



YOUNG ARTIST
AWARD
2014

JOW ZHI WEI

Born in 1983 in Singapore, Jow Zhi Wei graduated with first class honours from The Putnam School of Film at LASALLE College of the Arts (2010). He is also an alumnus of the Golden Horse Film Academy (2010) in Taiwan, where he was mentored by Taiwanese film director Hou Hsiao-hsien. He was then accepted into Le Fresnoy, National Studio for Contemporary Arts in 2011 in France, one of the most important visual art training centres in Europe. His short films have screened and competed at prominent film festivals in Southeast Asia and internationally.

As a filmmaker, Zhi Wei demonstrates an uncanny sensibility that helps him tell compelling stories of the lesser known segments of the community, with great artfulness and intimacy. His short films illustrate a clear artistic vision informed by personal experiences, which contributes to his unique aesthetic. Zhi Wei also possesses a dedication to his art-making process that goes beyond the artistic; such as building relationships with his film subjects, that lends his work added impact and significance.

His films have been selected for screenings locally at film festivals such as the Singapore Short Cuts at the National Museum of

Singapore Cinémathèque (2009, 2010 and 2013) and regionally at the Cinemania International Film Festival (2009) in the Philippines, the Thai Short Film and Video Festival (2010 and 2013) as well as at the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival (2010 and 2013) in Indonesia.

Internationally, his first short film *Outing* (2009) was selected to compete at the 58th San Sebastian International Film Festival (2010) in Spain, while *Waiting* (2010), was screened at the 15th Busan International Film Festival (2010) in South Korea. *After The Winter* (2013) was selected for competition at the prestigious Cinéfondation Selection at the 66th Cannes Film Festival (2013) in France, making him the first Singaporean filmmaker to compete in that category. It went on to be selected for other festivals including the 37th Montreal World Film Festival (2013) in Canada and the 41st Huesca International Film Festival (2013) in Spain. Zhi Wei has also earned numerous local film accolades including Best Script and Jury Special Mention for Best Director and Best Performance for the short film *Waiting* at the 2nd Singapore Short Film Awards (2011).





A CONVERSATION WITH JOW ZHI WEI

Tell us about your earliest memories of encountering the arts. Who or what were your key influences?

To really pinpoint a moment where my perception changed, it would be when a friend asked me if I wanted to catch a screening of Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*. We didn't know anything about the film and just wanted to see something different. Prior, I had only been aware of the blockbusters that were playing at the multiplexes, so when I encountered the film, it felt very new, a type of film that I had no idea existed, even though it was made in 1960. It was from that moment that I realised the depth and power of cinema.

In terms of my key influencers in cinema, there are a lot of filmmakers that I admire, so this isn't an easy question. I would have to say that perhaps most frequently, I find myself referring to Robert Bresson and Ozu Yasujiro, and after them, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni, Carl Theodor Dreyer, and Tsai Ming-liang to name just a few.

Where do you look for inspiration, whenever you set about creating a new piece of work?

Whenever I first get an idea, it always feels like it came from me without any form of external influence. It is only later that I discover the source - that there was a link to a past memory or it was based on someone close or something I might have seen or read. So I can only say that I try to be sensitive towards my environment and something somewhere might just present me with a sense of possibility, and a sense of curiosity for a new piece of work.

What do you aspire for your audience to take away from your work?

During the making of a film, I am not exactly thinking about the audience, but more simply, trying to create what I had envisioned in my mind to be the emotions, the feelings of the scenario, and ultimately, the film itself. I am creating what I want to feel onscreen. That being said, I realise that the gaze of the audience plays an important part in the process of filmmaking. It is the person watching my film who will complete this dialogue that began with the genesis of the film. Hence, I hope that when my films are being watched, it will be like a shared journey, an intimate conversation where the audience can discover, in their own way, their emotions.



WORDS OF APPRECIATION

“I would like to show my appreciation and special thanks to:

The team at the Singapore Film Commission and Media Development Authority of Singapore for my nomination and their support for my projects.

The National Arts Council and Specialist Panel for bestowing me with this award.

Institut Français Singapore for providing me the opportunity to further my education in France.

Warren Sin, Jasmine Ng, Fran Borgia, Anthony Chen, Michael Kam, Zhang Wenjie, Roger Crittenden, Stéphanie Rabourdin, Alexandre Col, Jennifer Kwok, Jean-François Danis, and everyone who has supported my films and encouraged me in my endeavours.

My fellow filmmakers, with whom I am fortunate to share friendships and dialogues.

My collaborators, for standing by me and joining me on this journey.

My friends for their love, encouragement and time.

My mentors at Le Fresnoy and LASALLE College of the Arts, Denis Côté, Herman van Eyken, Ng Swee San, Gisli Snaer, Charles Maideen and Rashid Saini for their advice and inspiration.

My family: To my parents who mean the world to me and whose love and support I cannot do without, and to my brother and Aries, whose kinship I treasure most. ”

Jow Zhi Wei



Waiting (2010)

If approached by an up-and-coming artist who wished to learn from your experience, what advice would you give to him/her?

Cinema has a very broad canvas, and it should not fit neatly into a box. I think it's very important to set out to make the film that one wants to make. It may sound simple but very often, we can get lost in a sea of expectations of what a film should be like. To that, I would say, have faith in what you want to do and believe that if you like the film you are making, there will be others who will share the same sentiment.

How does receiving the Young Artist Award change things for you? Tell us more about how you intend to further grow and contribute in the arts scene.

I am extremely honoured to receive this award and am grateful to the many people involved for bestowing me with this wonderful recognition. It is a deeply meaningful moment for me as this award takes into consideration an artist's output as a whole, and I am both humbled and encouraged to know that my films are contributing in some way to the vibrant arts scene in Singapore. The next step for me is to carry on and embark on my next project. The grant from this award will be immensely helpful in the creation of this new work. I hope that by having the opportunity to consistently make films, I will continue to grow as an artist and contribute to the arts community.