

Press release 28th February 2017

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Helsinki Cine Aasia 5th Anniversary Programme Offers Reflections on Societal Antagonisms and Family

The only festival of Asian cinema in Finland, Helsinki Cine Aasia, has announced its programme for 2017. The festival will feature 18 films in total from 10 different East Asian and Southeast Asian countries. The perspectives provided by the films will be developed further in discussions with experts in their fields - such as the legendary foreign correspondent Rauli Virtanen. The 5th anniversary festival of Helsinki Cine Aasia will take place at Korjaamo Kino and Kulmasali and Orion Cinema between Thursday the 16th of March and Sunday 19th of March.

The opening film of Helsinki Cine Aasia is [The Net](#) (2016), by the South Korean director Kim Ki-Duk. The gripping drama is an upfront depiction of the current state of the Koreas, and people living in the shadow of the ongoing conflict. Other films at the festival which deal with borders created either by nation states, societal norms or traditional gender roles, are, for example Rithy Panh's [Exile](#) (2016), a partly autobiographical portrayal of the Khmer Rouge regime; [Come, Together](#) (2016) by Shin Dong-il, which portrays an ordinary nuclear family struggling to keep up with increasing demands of competitive society; and [Japanese Girls Never Die](#) (2016) by Daigo Matsui which offers a feminist view of sexism, the pressure to marry, and the pay gap between the sexes in Japan utilising the colourful language of pop culture.

Themes emerging from the festival programme include the status of families in contemporary society, what it means to be young, as well as journeying into the mind. For instance, Koji Fukada's [Harmonium](#) (2016) sheds light on the dynamics of the nuclear family via a dramatic thriller storyline. Nontawat Numbenchapol's [#BKKY](#) (2016) draws from interviews conducted with one hundred Bangkok youths to create a film that combines elements from fiction and documentary and presents a lighthearted exploration of identity, sexuality and gender. Zhang Yang's depiction of a Tibetan-Buddhist pilgrimage [Paths of The Soul](#) (2016) is an impressive and empowering experience in its asceticism and dedication.

A special treat for Helsinki cinema-goers is [Hema Hema: Sing Me a Song while I Wait](#) (2016) by the Bhutanese director Khyentse Norbu. The actors in the film wear masks and rely entirely on their body language to tell the story. The inspiration for this surprising approach according to the director was the anonymity of online chat rooms. The film is currently under the threat of censorship in its home country and even its arrival to Helsinki Cine Aasia was secured only at the last moment.

Returning to the programme in 2017 are several directors who have become familiar names during the festival's five-year journey. Shunji Iwai is included with his most recent offering [A Bride for Rip Van Winkle](#) (2016) which is expected to become a cult classic, Midi Z features with the stylistically realistic portrayal of undocumented migrant workers [The Road to Mandalay](#) (2016), and the Watanabe brothers with [POOLSIDEMAN](#) (2016) - the winner of the Japanese Splash -award at the 2016 Tokyo International Film Festival.

This year's Helsinki Cine Aasia programme features a Parent & Baby Screening for the first time. Shown at the Parent and Baby Screening on Friday the 17th of March will be [The World of Us](#)

(2016), a delicate portrayal of friendship, bullying and the social pressures of school life by the South Korean director **Yoon Ga-eun**.

In preparation for planning of the programme for this year's festival, the Helsinki Cine Asia team visited the international film festivals of Busan and Tokyo, among others.

"The quality of East Asian and Southeast Asian films is currently very high. We are happy that we are able to present Helsinki cinema-goers with real gems and introduce rising talents of Asian cinema. In these times of violent contradictions and antagonisms, film can play a role in bringing faraway countries and peoples together," says **Eija Niskanen**, the artistic director of the festival.

The themes arising from the films will be explored further in discussions with experts

To celebrate its anniversary, Helsinki Cine Asia will be organising discussions that are open to the public and will bring new perspectives into the programme of the festival. At the festival, Eija Niskanen, the festival's artistic director who is also a researcher of film and animation, will discuss the future of Japanese animation after the predominance of Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli. The discussion will be followed with the screening of **Sunao Katabuchi's** [In This Corner of the World](#) (2016).

In conjunction with Rithy Panh's film *Exile*, the well-known foreign correspondent **Rauli Virtanen** will be present to talk about his experiences of reporting from Southeast Asia before the rise of the Khmer Rouge. Following the screening of *Hema Hema: Sing Me a Song While I Wait*, there will be the opportunity to hear more about the culture and cinema of Bhutan from **Riikka Suhonen**, an ex-resident of Bhutan and **Roope Ahola** who has worked with Bhutanese film makers. Present at the screening of *The Road to Mandalay*, will be **Anu Kultalahti**, a researcher with Finnwatch, to discuss the rights of migrant workers in Thailand's export industries.

Throughout its five-year history, Helsinki Cine Asia has sought to bring forth the female perspective, and this year in the programme, there is a panel discussion regarding the roles of Chinese women. The topic is introduced by University lecturer **Tiina Airaksinen**, senior researcher **Elina Sinkkonen** and journalist and winner of Tieto-Finlandia prize **Mari Manninen**. The Helsinki Cine Asia 5th Anniversary Club will be held on Saturday the 18th March from 9pm-1.30am at Korjaamo Bar.

See the full festival programme [here >>](#)

All films have subtitles in English. Online ticket sales for Helsinki Cine Asia will start on Thursday the 2nd of March at www.helsinkicineaasia.fi/en and will continue throughout the festival. During the festival, tickets may also be purchased at the box office at the festival cinemas. A regular ticket is €9. Parent & Baby Screening is €7.5. Screening card (inc. 5 tickets) is available for €40. To celebrate the Helsinki Cine Asia anniversary, anyone born in the year of the rooster in the Chinese zodiac may claim a €3 discount on the screening card when bought at the festival box office with proof of date of birth.

The Full Helsinki Cine Aasia Programme 2017:

#BKKY, Nontawat Numbenchapol, Thailand, 2016, 75 min
A Bride for Rip Van Winkle, Shunji Iwai, Japan, 2016, 180 min
Come, Together, Shin Dong-il, South Korea, 2016, 122 min
Exile, Rithy Panh, Cambodia/France, 2016, 77 min
Harmonium, Koji Fukada, Japan, 2016, 118 min
Hema Hema: Sing Me a Song While I Wait, Khyentse Norbu, Bhutan, 2016, 95 min
In This Corner of the World, Sunao Katabuchi, Japan, 2016, 128 min
Japanese Girls Never Die, Daigo Matsui, Japan, 2016, 100 min
Kaili Blues, Bi Gan, China, 2015, 113 min
The Net (opening film), Kim Ki-duk, South Korea, 2016, 114 min
Paths of the Soul, Zhang Yang, China, 2015, 115 min
POOLSIDEMAN, Hirobumi Watanabe, Japan, 2016, 117 min,
Rage, Lee Sang-il, Japan, 2016, 142 min
The Road to Mandalay, Midi Z, Taiwan/France/Germany/Burma, 2016, 108 min
Solo, Solitude, Yosep Anggi Noen, Indonesia, 2016, 97 min
Three, Johnnie To, Hongkong/China, 2016, 88 min
Wolf Girl and Black Prince, Ryuichi Hiroki, Japan, 2016, 116 min
The World of Us (Parent & Baby Screening), Yoon Ga-eun, South Korea, 2016, 95 min

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