Tun-fei 牟敦芾

Featuring: David Mayer 陳大偉, Donald Chua 蔡篤元

Drama, 1970, 91 minutes, Mandarin with Chinese and English subtitles

The long-lost second feature by Mou Tun-fei—later notorious for gory exploitation fare like *Lost Souls* and *Men Behind the Sun*—is a sensitive story of inner turmoil and social portraiture. Hsiao-tung and Yung-sheng are adolescent boys whose unusually close friendship comes to a sudden end with

Yung-sheng's accidental death. Hsiao-tung assuages his guilt by becoming a surrogate son to Yung-sheng's grieving, economically-deprived parents, but is eventually forced to confront the nature of his relationship with his deceased friend. Unreleased in its day and unseen for decades, *The End of the Track* can now take its rightful place as an early landmark of Taiwanese queer and independent cinemas.

Outcasts (a.k.a. The Outsiders) 孽子

Director: Yu Kan-ping 虞戡平

Featuring: Sun Yueh 孫越, Su Ming-ming 蘇明明, Shao Hsin 邵昕, Li Tai-ling 李黛玲

Drama/Romance, 1986, 104 minutes, Mandarin with English subtitles

Expelled from his home and school after being caught in the act with another man, Ah-ching is rescued from homelessness by a middle-aged photographer and his eccentric landlady. The pair induct Ah-ching into an alternative family of similarly spurned youth who work towards their shared dream of opening a nightclub. Based on a controversial novel by Pai Hsien-yung, one of the key figures of postwar Chinese-language literature, *Outcasts* became Taiwan's first commercially-released film with an explicit queer theme, offering many viewers their first glimpse of a vibrant subculture previously excluded from cinema screens.

The River 河流

Director: Tsai Ming-liang 蔡明亮

Featuring: Miao Tien 苗天, Lee Kang-sheng 李康生, Lu Yi-ching 陸弈靜, Ann Hui 許鞍華

Drama, 1997, 116 minutes, Mandarin with English subtitles

Tsai Ming-liang's follow-up to his breakthrough *Vive l'amour* (1995) develops his monumental long-take aesthetic while bringing it to bear on bolder, more transgressive material. A mother, father, and their son Hsiao-kang (played by Tsai's regular muse Lee Kang-sheng) lead emotionally-distant lives in a leaky Taipei apartment; the mother (Lu Yi-ching) has a desultory affair with a porn-video salesman, while the father (screen legend Miao Tien, of *Dragon Inn* and *A Touch of Zen*) cruises gay bathhouses for anonymous flings. Hsiao-kang's mysterious neck ailment brings the family together, but with a shocking and calamitous outcome for father and son.

Not Simply a Wedding Banquet 不只是喜宴

Directors: Mickey Chen 陳俊志, Mia Chen 陳明秀

Documentary, 1997, 50 minutes, Mandarin with English subtitles

In 1996, the well-known writer, sexologist, and gay activist Hsu Yosheng married his American partner Gary Harriman at a public ceremony in Taipei. Though same-sex marriage would not gain legal recognition in Taiwan until 2019, Yosheng and Gary's nuptials attracted a media frenzy and scores of VIP attendees. For their seminal documentary, Mickey Chen and Mia Chen not only filmed this trailblazing event, but also profiled queer Taiwanese from across the spectra of class and gender, exploring their relationships with partners and families while depicting an increasingly outspoken community's struggle for equality.

Spider Lilies 刺青

Director: Zero Chou 周美玲

Featuring: Rainie Yang 楊丞琳, Isabella Leong 梁洛施, Shen Jian-hung 沈建宏, Kris Shie 謝秉翰

Drama/Romance, 2007, 97 minutes, Mandarin with Chinese and English subtitles

Jade works as a webcam girl to support herself and her ailing grandmother, flirting with the anonymous men on the other side of the feed—including the lovestruck police officer David, assigned to monitor her activities. Meanwhile, a visit to a tattoo parlor brings Jade face-to-face with its proprietor: her childhood crush Takeko, who lives cut off from virtually all human contact except with her clients and her near-catatonic brother. Takeko resists her mutual attraction for Jade, but the encounter has already shaken her carefully-ordered existence beyond repair. Pioneering director Zero Chou's stylish psychodrama—winner of the Teddy Award at the Berlin International Film Festival—is as elusive and compelling as the desires within.

Small Talk 日常對話

Director: Huang Hui-chen 黃惠偵

Documentary, 2016, 88 minutes, Taiwanese and Mandarin with Chinese and English subtitles

Huang Hui-chen lives quietly with her mother A-nu, a Taoist priestess in rural Taiwan. When not documenting their everyday activities, Huang interviews A-nu about her troubled past—as a lesbian pressured into an arranged marriage with an abusive husband—and the estrangement between mother and daughter that persists even after decades under the same roof. Further interviews with A-nu's

family members and former partners produce a frank and complex portrait that reflects the prejudices and mores of a society at large, while crucially keeping sight of the intimate and the interpersonal. Nearly twenty years in the making and executive-produced by Hou Hsiao-hsien, *Small Talk* is perhaps the most widely-acclaimed of all Taiwanese documentaries, and was the first such film selected as Taiwan's submission to the Academy Awards.

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ABOUT AAAFF

The mission of the Austin Asian American Film Festival (AAAFF) is to tell Asian and Asian American stories via media arts and help Asian Americans explore opportunities in cinema.

AAAFF is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department. More information can be found at www.aaafilmfest.org.