



YOUNG ARTIST AWARD 2024

## TAN SI EN

TAN SI EN (b. 1993) is a notable figure in the film community, having graduated at the top of the class from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Film and Media Studies, and winning the Golden Village Prize and Shaw Foundation Gold Medal. Si En earned a Bachelor of Arts with Merit in Philosophy from the National University of Singapore.

The creative producer, filmmaker, and artist delves into human relationships and issues affecting the underrepresented. Si En's producing approach is like conducting music: shaping the intangible, uniting a team in a shared artistic vision, and motivating them towards a common goal. The aim is to foster a supportive environment for collaborators to take risks and tell significant stories. Si En founded Momo Film Co., which collaborates with filmmakers and moving image artists.

An alumnus of Berlinale Talents and Rotterdam Lab, Si En has produced significant films from Singapore and South-east Asia, most notably 'Dreaming & Dying' by Nelson Yeo, which won the Pardo d'Oro for Best Feature Film and the Swatch First Feature Award in 2023; 'Don't Cry, Butterfly' by Duong Dieu Linh, which premiered at the Venice International Critics' Week 2024 and won the IWONDERFULL Grand Prize and the Verona Film Club Prize for Most Innovative Film; and 'Wet Season' by Anthony Chen, which had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2019. Latest co-productions include 'Andragogy' by Wregas Bhutenaja, premiered in Toronto 2023, and 'The Year of the Everlasting Storm,' premiered at Cannes 2021.

Si En actively contributes to the film community by teaching, speaking, and mentoring at institutions like Nanyang Technological University, LASALLE, and Objectifs, as well as internationally at Purin Pictures' Short Film Camp (Thailand), Full Circle Lab (Philippines), and Rotterdam Lab (Netherlands). The film aficionado also leads initiatives such as the Objectifs Short Film Incubator and Momo Distribution Grant.

Named one of The Straits Times 30 under 30 – The Arts in 2020, Si En received the Youth Inspiration Award in 2021 from the National Youth Council and \*SCAPE and was shortlisted for the Women of the Future Awards – South-east Asia, Arts & Culture in 2022.



Poster of 'Dreaming & Dying' by Nelson Yeo  
Photo courtesy of Momo Film Co



## A CONVERSATION WITH TAN SI EN

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

My earliest memories of encountering the arts are deeply rooted in a profound love for TV and films. As a child, I spent countless hours captivated by the screen, enchanted by the magic of moving images. These experiences allowed me to live vicariously through stories, sparking my imagination and teaching me to dream beyond the possible.

Some of my early influences came from Singaporean films showcased on Arts Central and through Objectifs' DVD collections. These early encounters with local cinema shaped my understanding and appreciation of films. Additionally, exploring various global film industries and witnessing the powerful impact of cinema on audiences further fuelled my passion and desire to produce stories from our region.



Si En at the 76th Cannes Film Festival, 2023.

**Please share what a typical day in your life as a film producer is like.**

Producing is a role that's difficult to grasp, and there isn't really one answer to that question. So, there's never a typical day!

As a creative producer, I am among the first people working on and the last people who are done with the film years later. I spend a lot of time daily to build relationships with filmmakers, find the material, develop the script, bring the team together and, ultimately, put every aspect of the film in place in a manner that brings the vision to life.

So much goes into the making of a film. I suppose every day I try my best for the best story to get made and find right-minded collaborators who believe in the project.

**What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in your artistic journey and what motivated you to continue in spite of these challenges?**

Collaborating with individuals who have differing values can be challenging and counter-productive.

In my own practice as a producer, artist, filmmaker, I believe it is really important to create a safe space for everyone to take risks and tell stories that matter. Working with the wrong partners can be discouraging and hinder growth, but these experiences also drive me to think creatively and stay engaged, ultimately fuelling my enthusiasm to explore new possibilities.

I constantly ask myself, "How can we improve?" Rather than glorifying suffering, I prioritise potential, relationships, and well-being. My focus is on nurturing these elements while creating compelling stories and art that resonates deeply.

**What do you want the audience to experience through your works?**

My works often delve into the intricate dynamics of human relationships and the obstacles faced by the under-represented. Through the films I produce, I hope the audience experience a profound connection, whether through emotional resonance, intellectual stimulation, or a new perspective on the world around us.

**What advice would you give the younger generation who would like to pursue a career in the arts?**

Trust yourself and immerse deeply in the broader cultural landscape. Stay curious and open to new experiences. Keep trying, imagine possibilities. Above all, persevere through inevitable setbacks and rejections, as grit is important to navigating the challenges of an artistic journey.



Si En with cast and crew of 'Don't Cry, Butterfly' at the Venice International Film Festival Critics' Week, 2024.

### What are your hopes and vision for Singapore's film scene?

A future where Singapore's film industry is consistently recognised both locally and globally, celebrated for its unique storytelling and cultural depth. I hope that the entire ecosystem will keep growing with our audience supporting a wide range of voices and narratives.

### How does receiving the Young Artist Award change things for you?

Deeply humbled and honoured to be the first producer to receive the esteemed Young Artist Award. This is an important recognition of how producing is an integral part to telling great stories and a testament to the work that I have done.

### Tell us more about how you would like to further grow and contribute to the arts scene.

I hope to continue growing within the art and film scene as a journey of both personal exploration and communal contribution. As I refine my practice and challenge conventional boundaries, I want to contribute by filling gaps and fostering spaces where diverse voices can be heard and celebrated. By supporting emerging producers and filmmakers, I envision an inclusive community where important stories can flourish in all its forms.



## WORDS OF APPRECIATION

When I first started producing, this was not attainable so thank you to National Arts Council for this Young Artist Award. It is an important affirmation of the artistic work that film producers do.

My growth as a producer is thanks to consistent, vital support from the Singapore Film Commission.

I want to acknowledge the producers who came before me, the ones who dream, the ones who kept going. Filmmaking is a reminder that no one can be independent of others. And I kept going because of the generous people around me.

To my family, thank you for teaching me to value freedom above all things.

Filmmakers, producers and craftsmen I've worked with for trusting me with such intimate stories and processes.

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