

ALSO LIKE LIFE: THE FILMS OF HOU HSIAO-HSIEN

***New addition: Hou Hsiao-Hsien In Conversation
at BFI Southbank – Monday 14 September***



Thursday 13 August 2015, London

The BFI is delighted to announce that one of the leading figures of the Taiwanese New Wave **Hou Hsiao-Hsien**, whose latest film *The Assassin* won Best Director at this year's Cannes Film Festival, will make a very rare visit to the UK to take part in an *In Conversation* event at BFI Southbank. The event, which takes place on **Monday 14 September**, is part of **Also Life Life: The Films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien**, a major retrospective celebrating Hou's work, which takes place from 2 Sept – 6 Oct 2015 at BFI Southbank.

Hou-Hsiao-Hsien has helped put Taiwanese cinema on the international map with work that explores the island's rapidly changing present as well as its turbulent, often bloody past, and is one of the best examples in world cinema of a director who found his own distinctive style and voice while working on the job. The season will kick off with *Cute Girl* (1980), *Cheerful Wind* (1981) and *The Green Green Grass of Home* (1982), all starring Hong Kong pop star Kenny Bee; these early films offer a mixture of comedy and romance and begin to show Hou's interest in Taiwan's regional differences, a key theme of his later films. Hou's other early films such as *The Sandwich Man* (1983) and *The Boys from Fengkuei* (1983) dramatised engaging life stories – including his own in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* (1985).

By this mid-point in his career, Hou had begun to gain an international reputation for his style, often compared to Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu, and he won the Venice Golden Lion for *A City of Sadness* (1989) and a Cannes prize for *The Puppetmaster* (1993). Also screening will be Hou's most complex, but emotionally direct film *Good Men, Good Women* (1995) and *Flowers of Shanghai* (1998), which explores the manners and customs of the 'flower houses' or brothels of late-19th century Shanghai. Moving into the latter part of his career, the season will include *Millenium Mambo* (2001) starring Shu Qi (the star of this year's *The Assassin*) as a frequenter of the Taipei rave scene, who finds herself struggling to break free of an overly-possessive boyfriend; *Café Lumière* (2003), a hallucinatory picture of young singletons in Tokyo, made as an homage to Yasujirō Ozu in his centenary year; and Hou's tribute to Albert Lamorisse's classic *The Red Balloon*, *Flight of the Red Balloon* (2007), shot in Paris with a largely French cast including Juliette Binoche as a puppeteer working on a Chinese play. The season will also include introductory talks from season curator Richard I Suchenski (Bard College, NY) and film critic Tony Rayns.

International retrospective organized by Richard I Suchenski (Director, Center for Moving Image Arts at Bard College), in collaboration with the Taiwan Film Institute and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of China (Taiwan).



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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Season Listings:

Hou Hsiao-Hsien in Conversation

We are thrilled to announce that, as the highlight of a retrospective of his work, Hou Hsiao-Hsien will be making a very rare visit to Britain to appear on stage at BFI Southbank. He will be discussing his work with Tony Rayns, the world-renowned expert on Asian cinema, before taking questions from the audience.

Mon 14 Sep 18:15 NFT1

Tickets (at regular price) on sale to BFI Members: Fri 14 Aug 11:30am and to the public: Sat 15 Aug 11:30am

The Long View: An Introduction to Hou Hsiao-Hsien's Films

In a talk illustrated with film clips (including some rarities, showing Hou acting for other directors), film critic Tony Rayns will introduce Hou's remarkable career, his place in Taiwan's 'New Cinema' and his distinctive aesthetic of wide-angle shots, long takes and actor-led staging. A map to the road that's taken Hou from genre quickies to the 'Best Director' prize in Cannes.

Tickets £6.50

WED 2 SEP 18:15 NFT3

Also Like Life: Hou Hsiao-Hsien's Cinematic Aesthetics

In this illustrated talk, season curator Richard I Suchenski (joining us from Bard College, NY) will focus on the sophisticated, radically innovative, cinematic style of Hou Hsiao-Hsien. Hou's treatment of point-of-view, montage and elliptical storytelling reveals a cinema that places unusual demands on its viewer, but one that's bound up with the sympathetic observation of everyday experience.

Tickets £6.50

MON 21 SEP 18:15 BFI REUBEN LIBRARY

HHH: A Portrait of Hou Hsiao-Hsien

France-Taiwan 1997. Dir Olivier Assayas. With Chu Tienwen, Wu Nianzhen. 91min. Video. EST

Made for the *Cinéma, de notre temps* series, Assayas' very affectionate portrait establishes Hou as a quintessentially cinematic artist, deeply respectful of his collaborators and actors and committed to 'seeking truth from facts.' Alongside revelatory interviews with his regular scriptwriters, Assayas shows Hou's downtime: singing karaoke with Jack Kao and Lim Giong!

SAT 5 SEP 16:10 NFT2

SUN 6 SEP 20:15 NFT2

Cute Girl (aka Loveable You) Jiushi Liuliu de Ta

Taiwan 1980. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Kenny Bee, Feng Feifei, Anthony Chan. 90min. Film. Mandarin with EST
Hou's directing debut was typical of Taiwan entertainment movies in 1980: a frisky romcom about a young land surveyor (Hong Kong pop star Kenny Bee) seducing the daughter of a wealthy industrialist away from her

uptight fiancé Ma, guided by the song of an oriole. Countryside settings and the role of a bratty orphan boy suggest where Hou's heart really lies.

WED 2 SEP 20:30 NFT3

SAT 5 SEP 18:30 NFT2

Cheerful Wind (aka Play While You Play) Feng'er Tita Cai

Taiwan 1981. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Kenny Bee, Feng Feifei, Anthony Chan. 90min. Film. Mandarin with EST
There's less comedy and more romance in Hou's follow-up to *Cute Girl*, although all three stars return. This time Kenny Bee plays a blind flautist whose life is turned around by his encounter with a director of adverts and his charming stills photographer. The scenes in a fishing village prefigure Hou's later interest in 'localism' and Taiwan's regional differences.

THU 3 SEP 20:40 NFT2

SUN 6 SEP 18:20 NFT2

The Green Green Grass of Home Zai Na Hepan Qing Cao Qing

Taiwan 1982. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Kenny Bee, Jiang Ling, Chen Meifeng. 91min. Film. Mandarin with EST
Hou's third and last vehicle for Kenny Bee is distinctly more serious-minded than the first two. He plays a city boy who moves to a small southern town to replace his sister as a schoolteacher; he gets involved in local squabbles, conservation issues... and romance. Hou had started composing his shots in deep focus, but still enjoyed the odd scatological gag.

FRI 4 SEP 20:30 NFT2

SUN 13 SEP 16:00 NFT2

The Sandwich Man Erzi de Da Wan'ou

Taiwan 1983. Dirs Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Tsang Jong-Cheung, Wan Ren. With Chen Bozheng, Yang Liyin. 100min. Film. Mandarin, Taiwanese with EST

One of the foundation-stones of Taiwan's 'new cinema,' this social realist feature comprises three episodes drawn from stories by Huang Chunming. Hou's episode is called *Son's Big Doll* and is set in 1962. A young couple with an infant son are trapped in poverty; the man's casual work in a clown costume only tightens the trap. Keenly observed and very touching.

MON 7 SEP 20:40 NFT2

FRI 11 SEP 18:30 NFT2

The Boys from Fengkuei (aka All the Youthful Days) Fenggui Lai de Ren

Taiwan 1983. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Doze Niu, Zhang Shi, To Tsunghua. 99min. Film. Mandarin with EST
Three young men from Fengkuei in the Penghu Islands move to Kaohsiung, Taiwan's southern port city, in search of brighter futures. They make every mistake country hicks can make, but their brushes with factory work, conmen, crime and women provide a steep learning curve. This is where Hou came into his own; the stylised social realism is magical.

TUE 8 SEP 20:45 NFT2

SUN 13 SEP 18:10 NFT2

A Summer at Grandpa's Dongdong de Jiaqi

Taiwan 1984. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Wang Qiguang, Gu Jun, Mei Fang. 98mins. Film. Mandarin with EST. PG

Based on writer Chu Tienwen's childhood memories, this small classic of humanist cinema helped build Hou's international reputation. Circumstances force a father (Edward Yang in a cameo) to park his young son and daughter with their grandparents for the summer. The kids taste rural life for the first time and experience formative joys and terrors as they run wild.

WED 9 SEP 18:20 NFT1

FRI 11 SEP 20:50 NFT1

Taipei Story Qingmei Zhuma

Taiwan 1985. Dir Edward Yang. With Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Cai Qin, Ke Yizheng. 110min. Film. Mandarin, Chinese with EST

Hou co-produced and starred in Edward Yang's masterly second feature, about a couple engaged since youth who are drifting apart as they move into adulthood. He plays Lon, a 'good ol' boy' nostalgic for simpler times,

while his long-term fiancée Chin is a woman much more in tune with Taipei's emerging future. It's a film rich in piercing emotional truths.

SAT 12 SEP 18:10 NFT1

WED 16 SEP 20:30 NFT2

The Time to Live and the Time to Die Tongnian Wangshi

Taiwan 1985. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With You Anshun, Tien Feng, Mei Fang. 136min. Film. Mandarin with EST
Hou himself narrates his own family history in the great film that came to define 'New Taiwan Cinema.' In the 50s, Ah Hsiao is the second son in a family of five kids; the family moved to Taiwan from China in 1948, for his father's health. He doesn't do well at school and seems poised to join a teenage gang, but life has more interesting paths lined up for him.

MON 14 SEP 20:20 NFT1

FRI 18 SEP 20:20 NFT2

Dust in the Wind Lianlian Feng Chen

Taiwan 1987. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Wang Chingwen, Xin Shufen, Li Tianlu. 110min. Film. Mandarin with EST. 15

Writer Wu Nianzhen's memory of growing up in a mining town and being jilted by his childhood sweetheart while he was away doing military service provided the backbone for one of Hou's simplest and most beautiful films. Tackling native Taiwanese lives (rather than immigrants from Mainland China) for the first time, Hou casts the great Li Tianlu as the boy's salty granddad.

THU 17 SEP 20:45 NFT1

MON 21 SEP 18:00 NFT1

Daughter of the Nile Niluohe Nüer

Taiwan 1987. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Yang Fan, Jack Kao, Li Tianlu. 93min. Film. Mandarin with EST. PG
Hou's first look at modern life in Taipei centres on a girl (fast-food server Xiaoyang, played by pop queen Yang Lin) whose mind is elsewhere – in manga-led dreams of ancient Egypt. She has a crush on her brother's friend, but he's a gigolo in trouble with gangsters... Hou's long-take aesthetic hits its stride in this elegiac tale of a woman in the margins of a man's world.

SAT 19 SEP 15:40 NFT2

THU 24 SEP 20:45 NFT2

A City of Sadness Beiqing Chengshi + intro by season curator Richard I Suchenski

Taiwan 1989. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Tony Leung, Xin Shufen, Li Tianlu. 158min. Film. Mandarin, Taiwanese, Cantonese, Shanghainese, Japanese with EST. 15

Hou's loose trilogy of films on Taiwan's modern history started with this dark family saga, set in the years after Japan's colonial rule ended in 1945. All the sons in the Lin family have trouble, none more than Wenqing (Leung), an idealistic deaf-mute. Taiwan audiences flocked to a movie which overturned political censorship taboos, and Venice awarded it the Golden Lion.

MON 21 SEP 20:40 NFT1

The Puppetmaster Xi Meng Rensheng + intro by season curator Richard I Suchenski*

Taiwan 1993. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Li Tianlu, Lim Giong, Cai Chennan. 142min. Film. Mandarin, Taiwanese, Japanese with EST. 15

Having cast the 84-year-old Li Tianlu in three films, Hou decided to use the real-life master of Taiwanese puppetry as his touchstone for an account of pre-war life under the Japanese colonists. Li urbanely narrates episodes from his personal history, and Hou dramatises them as tableaux to be explored and savoured. The atmosphere is seductively languorous and dreamlike.

SUN 20 SEP 17:30 NFT2

WED 23 SEP 17:50 NFT1*

Good Men, Good Women Hao Nan Hao Nü + intro by season curator Richard I Suchenski*

Taiwan 1995. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Annie Shizuka Inoh, Lim Giong, Jack Kao. 108min. Film. Mandarin, Taiwanese, Cantonese, Japanese with EST

With its three levels of storytelling, this is Hou's most complex film – but also one of his most emotionally direct. An actress lands a role playing a real-life heroine of the anti-Japanese resistance in the war, later

accused of being a communist in the Taiwan of the 50s. But as she mentally rehearses the script, she's beset with problems – including the murder of her boyfriend.

SUN 20 SEP 20:45 NFT1

TUE 22 SEP 18:10 NFT3*

Goodbye South, Goodbye Nanguo Zaijian, Nanguo

Taiwan 1996. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Annie Shizuka Inoh, Lim Giong, Jack Kao. 112min. Film. Mandarin, Taiwanese with EST

Hou's valediction to the Taiwan he loved is a kind of road movie, sampling the misadventures of a young delinquent couple and an older gangster as they drive in diminishing circles from one crazed get-rich-quick scheme to the next. It's a sprawling, semi-improvised film, full of exciting experiments with colour, pace, movement and points-of-view.

TUE 22 SEP 20:40 NFT3

MON 28 SEP 18:20 NFT1

Flowers of Shanghai Hai Shang Hua

Taiwan-Japan 1998. Dir Hou Hsiao- Hsien. With Tony Leung, Carina Lau, Rebecca Pan. 113min. Film. Shanghainese, Cantonese with EST

Hou's druggiest film (much opium is smoked) explores the manners and mores of a closed world: the 'flower houses' or brothels of late-19thcentury Shanghai. Civil servant Wang (Leung) is an interloper here, causing trouble by shifting from one woman to another. Hou's dream-like study of these opulent enclaves is interrupted by one (crucial) point-of-view shot.

+ The Electric Princess Picture House

Dianji Guan. Taiwan 2007. 4min. EST

Hou's brilliant vignette of film-going in the good old days.

WED 30 SEP 18:00 NFT2

MON 5 OCT 18:00 NFT3

Millennium Mambo Qianxi Manbo

Taiwan-France 2001. Dir Hou Hsiao- Hsien. With Shu Qi, Jack Kao, Duan Junhao. 105min. Film. Mandarin, Japanese with EST

Shu Qi (star of this year's *The Assassin*) makes her first, radiant appearance in a film by Hou playing Vicky, night-blooming denizen of Taipei's rave scene. She's under the thumb of an ultra-possessive boyfriend and keeps promising herself that she'll break free – but her plan relies on help from a gangster with problems of his own. This is Hou at his most rhapsodic.

THU 1 OCT 20:45 NFT2

SAT 3 OCT 15:30 NFT2

Café Lumière Kohi Jikou/Kafei Shiguang

Japan 2003. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Hitoto Yo, Asano Tadanobu, Hagiwara Masato. 103min. Film. EST. U

Invited to make a centenary homage to Ozu, Hou came up with this hallucinatory picture of young singletons in Tokyo. Yoko devotes her time to researching a pre-war composer; her platonic friend Hajime sells second-hand books and roves Tokyo's vast rail network. Plotless but crammed with resonant incident, the film muses on the 'Starbucks generation,' time and light.

FRI 2 OCT 18:20 NFT2

SUN 4 OCT 20:30 NFT2

Three Times Zuihao de Shiguang

Taiwan-France 2005. Dir Hou Hsiao- Hsien. With Shu Qi, Chang Chen, Mei Fang. 116min. Film. Mandarin, Taiwanese with EST. 12A

The times are 1966, 1911 and 2005, and what happens in each is that two possible or actual lovers – played by Shu Qi and Chang Chen – go through the ups and downs of a romance. 1966 is the most romantic episode, rooted in Hou's memories of pool-halls and *The Platters*; 1911 is a pastiche silent movie, and 2005 is a darker coda to *Millennium Mambo*.

+ La Belle Époque Huangjin zhi Xian

Taiwan 2011. 6min. EST

A mother (Mei Fang) passes on family heirlooms to her daughter (Shu Qi).

SUN 27 SEP 15:50 NFT2
SAT 3 OCT 18:10 NFT2
MON 5 OCT 20:40 NFT1

Flight of the Red Balloon Le Voyage du ballon rouge

France-Taiwan 2007. Dir Hou Hsiao-Hsien. With Juliette Binoche, Song Fang, Hippolyte Girardot. 115min. Film. French, Mandarin with EST. PG

Shot in Paris with a largely French cast, Hou's mysterious tribute to the Albert Lamorisse classic *The Red Balloon* stars Juliette Binoche as a puppeteer working on a Chinese play – and hiring a Chinese child-minder to keep an eye on her young son. Human relationships never run smooth in Hou's films, but the balloon plays a benign role in bringing people together.

SUN 4 OCT 18:10 NFT2
TUE 6 OCT 20:40 NFT1

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***** PICTURE DESK *****

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