

###

REEL ASIAN BOOSTS HOMEGROWN TALENT WITH CANADIAN FEATURES AND SHORT FILMS

Toronto, October 6, 2015 – The Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival (Reel Asian), presented by National Bank, celebrates its 19th annual edition from November 5 to 15, 2015. Each year, Reel Asian highlights the cinematic accomplishments of Asian Canadian filmmakers. A record 42% of this year's line-up are Canadian titles, including 10 world premieres. Reel Asian is honoured to welcome over 30 Canadian filmmakers, artists and guest speakers to the festival. Canadian highlights include:

OPENING NIGHT GALA PRESENTATION: DRIVING WITH SELVI

Thu Nov 5, 7:30pm – Isabel Bader Theatre

Reel Asian is proud to open its 19th edition with *Driving With Selvi*, an inspiring documentary about Selvi, who ran away from an abusive child bride marriage and changed her life to become Karnataka's first female taxi driver. With more than 25 years of experience, Elisa Paloschi is a documentary filmmaker, producer, cinematographer, and president of Eyesfull, a Toronto-based independent production company dedicated to diverse and socially relevant documentary films. Over a decade, Paloschi follows Selvi as she navigates through the harsh realities that millions of women and girls in India face. In a society where women are often considered expendable or worthless, Selvi refuses to accept this estimation for herself. Through Selvi's eyes, the audience is taken on an intimate journey of healing, overcoming obstacles and fulfilling dreams.

CLOSING NIGHT GALA PRESENTATION: SEOUL SEARCHING

Fri Nov 13, 8:00pm – Isabel Bader Theatre

Canadian-born, Korean American filmmaker Benson Lee (*Planet B-Boy*) returns to Toronto with *Seoul Searching*, a raucous Sundance Film Festival selection that had audiences laughing, crying, and cheering on their feet in 2015 (while rocking out to a stunningly comprehensive 80's soundtrack). In the 1980s, the Korean government began a summer camp for gyopo (foreign-born) teenagers to visit the motherland. The government would re-establish ties with the diaspora, parents would get a sponsored trip, and teenagers would learn about Korean culture. What could possibly go wrong? *Seoul Searching* is based on a true story of one of the summer camps that took place in 1986.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION AT THE AGA KHAN MUSEUM: MINA WALKING

Thu Nov 12, 8:00pm – The Aga Khan Museum

Reel Asian is partnering once again with the Aga Khan Museum to present the Toronto premiere of *Mina Walking*, the debut feature of Canadian filmmaker Yosef Baraki which had its world premiere in Berlin. Mina is a typical feisty and energetic 12-year-old girl, except she lives in modern day Kabul, Afghanistan and her circumstances are anything but typical. After losing her mother to a Taliban attack, Mina is left alone to take care of the household, looking after her senile grandfather, while her drug addict father wastes away. Eager to learn, Mina must skip school in order to earn a meager living for the household peddling souvenirs on the street.

Dedicated to the preservation of Islamic arts and culture, the Aga Khan Museum will house collections of Islamic art and heritage, including artefacts from the private collections of His Highness the Aga Khan, and opened to the public on September 2014. Reel Asian is the first international film festival to collaborate with the Museum.

**CANADIAN SPOTLIGHT ARTIST
RETROSPECTIVE ON RANDALL OKITA**

Sat Nov 7, 4:00pm – AGO Jackman Hall (Shorts Presentation)

Reel Asian has followed Randall Okita's work as it has become progressively more ambitious, exhibited and awarded. Born and raised in Calgary, Alberta, Randall Okita has lived and worked in Japan, Vancouver and Toronto. His visual artworks have been commissioned and shown in group and solo exhibitions. His films have been awarded nationally and internationally, broadcast on television and screened at festivals and theatres around the world.

As this year's Canadian Spotlight Artist, and in partnership with the Robert Kananaj Gallery, Reel Asian is presenting *Things I Can't Tell You*, an exhibition featuring three artworks that correlate to three of Okita's short films.

Exhibition Dates at Robert Kananaj Gallery 172 St. Helens Avenue, Toronto ON

Saturday November 7th: Gallery Opening

Sunday November 8th - Saturday November 28th: Open Tues - Sat 11AM – 6PM

Reel Asian is also hosting the spotlight screening of Okita's shorts, *Retrospective on Randall Okita*, where the artist presents a series of short films and discusses the influences and processes involved in *Portrait as a Random Act of Violence*, *Machine with Wishbone*, *Fish in Barrel*, *No Contract*, and *The Weatherman and the Shadowboxer*.

SHORTS PRESENTATION: BORN TO RUN

Balikbayans (director Alex Humilde, Canada 2015) is a documentary that shares the experiences of three Filipinos living in Ontario who have acquired "VIP" status as *balikbayans* - those who have moved abroad, and return to the Philippines to share their fortunes and experiences. *A Rose, A Fisheye, and a Line* (director Rekha Rmachandran, Canada 2015) explores the symbolism and significance of her family names in relation to place and identity, and her own mixed-race family. *Go For Broke* (director Aram Siu Wai Collier, Canada 2015) is an Altman-esque look inside the world of red envelope artists and collectors, and material culture in Chinese diaspora.

YOUTH SHORTS PRESENTATION: THE WORLD'S A STAGE

Way's Favourite Machine (directors Gian-Paolo Mendoza and Chris Cheung, Canada 2015) is documentary on a man who is nostalgic for Dance Dance Revolution. *Tanabata* (director Annie Amaya, Canada 2014) is an animated short based on a Japanese legend of star-crossed lovers. *Flamenco* (director Gloria Ui Yong Kim, Canada 2015) is a dance film produced as the winner of Reel Asian's So You Think You Can Pitch competition. *BAM* (director Howie Shia, Canada 2015) is a short animation about a young boxer who is struggling to contain the rage that roils inside him.

SHORTS PRESENTATION: YOUTH VIDEO PRODUCTION WORKSHOP: UNSUNG VOICES 4

(Directors: Seden Lai, Bruce Ravichandran, Lakshya Dhugana, Ammar Keshodia, Melissa Tran, Iris Ni, Anthony Tran, Natalie Yiu, Veronica Tsui, and Camille Bertrand-Morel, Canada 2015)

Unsung Voices 4 brings together a group of ambitious young first-time filmmakers, ages 16 to 24, who each took on the challenge to produce a short video in only ten weeks.

YOUTH SHORTS PRESENTATION: LUCKY TOWN

Nayan and the Evil Eye (director Shaleen Sangha, Canada 2014) is based on an old superstition, where a young boy finds a mysterious glass eye and discovers its strange power. *Ah Poh* (director Kendra Legault, Canada 2015) is a short documentary where the filmmaker explores her relationship with her Hakka grandmother and a family history she never knew existed. *The Ghost of Grandpa Tong* (director Celeste Koon, Canada 2015) is a short comedy from the winner of last year's So You Think You Can Pitch competition, where a family continues to pressure each other from beyond the grave. *Mattress* (director Michelle Kee, Canada 2014) is a comedy about a suburban war sparked by the improper disposal of a mattress.

SHORTS PRESENTATION: BADLANDS

Vishal (director Sumit Judge, Canada 2015) is about Vishal, a 22-year old international student, who finds himself in a dingy, crowded basement, trying to balance work and school. *Paradise Island* (director Kathleen Jayme, Canada 2015) documents the everyday lives of local children in Boracay, Philippines, who make sandcastles for money. *Second Sun* (Leslie Supnet, Canada 2014) is an experimental piece that shows a post-apocalyptic imagining of the birth of our Second Sun.

SHORTS PRESENTATION: HUNGRY HEART

Sun (director Eui Yong Zong, Canada 2015) is about hair salon employee Sun, who discovers that the man she's been secretly in love with is going back to Korea for military service. *This Home is Not Empty* (director Carol Nguyen, Canada 2015) wanders around a miniature house made entirely out of paper.

MEDIA CONTACT

Virginia Kelly, V Kelly & Associates – 416-466-9799 – info@vkpr.ca
Visit www.reelasian.com for further press information, including digital images, press releases, and accreditation.

- 30 -