

Asian Film Festival Berlin 2017

Under the program title ***busy bodies*** this year's Asian Film Festival Berlin (AFFB) will be presenting an unusual selection of Asian and Asian-Diaspora documentary and fiction films. *Busy and on-the-move: driven by capitalistic forces and logic.* The fifth edition of the festival examines the phenomena accompanying this dynamic change from an Asian, Asian-German, and Asian-European perspective.

busy bodies. Everyone is busy and on-the-move. On one hand, there is the job, security, and search for a better life. On the other hand, the forces of ideological acceleration: everyone has to be mobile, fit, and flexible. While the prosperous middle class and the Jet-setters seem to be plagued by too much mobility, the travel and activity boundaries of so called guest workers, migrants and refugees are very limited. The rules of mobility are generally decided in specific processes and set in pre-defined routes: Capital in the affluent societies determines the boundaries. At the same time, local cuisine, slow-food, and local-regional vacations have become trendy. What is the connection between these developments and how can they be explained? The week-long festival will offer over 40 long and short films, performances, and podium discussions; also introductions to poly-local identities, transnational personalities, and featuring trans-border communities and concepts, with discussions about "being busy" in our times.

Seldom do we hear about solidarity between different (post) immigrant communities. But especially in times when right-wing extremism is increasing, it is important to re-emphasize narratives and images which show the common struggle for diversity and justice across all borders. The opening film, *The Gook* (USA 2017), succeeds especially well in this context. The film deals with the background of the L.A. riots in 1992, the hate and violence inherent in the racist logic and structures of the larger society, which struck two different communities. Against all these forces, two Korean-American brothers befriend an Afro-American girl and create a space of warmth and protection, against the harsh reality of mutual discrimination and (self) deception. This opening film will be accompanied by a live-performance by Olivia Hyun-sin Kim (Berlin).

The section ***local bodies*** presents an exciting selection of films about the experience of the Asian Diaspora in Europe. A real milestone in Asian-European film production is the film, *Ping Pong* (England 1987), a comedy-mystery concerning the Chinese community in London. This will be the first-time screening of this important film in Germany. In *Schau mich nicht so an* ("Don't Look At Me That Way", Germany/Mongolia 2016) the director and actress, Uisenma Borchu, breaks with all clichés of the passive "Asian woman", showing which roles and images are possible for Asian and Asian-German women. *Il Kang's Seme - Schlage nicht, um zu gewinnen. Gewinne, dann schlage* (Germany 2013) examines a father-son conflict within the Korean community in Hamburg. In addition, the feature film program will be accompanied by local bodies, three different short-film series: stories from the Vietnamese Diaspora, a "best-of" selection from the CinemAsia Filmlab (Amsterdam), as well as the latest discoveries from neighbouring European countries. The film section will be enriched by the discussion panel, *Forging an Asian-European*

film network which will review past experiences and conditions, and discuss future opportunities for filmmakers from the Asian Diaspora.

The section ***mobile bodies*** will focus on relations, and consequences of migration within Asia, as well as from Asia to North America and Europe. One of the highlights is the film *Yamato* (California) (Japan 2016), which tells the story of two young women's complicated encounter in a bleak small town, where a U.S. military base is based, and examines the love-hate relationship between Japan and America. Japanese post-colonial criticism meets a coming-of-age narrative. The documentary film, *Mrs B., a North Korean Woman* (S. Korea/France, 2016) portrays a charismatic woman from North Korea, who searches for a better life via China, Laos, Thailand and finally fleeing to South Korea. An odyssey full of surprises. In *Money and Honey* (Taiwan 2015) the working life of Filipino women working in an old-age home are shown from a peer perspective. An unusual film concerning migrant workers, exposing how Capitalism, mobility and the care-economy are mutually dependent on each other. The IDFA (Int. Doc Filmfest Amsterdam) prize winner, *Still Tomorrow* (China 2016), portrays the 39-year old YU Xiuhua, who suddenly became famous after she posted her poems on the internet. She grew up handicapped in a rural area, and without a school diploma, but she proclaimed her right to a good life, love, and self-determination. "It's not about how much you can tolerate the system, but how much the system can tolerate you", is the core message of the docu-fiction film, *Out of Frame* (Hong Kong 2015). The film shows the struggle for survival and the basic position of an artist, at an artist's village near Beijing.

The film section, ***queer bodies***, examines the cross-borderline qualities and possibilities of queer Asian personalities, and simultaneously the obligatory context these subjects have to deal with. Vincent Chui's film, *Fig* (Hong Kong 2013), shows with wonderful, calm imagery how a woman in Hong Kong can no longer handle her desolate marriage after her child dies, and she seeks a new life in Macao. A lesbian-love story freeing itself from the boundaries of social class and gender. *Spa Night* (USA 2016) offers an intimate look at the life of a gay teenager in L.A.'s Korea-Town: a moving coming-of-age story in the Diaspora. The famous filmmaker and activist, FAN Popo, documents the confrontations with Chinese fathers concerning their queer children in his film *Papa Rainbow* (China 2016). The documentary, *Troublers* (South Korea 2016), equates the experiences and struggles of non-binary persons for their rights and inclusion with the history of democratic resistance in South Korea. The section *queer bodies* will be enriched by new acclaimed shorts and by the panel discussion, *A Transdiasporic Queer Commons: Beyond the 'Global Gay'*, which will handle theory and practices within the queer film scene.

We wish everyone an exciting festival!

Sun-ju Choi and Kimiko Suda

In addition to the film program, media installations by Asian-European artists will be presented in the Gallery of Ballhaus Naunynstrasse.