

Our International Cinema

The Hong Kong Film Archive cinema was devoted to screening Shaw films during the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) month of April. The full Ozu Yasujiro retrospective, continued well into the month of May, will be relayed to our cinema. Indeed, the appreciation of foreign films and film history is intrinsic to the promotion of the local film culture. Apart from organising topical programmes on Hong Kong cinema, the Archive also expanded its horizon to presenting the *Metropolis, Noir and Visions: Films of Fritz Lang* programme in January last year. Film buffs and film lovers must keep an eye out for the full retrospective on the influential German expressionist director F.W. Murnau, entitled *The Psychic Labyrinth of F.W. Murnau*, coming up in June. From mid-2002 onwards, the Archive and the Film Programmes Office have been presenting *Repertory Cinema - A Spectrum of Film Classics* and *Masters* featuring Francesco Rosi, Jean Renoir and Werner Herzog, etc, contributing to the diversity of screening programmes held at our cozy cinema. Films, especially good ones, know no boundaries at the Archive.

'Did I like studying western films?' 'Oh, yes. I used to capture scenes from western films on my camera during viewing. At first, I focused on the camera positioning in order to learn their techniques. But gradually I came to analysing their content...' (Director Lee Sun-fung's interview published in *China & Overseas Movie News*, June 1985). The allusions and juxtapositions of Hong Kong cinema and its overseas counterparts enable convergence of ideas and creative forces, yet each finding its own way to blend in and present itself on the silver screen. Contrasting to some of the mundane family melodramas of Cantonese cinema in the 1950s and 60s, Ozu's films stand out with their serenity and absorbing enigma to restore beauty and truth to life and human relationships. Having said that, let's not forget the timeless teachings, ancient wisdom, and stories of joy and sadness told by the common folks from Hong Kong film classics with which we find accord even to this day.

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The Psychic Labyrinth of F.W. Murnau

Winnie Fu

F.W. Murnau (original name F.W. Plumpe) is a creator in many ways. His skills in drawing his filmic images with light are comparable to those of a painter wielding his paint brush. He used unprecedented powerful compositions that drill deeply into the human psyche, telling stories with hindsight like a prophet. He experimented on cinematographic and lighting techniques with the adventurous spirit of a young child, testing the limits of indoor shooting and driving his crew outdoors into the fields and as far as the Tahiti islands.



F.W. Murnau

Those who have viewed John Malkovich's interpretation of Murnau in *Shadow of the Vampire* (2000) might think of the director as a desperate, aggressive being that can sell his soul (like being his own Faust) in exchange for his filmic immortality. I myself, having seen most of his surviving images, tend to feel him as a loner who found escape in the light paintings that he created with passion. Behind his elegant outfit, ambitious undertakings and cosmopolitan thinking, he seemed to be emotionally suppressed and searching in vain for his own paradise.

Murnau's gothic castle images have been haunting the cinema for years, not only for the creepy shadows and stiffly cloaked Mr Nosferatu, but also his lighting style that penetrates into our conscience, and his architectural compositions that gives perspectives a new definition. Murnau enjoyed playing with lights. In a *Phantom* (1922) scene featuring the 'running shadows', he created a huge studio setting with spotlights flushing over a line of shadows running on tracks, creating the effect of dark shadows chasing after a man. The entire *Faust* (1926) was shot indoors so as to manipulate his moving lighting, and a huge landscape model was built out of nothing to fit in Faust's flight over Mephisto's cloak.

He also tried out all sorts of natural locations for his films *Nosferatu* (1922) was filmed in more than six cities; he made his main characters run across the American farmlands with the cameraman running after them in *City Girl* (1930); he also let

the camera stalk a woman's entire tram ride in *Sunrise* (1927), guiding the audience through her entire journey from the country to the city....



Model showing the scene of running shadows in
Phantom (1922)



Nosferatu (1922)

Murnau was keen on theatre and poems already at a young age and received training in fine arts and theatrical acting. His stylistic and formic compositions have laid the foundation for many directors to come, and his cinematographic techniques continue to dominate German film history.

Despite a comparatively short-lived life (1888 to 1931), he has left behind a film heritage that is still overwhelmingly enjoyable to view after almost eight decades now. However, it seems that Murnau is largely neglected by the new generation. People who know him have vague memories from his most famous *Nosferatu*, *Faust*, or his oscar-winning *Sunrise*, but few have heard of his earlier *Journey into the Night* (1920) and *The Haunted Castle* (1921), while his comedy *The Grand Duke's Finances* (1924) and later an adaptation of Molière's theatrical work, *Tartuffe* (1926), fall into oblivion. This summer, Hong Kong audience will have the rare opportunity to experience again, or for the first time, Murnau's expressive cinema.

In February this year, the Berlin International Film Festival dedicated its retrospective section to this great German director, whose name was often mentioned in the same breath as Pabst, Wiene and Fritz Lang. Hong Kong, as the second leg of the retrospective, follows Berlin to show all 12 film titles in the Murnau repertoire that survive today, all in their best available restored conditions - *Nosferatu* in its original tinted colour, a Pre-Paramount version of *Tabu* (1931), a newly restored copy of *The Last Laugh* (1924) and newly retrieved footages and intertitles for a restored print of *The Haunted Castle*.



Sunrise (1927)



Tabu (1931)

The Murnau exhibition accompanying this retrospective will also make its way to Hong Kong with two very interesting set replicas that illustrate the 'pioneering' shooting techniques of the 1920s, including the abovementioned *Phantom* and *Faust* scenes. This multi-media exhibition will put on display around 200 archival items, plus interesting film footages and interviews with film critics on Murnau's shooting techniques, his film music and his film aesthetics.

This is the first time after 15 years to present a comprehensive retrospective on Murnau in Hong Kong (the last one was curated by Mr Michael Lam in 1988). Two seminars are scheduled and a brochure on Murnau, priced at HK\$40, will be published at the same time.

The Murnau programme is presented by the Hong Kong Film Archive in association with Goethe Institut of Hong Kong, while the exhibition is supported by Filmmuseum Berlin—Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek. ●

Winnie Fu is the Programmer (Cultural Exchange) of HKFA.

Photos and stills courtesy of Filmmuseum Berlin - Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek.

Under the Banyan Tree

Louis Fei and His *Romance in the Boudoir*

Barbara Fei

Editor's Note: *Romance in the Boudoir* and *Spring in a Small Town* showcased in the 'Archive Treasures - Spring' screening not only tell a tale of two cities but also of two directors - Louis Fei and his eldest brother Fei Mu. While *Spring* had long been celebrated for its craftsmanship, *Romance* and his creator Louis Fei remained largely unnoticed. Ms Barbara Fei recounts her days with Fourth Uncle Louis and how his creative flair was channeled into his masterpiece that graced the cinema.



The Fei brothers (From left) Kang, Tai aka Louis, Mu, (Back row from left) Louis Fei, Fei Kang, Zhang Bing
Yuquan; (Front row) Lai Hang (2nd left) and Barbara Fei (3rd left)

Louis Fei (1915 - 1980), original name Tai, courtesy name Xudong, alias Luyi. Born the fourth of the Fei brothers, Louis has always been the beloved little brother of my late father Fei Mu and my other two uncles, and the darling of the family. Compared with my affectionate and sensitive father, the forthright and decisive Second Uncle, and the modest and honest Third Uncle, the fun-loving and agile Fourth Uncle naturally became the perfect candidate of my 'uncle/niece-cum-buddy' team. Whenever my grandparents and father were too tied up with the housework or other work engagements, my uncle would take up the role of caretaker and venture out with this 'adult-like' niece of his. Age gaps or seniority mattered little, if any, to us. We got along really well and enjoyed each of our outings to heart's content.

Fourth Uncle finished his high school education at Xuhui and was accepted by Université de l'Aurore to study mechanical engineering in Shanghai. He was a straight-A student. His language flair was a testament to his giftedness and intelligence: not only was he fluent in French, he was also conversant in some seven, eight Chinese dialects. Many a times he turned himself into a mimic, and by

imitating the voice and speech of family friends and relatives, he never failed to elicit hilarious laughter from Grandpa and Grandma. Fourth Uncle inherited Grandpa's graceful manners and Grandma's good look, more so than his brothers, but his innocent and genial disposition was sadly flawed by his rebelliousness and impulsiveness. Despite the earnest guidance and protection from the elders and his siblings, Fourth Uncle frequently found himself the subject of love disputes that remained the source of worry for the family.

In around 1939, Fourth Uncle married Huo Yuanlan, a shrewd woman who had plenty of the business savvy. Together, the couple raised two daughters and a son. Their marriage lasted 18 years when the free-spirited and idealist Fourth Uncle grew distant from Huo, who became increasingly devoted to her ambition to become a successful businesswoman. This marriage ended in divorce. In the late 1950s, Fourth Uncle married a Ms Leung from Macau, who bore him two sons and a daughter. By then Fourth Uncle was no longer his usual expansive self and had abandoned his pursuit of astounding love or romance. He kept his marriage to Ms Leung a low profile one. This did nothing to dampen his passion for the cinema. In fact, he gave up mechanical engineering altogether under the influence of his big brother, my father. After my father's death in 1951 of a heart attack, Fourth Uncle took over the management of Dragon-Horse (Loon-Ma) Films and this hastened his devotion to film-making. With the making of *Romance of the Boudoir* (1960) - his directorial debut shot on location in Macau - Fourth Uncle eventually realised his aspiration.

Under the intricate political and social conditions of the time, in addition to the lining up of a director, the cast and crew which normally figured in production planning, the filmmaker often had to sort out funding and secure exhibition and distribution networks. The script and the choice of subject matter in particular imposed enormous limitations and obstacles. Fourth Uncle lent me a copy of the script outline that he helped revise (Wang Jiping, originally an art technician at Dragon-Horse, was the screenwriter), and spoke of his confidence in making this project a success. Fourth Uncle's talent already showed when he was in his teens, but his ambition and synergy reached a new height in his adulthood. It was a shame that he plunged into a state of confusion and lost his sense of direction in the mist of the turbulent times, and was devastated by the failure of his first marriage followed by the untimely death of his eldest brother who had been his biggest inspiration and spiritual support.



(Photo on the left) The wife Hsia Moon and the husband Shi Lei ; (photo on the right) the wife Hsia Moon and the guest Ping Fan in *Romance in the Boudoir*.

Blood relationship might offer an explanation as to the resemblance of the story of *Romance in the Boudoir* to my father's earlier work *Spring in a Small Town* (1948). The story also evolves around a husband, his wife, and a family guest. It is apparent to the viewers that through composition of the scenes, contrast of lighting, and manipulation of music score, Fourth Uncle projected onto his debut his own perplexity, emptiness, self-contradiction and inner struggles. *Romance of the Boudoir* may very well said to be a confession on the part of its director. Towards the end of the film, the husband and his guest are seen sitting aimlessly in the house, looking despondently on to the wife who carries with her a suitcase and sets out on a path that sees no end. Does the ending suggest that the wife chooses to leave a home that she no longer finds bearable but yet sets foot in another house that offers no hope or solution, or could this be an analogy that Fourth Uncle used to express his own predicament, constraints and boundaries?

Upon its completion, *Romance of the Boudoir* was shown in the Cathay Cinema in Wanchai in 1960. It wasn't until several decades later on 5 April 2003 at a night screening at the Hong Kong Film Archive that I first saw it on the big screen. I remember paying a visit to Fourth Uncle in Macau in early winter, 1963. He suffered a stroke and as a result, became paralysed and experienced a loss of speech. But his mind was clear. Sitting on a wheelchair, we exchanged silent gazes. And when the time came for us to bid farewell, his eyes were filled with tears, his hands were grabbing me tightly, reluctant to let me go. I will never forget the scene of our last meeting. While *Romance of the Boudoir*, Mr Louis Fei's only film, continues to shock and surprise viewers who sing praises of his incredible talent and wisdom, I would like to take this opportunity to pay respect to my fourth uncle, Louis Fei, who will always be fondly remembered. ◆

Barbara Fei, eldest daughter of renowned Chinese director Fei Mu. She received education in Shanghai before moving to Hong Kong in 1949 to study vocal music. Fei began acting in the 1950s and was an accomplished vocalist. She set up the 'Allegro Singers' in 1964 and has been actively promoting music and art education in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Photos courtesy of Ms Barbara Fei.

New Acquisitions

Films Donated by the Bray Family

Denis Bray

Editor's Note: Denis Bray, former Secretary for Home Affairs of Hong Kong, followed his father Reverend Arthur Bray to South China and later settled down in Hong Kong. The father and son team subsequently captured on 16mm and 8mm film the people and life of Hong Kong and the Guangdong region between the 1930s and 50s. Mr Denis Bray generously donated over 30 precious reels in the Bray family's collection to the Hong Kong Film Archive and in the following article, he recounts the adventures and stories behind the shooting of these rare footage.



A family portrait taken in the 1930s. (Back row from left) Jeremy, Mrs Muriel Bray, Denis, Revd Arthur Bray, Barbara; (Front) Eleanor

There are two groups of films in the Bray family's collection. First, 16mm films taken by Revd Arthur Bray from 1933-39; second, 8mm films taken by Denis and Marjorie Bray from 1953-77. Revd Arthur Bray was a Methodist Missionary in South China and Hong Kong from 1914-39 and again in Hong Kong from 1949-52. He and his wife, Muriel, had four children who were brought up in China and Hong Kong until 1939.

I am the oldest child of Arthur Bray, returning to Hong Kong as a Cadet Officer in the Hong Kong Government in 1950. I retired in 1985 as Secretary for Home Affairs and continued to live in Hong Kong.

16mm films by Arthur Bray

Most of the longer edited film is about rural life in South China in the 1930s. The pattern of rice growing had not changed for decades. The processes of ploughing and harrowing, planting out seedlings and harvesting are all recorded. There is also film of the irrigation pumps that were used to raise water into the paddy fields. I can recall these processes as being common in the New Territories when I was a District Officer in the 1950s. There is now no rice grown in Hong Kong. There is also film of some other traditional crafts, including ceramic arts in Shiwan near Foshan where Arthur Bray spent most of his missionary career.

In his last years Arthur Bray had his headquarters in Hong Kong where he was Chairman of Methodist Conference in South China and Hong Kong. His principal work during this period was the construction of the Methodist Church in Wanchai at the junction of Hennessy Road and Johnston Road. The film includes some footage of the construction and opening ceremonies of this church. The church survived until recent years when it was replaced by a combined office building and church with the church occupying the lower floors. The new building retains the miniature pagoda with its cross on top at the western end of the triangular site.

8mm film by Denis and Marjorie Bray



Wedding of Denis and Marjorie Bray on 19 February 1952 at St John's Cathedral, Hong Kong.

The Brays bought their 8mm camera in 1953 where the family lived first in the Methodist bungalow at No 24 Cheung Chau. My work involved relief activities after squatter fires. There are scenes of the massive queues formed up for the distribution of food, clothing and cash, and of the work of construction of the first resettlement houses in Shek Kip Mei. The family then moved to Tai Po with my posting as District Officer, Tai Po.

Most of the 8mm film is of family activities but there is film of a flight I made in an Auster aircraft of the Army in 1955 or '56. This shows the more rural parts of the Tai Po District in the mid-1950s and is, as far as I know, the only photo of the pier at Tai Long Wan. This is a very exposed bay at the eastern end of the Sai Kung Peninsula and miles from the closest road so the villagers had always wanted a pier. The engineers had always said that only the most costly and robust pier could stand up against typhoons on this shore. Even so the District Officer, Austin Coates, supplied materials to the villagers for a simple pier and it was built. I remember seeing the pier on this flight with a few fishing boats round it. Sadly a typhoon soon struck and afterwards I could not see the slightest sign of the pier at Tai Long Wan.

Preservation of the films

The 16mm film of Arthur Bray was taken to England with all the family goods in 1939 and for years was in storage in the things you do not want to throw away. The storage was dry and as warm or cool as a house in Britain. The films were occasionally taken out for viewing but the occasions grew less and less.



(From left) Denis Bray and movie stars Ng Kwan-lai, Shi Ying, Patricia Lam Fung and Bai Guang at the opening of the Fan Ling Theatre on 11 September 1959.

Shortly after my parents died in 1974, and we had little of their things to remember them with, it was agreed that the films could come to us. We brought them back to Hong Kong but had no equipment to show them. By then we were living in accommodation that had good storage for clothes even though the flat was never wholly air-conditioned. The films were simply stored with our clothes. Although there was no special storage for the films, even clothes needed special precautions against damp and insects and these precautions seem to have preserved the film well. They have not been shown in recent years so there is no wear other than when they were newly developed. I think the key to their preservation has been their neglect, but fortunately neglect that involved storage in an even temperature, free from damp and insects.

We are most grateful to the Hong Kong Film Archive for making video tapes of the films and look forward to seeing them more frequently in the future. 🍀

Photos courtesy of Mr Denis Bray.

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Thank You!

An Eye-Opening Experience at the George Eastman House

Edward Tse

It took me almost a whole day of flight time to get from Hong Kong to Rochester on 2 September 2002 to arrive at the most renowned film preservation and restoration school of the world, L. Jeffery Selznick School of Film Preservation at the George Eastman House (GEH) - the first stop of my three-leg training programme. I was to attend an academic course offered by the School, followed by the 144th Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) Technical Conference and Exhibition in Pasadena and the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) 2002 Annual Conference & Workshop in Boston. At the end of my journey, I also visited the conservation laboratories of UCLA Film and Television Archive in Hollywood.



View of GEH at summer

Academic Course at L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation

Rochester is not a very large city in the state of New York, however it is the birthplace of many well-known photography supplies and imaging companies, like Xerox and Bausch & Lomb. And most important of all, it is the city where Mr George Eastman founded the Eastman Kodak Company, the world's leading supplier of photographic film and cinematographic film.

George Eastman House (GEH), once the estate of Mr George Eastman, is now an international museum of photography and film. Chartered in 1947, GEH's mission from the outset has been to collect, preserve and present the history of photography and moving images to a diverse public audience. GEH possesses unparalleled collections of photography, motion picture, and photographic and cinematography technology as well as a commitment to preservation, education

and exhibition that has set the standard in the field. Throughout the years, it has received donations of entire archives, corporate collections, artists' lifetime portfolios and a staggering assemblage of rare motion pictures and ephemera.



GEH The Louis B. Mayer Conservation Centre at Chili Exhibition Gallery of GEH

The L. Jeffery Selznick School of Film Preservation at GEH was established in 1996 and is the first of its kind in North America to teach the restoration, preservation and archiving of motion pictures. Each year, twelve students with different background are selected from hundreds of applicants all over the world to study in the School for one year. Being one of the lucky few, I enrolled in the first two quarters of their certificate programme that ran from September 2002 to March 2003. Among my fellow students, one was from Sweden, and another from Canada; the rest are from various states of the US. I was the only student from Asia - in fact the first ever Hong Kong student the School took in - as I later found out from the graduates list. Like other students in the Motion Picture Department of GEH, I had to attend the lectures on film preservation and archiving every week. The topics include theory, methods and practice of archival work, laboratory work quality assessment, cataloguing, curatorial duties, access procedure and technical matters concerning preservation of nitrate film, and the management of climatized film vaults, etc. Besides, we were rotationally assigned to each and every staff member in the department and to shadow them in order to get acquainted with their job duties. I had the chance to work with the department head, even acting as one to participate in the decision-making process for issues confronting a film archive. This was just one of the many exciting moments during the attachment. Students worked closely with the staff of GEH, receiving hands-on training in the maintenance, care and storage of motion pictures. At the end of the quarter, students will be assessed on the merits of a written examination and evaluation by each staff member of the Department during the attachment.



Resident Paper Conservator, Mr Gary Bright (middle) discussing the treatment of a film poster with students

In addition to motion picture film, as the collection of GEH also includes film-related materials like posters, handbills, scripts, orchestral scores of silent films and stills, we had the opportunity to work with the resident paper conservator, Mr Gary Bright, on the restoration of an old film poster. I had a good time discussing with him about the choice of treatment materials and we exchanged our views towards different treatment methodologies between GEH

and Hong Kong.

The 144th SMPTE Technical Conference and Exhibition, 23-26 October 2002, Pasadena, California

The second leg of my training programme was to attend the technical conference and exhibition organised by SMPTE. This was their 144th conference even though the society was founded only about 90 years ago. SMPTE is the leading professional body in the field of technical aspects of motion picture and television, and since its founding year in 1916, the society has been the standard issuing organisation and the only authoritative body to produce technical testing materials.



SMPTE conference

This year the discussions centred on the emerging issue of digital cinema technology and its relating issues such as digital right management, digital content protection, the possibility of adopting advance digital (high definition) television technology for digital cinema, the corresponding changes and advances in post-production under the new digital cinema environment, digital film laboratory technology, transfer and display technologies and the challenge of film archiving towards this new digital cinema technology, etc.

In one of the sessions, a direct comparison was drawn between the projections of a film shot with traditional motion picture film and another shot with the new digital image acquisition and output as film. The participants unanimously agreed that the traditional film-based motion picture is far superior to its corresponding digital technology in terms of both the visual effects and the cost of production. After the conference, I had an impression that although the work of issuing the standard for digital cinema is almost finished and that a draft has been published for public comment, the technology is still at its infancy and motion picture film still cannot be replaced by the current technology alone. With regard to film archiving, the latest technology emphasises the reuse of digital content which arguably justifies its archiving. If the content is thought to be not reusable in the future, there appears no need for archiving, a notion which is very different from the international accepted philosophy of film archiving as a means of cultural heritage preservation. Archives should therefore weigh the pros and cons of adopting the technology from the industry, while keeping abreast of the new technology. The conference not only gave us the latest update on digital cinema technology but also explored some of the more controversial issues.

I have also attended the technical test screening of a film re-released under the new digital cinema projection system, which was fascinating as not even one single minor defect that we usually find in an ordinary motion picture film during projection was spotted. However, I should emphasise that being an audience myself, the experience was more like viewing a video clip than watching a motion picture film under the current setting.

**AMIA 2002 Annual Conference and Workshop, 19-23 November 2002,
Boston, Massachusetts**



(From left) Edward Tse, Ray Edmondson and the former Secretary General of SEAPAVAA and Lim Ky of the National Archives Cambodia attending AMIA 2002 Conference

As part of the academic course at GEH, my fellow students and I were encouraged to attend the AMIA 2002 Annual Conference and Workshop held in Boston. The conference and its workshop series were organised by AMIA, the world's largest professional association of moving image archivists, which is currently representing over 750 individuals and institutions worldwide. It is a non-profit professional association established to advance the field of

moving image archiving by fostering cooperation among individuals and organisations concerned with the acquisition, preservation, exhibition and use of moving image materials.

Besides the conference, I have also participated in the AMIA workshops on film restoration and video signal correction, and visited the Conservation Laboratory of the Preservation Services Department of the Harvard College Library. Just like the SMPTE conference, this year's AMIA conference also focused on the advancing digital technology and its impact on audio-visual material archiving. It was a precious time for me to discuss the current issues of film archiving with specialists from all over the world. The most imposing topic covered in the conference was the pilot project of using large volume hard disks for the storage, archiving, preservation and access of digital data at the Library of Congress. The materials to be archived under this project include manuscripts, printed matters, photographic and printed images, and audio and video materials. Some speakers were convinced that large volume hard disks would be the solution to digital archiving, as the present Redundant Array of Inexpensive Disks (RAID) technology guarantees that the data so stored can be copied, 'back-up' and duplicated to increase their redundancy and facilitate migration to other format and medium without difficulty, being also the current business solution for the commercial sectors to maintain their large volume of digital data. However, it remains doubtful whether mechanical failure of hard disk may occur in RAID setting. Thus, most delegates were skeptical about this new direction of archiving.

Visit to UCLAFTA, Film Preservation Laboratory in UCLA, Hollywood, Los Angeles

At the end of my journey, I visited the conservation laboratories of the UCLA Film and Television Archive. Interestingly, the laboratories occupy the old site of the processing laboratory of Technicolor, the company which was famous for its early colour processes of silent movies. I was guided by the archivists there to learn about their conservation facilities and film preservation equipment. The laboratories are responsible for all the printing work of the archive, both black and white and colour. Meanwhile they have to rely on outside film processing laboratories for processing of their exposed film. Unlike GEH where the largest portion of the collection is silent film, UCLAFTA has a large collection of sound films. Owing to their good relationship with Hollywood film companies, UCLAFTA receives donations of recent films as well as comprehensive newsreel collections from television stations. At the moment, there is a separate department inside their laboratory to provide commercial services to production companies.



Conservation facility in UCLA Film and Television Archive

Challenges Ahead



Edward inspecting prints inside projection room



Gathering with other fellow students of GEH

In a course of just six months, I have gained valuable knowledge and hands-on experience in film preservation, archiving, presentation and access during my study

at GEH; the two conferences not only deepened my understanding of the advance of digital cinema and its impact on audiovisual archiving, but also provided me with unparalleled opportunities to establish contacts with archivists and specialists of film archives all over the world. My visit to UCLA Film and Television Archive conservation facilities widened my horizon on the professional and technical aspects of film archiving. I owe a special gratitude to Mr Chan Shing-wai, Chief Curator of Central Conservation Section, and Ms Angela Tong, Head of Hong Kong Film Archive, for their support and advice during my training programme. Without them, this journey would never be a reality. Resuming my work at the Hong Kong Film Archive, I can now apply what I have learned during my training programme on many precious films still awaiting restoration and in this way, to contribute to the long-term preservation of Hong Kong's cultural heritage, the films of Hong Kong, for the generations to come to enjoy what our father had and what we have today. ◆

Edward Tse is the Assistant Curator I (Conservation) of HKFA.



Master & Protégés—Chun Kim, Chor Yuen and Patrick Lung Kong Seminar

Director Chun Kim was a prominent figure of the 1960s cinema. Chun, together with his protégés Chor Yuen and Patrick Lung Kong, had noteworthy contribution to Hong Kong cinema. A seminar was held on 15 March 2003, chaired by HKFA programmer Law Kar and attended by Hong Kong Polytechnic University lecturer Dr Stephen Sze and scholar Au-yeung Shing, to discuss the works of these three directors from the cultural, artistic and sociological perspectives.

Law hailed Chun Kim as a 'humanistic director, who excelled in portraying human sentiments and humanity'. His early Union works concerned with youth and education, placing a special emphasis on the intricate relationship between the generations. *Parents' Hearts* (1955) is a story about a devoted father and his two sons, and so profoundly moving it is that the film firmly placed Chun Kim on the 'Holy Hands of Human Sentiments' pedestal. When Chun later directed for Kong Ngee, he started to explore relationships between the sexes. The results were accomplished films that were innovative and much bolder than many of his contemporaries. Chun's women are often tougher and more multi-dimensional than his male characters, as demonstrated by the central characters - a mother and a daughter - both played by Hung Sin Nui in *The Rouge Tigress* (1955). The all-loving mother yields not to adverse circumstances, while the filial daughter remains steadfast in executing her scheme to seek vengeance.

At the launch of his directing career, Chor Yuen inevitably inherited his master's creative style but he would later set out to establish his own directions. Law Kar compared Chun Kim's *My Intimate Partner* (1960) with Chor Yuen's *The Dairy of a Husband* (1964), both dealing with the 'boy-meets-girl' subject matter. While the male characters uniformly come from the lower-middle class in former and concludes with an almost clichéd teaching of winning the beauties by holding one's feet firmly on the ground, Chor's film put its finger on the pulse and placed the male lead among the rank of the emerging middle-class, adding also a touch of complexity to the love he pursues.

Dr Sze cited *The Great Devotion* (1960) to juxtapose with Chun's *Parents' Hearts*. Released in the mid-1950s, *Parents' Hearts* exuded an aura of apprehensiveness about the future shared by the public at the time. And several years later in the

1960s when the social climate supported a more optimistic outlook, *The Great Devotion* also ended on a brighter note, with the character played by Cheung Wood-yau collecting his writing fees and embracing a brighter day ahead. Dr Sze also highlighted several of Chor's artistic achievements: 1) his contemporary outlook, and the major breakthrough with the depiction of lesbian love in *Intimate Confessions of a Chinese Courtesan* (1972). Chor also made a statement with his exposé of the exploitation of the female sex by chauvinistic Chinese male; 2) the intricate psychology of his characters, best seen in the Lily Ho character in *Chinese Courtesan* who transforms from an immaculate lady to a femme fatale; 3) his highly stylised cinematic techniques, such as the rich spectrum of colours and the eerie atmospheric build-up; the employment of long shots in filming scenes of grandeur film sets, and the minute detail and precision in set design exemplified by close-ups and slow-motion shots; 4) the blending of different elements, including action fight scenes, suspense, mystique, and eroticism, etc to enhance audience appeal.

Au-yeung Shing recalled the impact and shock upon his first viewing of Patrick Lung Kong's *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (1970). The film is one of the first attempts to explore wider and momentous social issues such as plagues and social uproars, which naturally called for scenes of a larger scale than many of its Cantonese contemporaries. The result is an overwhelming social realist characterised by location shooting and solid colours. Indeed, Lung's farsightedness and social sensitivity served well today's social discourses. The plague in Lung's film reenacts itself in the recent SARS outbreak, while the string of knock-on social issues such as labour disputes, and housing and medical crises remain problems to be tackled. Beside the exterior shots and street scenes, the role played by the media was also highlighted in Lung's film, all of which contributed to a sense of a 'public space'.



(Photos from left) Speakers: Au-yeung Shing, Dr Stephen Sze and Law Kar

Lung's films and his choice of subject matters may be said to convey overt moral and familial teachings, so much so that they exude a sense of 'simple righteousness'.

His daring experimentation and cosmic pity with even the most controversial subject matter was evident in the sketches of the 1967 riots in *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*. It is perhaps the director's sentimentality and didactic approach that compromised his ability in fairly and justifiably dealing with the core issue, as pointed out by some critics.

Dr Sze joined the queue of critics to praise Lung's cinematic technique, in particular his lively film language and the agile camera work clearly in debt to the edgy street style of the French New Wave. Au-yeung praises the editing of *Hiroshima 28*, which intertwined the main plot with flashbacks and the aftermath of the A-bomb to dwell into the inner world of the lead character.

Law Kar concluded that with the change of times, the responsibility of delving into social issues has been laid on the shoulders of other media, sadly relegating films to a pure entertainment form. The master and his two protégés have nevertheless left to posterity their explorations with intricate human relationships, and the working towards a harmonious co-existence between the individuals and their families and the society. (Collated by Wong Yue-hin) ◆

Shaws on Screen: Seminars

1. Melodrama & Martial Arts—The Shaw Style

To dwell on the Shaw treasure trove and to complement the HKFA screening programme *Shaws on Screen*, the first of *Shaws on Screen Seminars*, titled *Melodrama & Martial Arts - The Shaw Style*, kicked off on 12 April 2003, featuring panelists Cheng Pei-pei, Golden Chen Hung-lieh, Gu Feng, Wang Yu and Gordon Liu Chia-hui hailed from the Shaws martial arts stable. Their charismatic faces, for once concealed by the surgical masks that help preventing the spread of SARS, rather amusingly became reminiscent of the air of mystique and solemnity surrounding the chivalrous knights who roam freely the martial arts world. Casting aside on-screen personas, the panelists talked eloquently and fondly of their working relationship with acclaimed directors on Shaw films. Gu Feng praised Li Han-hsiang's thorough research for his palace epics and meticulous studies of set design down to the last detail. Golden Chen believed that King Hu's style was characterised by *mise-en-scène* and composition, and that his remarkable characterisation is achieved by wielding a unique colour palette and costumes. Cheng Pei-pei described Yue Feng as her mentor who warned her against the vanity of the show business, and that she should take hold of herself and always better herself as an actor, but

not a 'star'. Wang Yu remembered how Lau Kar-leung would strive to reinvent and reinvigorate the *wuxia* language in *Executioners from Shaolin* (1977) by designing a string of action sequences and dialogues, all to be executed in a single long shot. It took Wang and the rest of the cast three days to gain Lau's approving nod and finish the shot! Gordon Liu Chia-hui remembered how martial arts actors would supplement the rudimentary filming techniques with their kung fu skills having undergone real-life training themselves. It was indeed hard work shooting action films back in those days. Cheng also praised Run Run Shaw for his shrew leadership; she also expressed admiration for the Shaw star Linda Lin Dai who persisted in practising and perfecting dance routines for her films, and her warm, approachable personality. Chairing the session, HKFA Programmer Law Kar took the panelists down the memory lane, reminiscing the days when scriptwriting, rehearsals were buzzing at the Shaw studio. Thanks to their experience sharing, the veil worn by Shaws was momentarily lifted for the audience to take a glimpse of on and behind the scenes of the movie empire. (Collated by Edith Chiu) ●



Gu Feng, Cheng Pei-pei, Golden Chen Hung-lieh, Law Law Kar, Wang Yu and Gordon Liu Chia-hui
Kar and Wang Yu

Shaws on Screen: Seminars

2. Li Han-hsiang & Doe Ching, and Early Shaw Productions

Shaws' two main creative forces, Doe Ching and Li Han-hsiang, both departed the studio at one point only to make a detour and return with a new directorial style different from that of their earlier spell. A seminar entitled *Li Han-hsiang & Doe Ching, and Early Shaw Productions* presided over by HKFA Programmer Mr Law Kar was held on 10th May 2003 at the exhibition hall, inviting HKFA Research Officer Wong Ain-ling and film critic Sam Ho to discuss the works of the duo. Shaw marital arts star Ti Lung was the guest of honour.

The seminar began with a review of the duo's wenyi repertoires. Wong pointed out that Doe was one of the few Shaw directors who remained faithful to the *wenyi* genre, undeterred by the *wuxia* craze. He made mostly contemporary dramas, and had directed only one costume film, *Beyond the Grave* (1954) - an adaptation from the literary classic *Strange Tales from the Chinese Studio*. Doe majored in literature at university and was known to conceive his films in text form, most of which were turned into screenplays by himself. Chang Cheh once praised Doe for his modern style and held it in the same regard as European cinema. The mode of representation of European cinema, as Wong explained, differs from the narratives of Hollywood's productions, which are typically structured in four 'movements', in that it inclines to the sensitive, simplistic and nimble prose style. When Doe returned to Shaws after his tenure at Motion Picture and General Investment Co Ltd (MP & GI), his style changed. *Desire* (1959), *Twilight Hours* (1960), *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1960) explore the changing relationship between the sexes, and the signature song-and-dance extravaganzas in MP & GI films are given a second lease of life in *Les Belles* (1961), *The Blue and the Black* (1966, two parts). His later works became more commercialised and overly crafted - a sharp contrast to his earlier films which ooze with poetic spirit. He nevertheless managed to work magic with the clichéd story of *Love Without End* (1961). Similarly, despite the predictable plot, *The Golden Trumpet* (1961) has the trumpeter carry the moral weight of regaining one's dignity, while letting the camera run free to capture the real life street scenery of Hong Kong in the 1960s.



(From left) Ti Lung, Sam Ho, Law Kar and Wong Ain-ling

The fact that Doe Ching hailed from Shanghai, a metropolis, may explain why his works are told with urban sentiments. The Beijing-born Li Han-hsiang, on the other hand, inherited a strong mainland sensibility. Sam Ho's discussion focused on Li's

distinctive personal style. Li, a graduate from the National Art Institute, naturally had an eye for visual images, a strength which ironically crippled his narratives. During the Run Run Shaw reign, Li's works suffered due to the restricted budget and the studio's policy to keep churning out films. His creativity wasn't given a new lease until after Run Run Shaw took over the helm at the studio. Citing the opening scene of *Lady in Distress* (1957), Ho demonstrated Li's mastery orchestration of movements, characters and the camera by explaining how the four-minute dialogue-free segment was animated by the rich and diverse camera movements, accentuating the activities of Linda Lin Dai with agile and lively shots. Ho then took a scene from *A Mellow Spring* to show the director's persistence in visual spectacle. Li's sets and compositions are incredibly complicated, and his characters abundant. Ho describes it as 'an overly resplendent expressive style', resulting in its frail narratives. Li's orchestration of cinematic elements is as much his personal style as building his drama. Ho believed that Li, famous for his palace epics, would accomplish equally well with urban dramas. His historical films concerned less with giving a historical account than with depicting communication breakdown and human deceit in an enclosed space. In this respect, *A Mellow Spring* falls into this category. It could be said that Li's historical epic was essentially *wenyi* with a wider outlook.

Adding to the above discussions, Law Kar also made a major distinction between the two directors: Doe was influenced by western culture but favoured the traditional and virtuous woman; Li received a traditional education but was less interested in the traditional type, choosing instead his title women characters from the rank of the powerful, dominating, and extraordinary.

Ti Lung joined in the second half, recounting his Shaw acting career before an enthusiastic audience. Ti praised Li Han-hsiang for his professionalism and for helping him grasp the key to developing his characters. Li is an all-rounded artist who excelled in expressing different emotions, while Chang Cheh is a master of subtlety. Ti recalled some of the bittersweet moments of his career, and anecdotes including an episode of heating wine and enjoying his glass with the martial arts novelist Gu Long as well as a discussion on the martial arts with Tong Kai. The two-hour of lively accounts and in-depth discussions provided the occasion where the *wenyi* genre glittered along the *wuxia* genre under the Shaw roof. (Collated by Kiki Fung) ●

Shaws on Screen: Seminars

3. Let's Talk about Lam Fung

She was one of the studio's biggest stars - crowned the 'Jewel of Shaw', and the subject of the seminar held on 24th May. The highlight of the event was the interview excerpt of the veteran director-screenwriter Chan Wan on the Shaw star, Patricia Lam Fung, who first wrote to the director requesting an audition.

Nevertheless it was director Chow Sze-ching who gave Lam her breakthrough in acting and almost instantly shot her to stardom. Chan praised Lam as a gifted actress, whose success also attributed to her diligence. She trained hard in stage singing and movements for her debut *The Fairy Sleeves* (1957), a Cantonese opera film, and won applause from opera master and famed female impersonator Chiu Lan Fong. Lam also demonstrated her artistry in her all-singing, all-dancing role in *Glass Slippers* (1959). Being cast in diverse film roles also stretched Lam's abilities by feeding her with ever-changing screen personas in which she were equally adept, whether period or contemporary. HKFA programmer Law Kar also remarked how Raymond Chow at the Shaw publicity department got the publicity machine rolling for Lam by setting up a personal fan club and custom-made a western, modern image for the star. Sadly, when Lam departed Shaws, she not only left behind a publicity mastermind but also began to take up roles indiscriminately. Many Patricia Lam Fung fans present at the seminar nevertheless agreed unanimously that the star exuded the image of vibrant youth and was emblematic of the elegance, confidence and beauty of the contemporary woman. It was with the floor's enthusiastic response that the tribute to Patricia Lam Fung ended. (Collated by Edith Chiu)





The 14th Macau Arts Festival

Perhaps due to geographic proximity, nostalgic images of Macau were often captured and preserved in Hong Kong films. In this connection, the 14th Macau Arts Festival held earlier in March presented 'Memories of the Past - Film Cycle about Macau' to showcase six memorable features shot on location in the 'Monte Carlo of the Orient', including *Everlasting Love* (1955) and *Romance in the Boudoir* (1960). The event was curated by the HKFA programmer Law Kar and was held in association with the HKFA who also supplied the film prints. During the post-screening seminar, Law Kar and Macau historian Chan Shu-weng explored the history of Macau and how it was presented in the cinema. ◆



Picture shows Manuel U, Chief of Cultural Events Department, presenting a special gift to HKFA Acting Head Angela Tong.

Puppet Demonstration

The avid puppet collector played by child star Fung Bo-bo in *Puppet Princess* (1962) once charmed many young members of the audience with her collection consisting of dozens of adorable puppets. After the screenings of *Puppet Princess* on 8th and 23rd February, puppeteer Lotus Chan, alias Sister Lo Lo (see picture below), was invited to demonstrate the artistry and discipline of this highly animated art to the fascination of the young audience, who even got the chance to pull the strings themselves! ◆



Customer Liaison Meeting



The Customer Liaison Meeting was held on 10 May to answer queries from the public. In the above photo (from right) Venue Manager Edward Wong, Monique Shiu of Resource Centre, and Programmer Winnie Fu. ◆

International Museum Day, Hong Kong

The 3rd International Museum Day, Hong Kong was held from 16-18 May with 'Discovering Museums' as its theme, aiming at enhancing the communication between the museums and the public. Over twenty participating museums jointly organised more than 200 free activities for the public. The Museum Panorama was located at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza which was crowded with participants who had come to enjoy the games and raise queries about the museums. ◆

