Reel Asian Festival Group
with Canasian Artists Group

toronto reel asian international

1st Annual Asian Film Festival
November 20-23, 1997

Bloor Cinema • John Spotton Theatre
506 Bloor St. West 150 John St. • Richmond St. West


Yellow 3


Automatic Writing 13


Chinese Chocolate 7


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Strawberry Fields 2


Sunsets 12

Welcome to the first annual Toronto Reel Asian International film festival. The United States presently hosts an Asian film festival in numerous major cities, including New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and Seattle. Despite the significant size of Asian communities in Canada, there has not been an annual Asian film festival nationwide, until this year.

1997 marks the exciting launch of two Asian film festivals, Vancouver Asian Film Festival in September and now Toronto Reel Asian International.

Although the festival will present a selection of Asian international cinema in the future, we have chosen in our inaugural year, to showcase exclusively independent works by Asian North American directors.

With the rising popularity of Asian directors such as John Woo and Jackie Chan in the west, and their increased presence in the mainstream, there is a growing misconception that there is also an increase of Asian North American images. Although we celebrate the success of Asian national cinemas in the international arena, it cannot replace the the importance of diverse and native Asian North American perspectives.

The aesthetic of the festival is not simple or reducible. This years' festival is a platform for the full range of artistic endeavours by Asian North American filmmakers, from the mainstream to the esoteric, from the formal to purely entertaining. What the films do have in common are that they are auteur works, independently produced and speaking an original and stimulating voice. Many of the works are first films by young directors, fresh and hip with a pop sensibility such as Yellow and Sunsets. Others such as Strawberry Fields and Automatic Writing are very personal renderings by acclaimed independent directors.

We are proud to present Toronto premiers of many exciting and new work. ENJOY!

Anita Lee
Director/Programmer

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The Toronto Reel Asian International 1997
presented by the Toronto Reel Asian
International Festival Group,
in association with Canasian Artists Group

November 20-23, 1997
at the Bloor Cinema, 506 Bloor St. West

and the John Spotton Theatre, 150 John Street.

Executive Director/Programmer
Anita Lee

Associate Directors
Andrew Sun, Ann Chiu (Corporate Development)

Corporate Development and Comunications
K. Yu/(Blue Moon Communications

Publicist
Shelly Hong

Catalogue/Poster Designer John Wen
Additional Catalogue Design David Brown & Claman Chu

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The Toronto Reel Asian International
P.O. Box 364 Station P, 704 Spadina Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S 2S9. tel/fax: (416)
588-6976. Email: aleeron@ibm.net

toronto reelasian international 1997

schedule

Thursday, November 20, 1997 — OPENING NIGHT FILMS
Bloor Cinema 7 pm — **Strawberry Fields** (Canadian Premiere)
9 pm — **Yellow** (Canadian Premiere)

Friday, November 21, 1997
John Spotton Theatre 7 pm — ***Not The Joy Luck Club*** with
Ten Little Dumplings,
One Hundred Eggs A Minute,
Under The Willow Tree
9 pm — **Chinese Chocolate**

Saturday, November 22, 1997
John Spotton Theatre 7 pm — **Jumping At Shadows,**
Love Story
Isamu Noguchi: Stones and Paper
9 pm — **Shopping for Fangs**

Sunday, November 23, 1997
Bloor Cinema 5 pm — ***GenerAsian X*** with
Fish And Chips, Hing Dai And The Man,
Tough Bananas, Cowgirl, Mouse,
Silencio
7 pm — **Sunsets** (Canadian Premiere)
9 pm — CLOSING NIGHT FILM
Automatic Writing (Canadian Premiere)

workshops

John Spotton Theatre
Saturday, November 22, 1997
1-3 pm — **Role Call: Non-traditional Casting Panel**
facilitator Kishwar Iqbal (Goddard & Associates), panelists Karen Hazzard (casting director), Shari Caldwell (Caldwell & Co.), Jane Luk (actor/filmmaker), M.J. Kang (writer/actor), Thomas Yee (Asian talent Talents)
Saturday, November 22, 1997
3-5 pm — **Facing Off: Producer Master Class with Terence Chang**
facilitator Anita Lee

VENUES
Bloor Cinema, 506 Bloor Street West
John Spotton Theatre, 150 John Street @ Richmond St. West

strawberry fields

Thursday, November 20, 1997
Bloor Cinema, 7 pm



Strawberry Fields
(1997) USA, 90 min.
Colour/35mm
director Rea Tajiri, producers Rea Tajiri & Jason Kliot
Writer: Kerri Sakamoto

Principal cast: Suzy Nakamura, James Sie, Marilyn Tokuda, Chris Tashima
Print source: Open City Films, 198 Sixth Ave., New York, NY,

Opening night presentation 1

Strawberry Fields, by Chicago director Rea Tajiri and scripted by Torontonian Kerri Sakamoto is both a road movie and a coming of a age tale. Set in the Aquarius age of free love and anti-Vietnam War protest, a young Japanese American girl goes through her own social upheaval. Tortured by her sister's recent death and frustrated by her bickering parents' lack of communication, she breaks out of the conundrum with her boyfriend on a journey from Chicago to California. Did we also mention she's also a match stick-flicking pyromaniac and is nagged by her late sister's ghost? But what starts out as a road trip of escape soon turns into a deeper sojourn as the character arrives at the reservation where her family was interned thirty years ago. Full of evocative editing and dreamy sequences, Tajiri's touching film travels a path that enlightens both the character's personal identity and the painful history of Japanese-American internment. This is a mighty impressive first feature from the award-winning Japanese American artist, who's previous work in documentary has established her as a filmmaker to watch. In *Strawberry Fields,* Tajiri has fused the anger of domestic suffocation and silent shame of cultural oppression in a film that is sure to fire up your passion.

yellow



Thursday, November 20, 1997
Bloor Cinema
9 pm

Yellow
(1996) USA, 90 min.
Colour/35mm
director Chris Chan Lee, producers Taka Arai, David Yang & Chris Chan Lee
Writer: Chris Chan Lee

Principal cast: Soon Teck Oh, Michael Chung, Mia Suh, Emily Kuroda, Lela Lee, John Cho, Burt Bulos
Print source: Taka Arai, 3661 Colonial Ave., Los Angeles, CA, 90066

Opening night presentation 2

Eight Korean-American friends are on their high school graduation night, but instead of celebrating, one's family convenience store has been robbed. This particular hesitant young man now face the wrath of his oppressive and patriarchal father who will surely skin him for the stolen $1,500 from the till. It's up to his buddies to come up with a solution. Over this one fateful night, they come with harebrained schemes, goof at their own suburbia hellhole, while at the same time consider what their individual futures may hold. Chris Chan Lee's kick-ass movie has received much critical praise and it's most often called *Korean American Graffiti*. The episodic nature of the film, its ensemble cast, the way it expertly switches from comedic to sober situations and its penetrating look at coming of age Korean-American teens strike a deep chord to all youth, Asians and non-Asian. And with an appealing and wonderful set of talents who bring unique characters to life, *Yellow* ushers in a class of new Asian-American actors who should soon graduate to celebrities.

not the joy luck club

Friday, November 21, 1997
John Spotton Theatre
7 pm

Ten Little Dumplings
(1995) Canada, 9 min. Colour/16mm
director & producer Larissa Fan
Print source: Larissa Fan, 197 Spadina Rd., Apt. #3, Toronto, On.

The director's grandfather is a honoured man because he had ten sons who all became successful men of their own. But Fan, in a touching and personal film haiku, wonders out loud about why her one aunt and the grandmother who bore all those sons remains in the family background.

One Hundred Eggs A Minute
(1996) USA, 23 min. B&W/16mm
director Anita Chang, producers Anita Chang & Jeff Adachi
Print source: Anita Chang, 1012A Shotwell St., San Francisco, CA, 94110

An Asian-American woman recalls her childhood as part of a family with a fortune cookie factory in San Francisco, which has since become a garage. With the strange way memory works, it's always the trivial minutiae which has the most lasting impression.



Under The Willow Tree
(1997) Canada, 52 min. colour/16mm
director Dora Nipp, producer Margaret Wong
Print source: National Film Board, PO Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville, Montreal, PQ, H3C 3H5

We know about the men who left their families in China to come and work in the land of the Gold Mountain, but little is known about the few pioneering Chinese women who also were lured here. This story of the first generation of courageous women who were shipped to the new world to marry men they've never met before and who had to deal with the sexism and racism of the time, is a bittersweet and important part of Canadian history.

chinese chocolate



Friday, November 21,
1997 John Spotton
Theatre
9pm.

Chinese Chocolate
(1996) Canada, 99 min.
Colour/35mm
directors Yan Cui & Qi Chang,
producers Stacey Donen,
Qi Chang & Yan Cui
Writers: Yan Cui, Qi Chang

Principal cast: Diana Peng,
Shirley Cui, Bo Z. Wang,
James Purcell, Henry Wang,
Fei Gao.
Print source: Yan Cui & Qi
Chang,

Two mainland Chinese women arrive in Toronto on the same plane. One is naive and nubile, literally fresh off the plane (FOP?). The other is a long suffering wife hoping to reunite with her husband. They don't know each other but their worlds will become connected soon enough as they discover the trials and tribulations of the new country. Yan Qui's and Qi Chang's quiet meditation on assimilation – and on the difficulty of finding love in a cold place like Canada – speaks from the heart and the mind. And it's not afraid to deal with its Asian females as sexually empowered beings. The younger woman's exploitation isn't portrayed with stereotypical salacious melodrama. The elder woman's betrayal by her husband and other men never resorts to tired *Madame Butterfly* tragic hyperbole either. This sensitive Canadian production simply doesn't tug cheaply at our heartstrings. Instead, *Chinese Chocolate* demands its heroines put up a fight. If anything, Yan and Qi could have given us more on the women and less on the minor male characters, but that's asking for more icing on this *Chocolate* cake.

stones and paper

Saturday, November 22, 1997
John Spotton Theatre
7 pm

Love Story
director & producer Ayana Osada
(1997) USA, 20 min. B&W/16mm
Print source: Asian Cinevisions, East Broadway, New York, NY, 10002

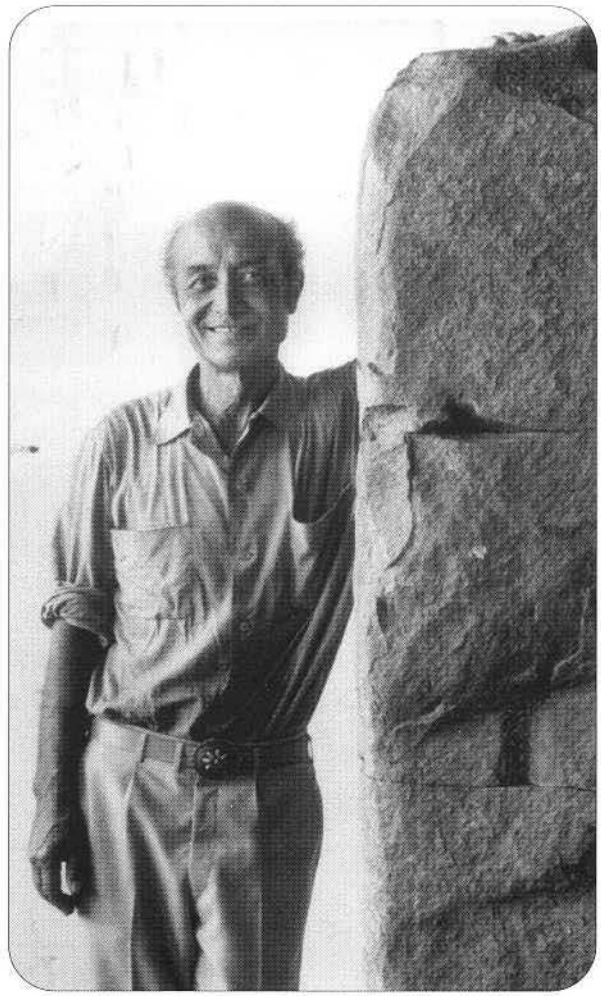
Osada, the first recipient of the Ang Lee fellowship at NYU, creates an understated and poetic narrative of a love triangle between a woman and two men. In a style reminiscent of early Jim Jarmush, Maya is in love with Thomas who is in love with Dan, who is in love with Maya. Passions and longings are revealed visually instead of by dialogue.

Jumping At Shadows
(1997) USA, 6 min. colour/16mm
director & producer Steve Yamane
Print source: Steve Yamane, 505 23rd Ave., San Francisco, CA, 94121

More than an experimental film, this is a three year travel diary through Paris, Tokyo, Los Angeles and San Francisco. The jumpy footage is enhanced with a strangely hypnotic soundtrack.

Isamu Noguichi: Stones And Paper
director Hiro Narita, producers Steve Burns & William Smock
(19970 USA, 60 min. Colour/16mm
print source: Asian Cinevisions, East Broadway, New York, NY, 10002

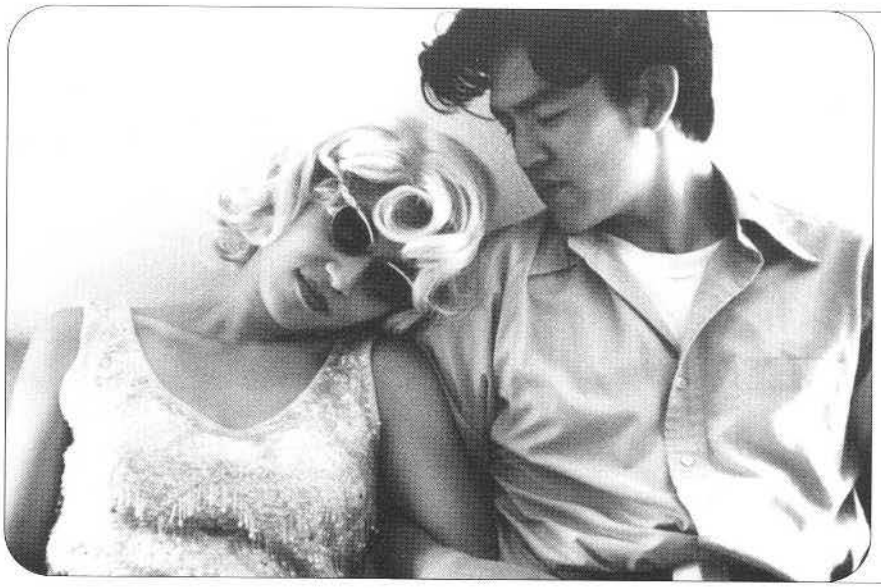
Sculptor and environmental artist, Isamu Noguchi is one of the most significant and important artists of this century. Besides his innovative and refined aesthetics, Noguchi lived a most unique life. Born to an Irish-American mother and Japanese father at the turn of the century, Noguichi lived in two worlds and never felt at home at either one. He resented his Japanese father for walking out on his mother, but he also volunteered to join his fellow Japanese-Americans in an internment camp during the Scodn World War as a means of protest. In his art, he combined Japan's rigorous discipline and zen fluidity, with America's ambition and modernity. Noguichi essentially created his own world with art. This thorough documentary presents us with a penetrating look Noguchi's life and work.



Love Story and Isamu Noguichi: Stones and Paper is part of the National Tour of the 20th Asian American International Film Festival organized and programmed by Asian Cinevison, a not-for-profit media arts center based in New York City.

shopping for fangs

Saturday, November 22,
John Spotton Theatre
9pm.



shopping for fangs
(1997) Canada/USA, 90 min.
Colour/35mm
directors Quentin Lee & Justin Lin, producer Quentin Lee
Writers: Quentin Lee, Justin Lin, Dan Alvarado
Principal cast: Radmar Jao, Jeanne Chin, Clint Jung, Lela Lee, John Cho, Peggy Ahn, Scott Eberlein
Print source: de/center productions
840 S. Serrano Avenue Suiete 608 L.A.
CA 90005

The riffs from Wong Kar-Wai and John Woo may be obvious, but *Shopping For Fangs* is more than just a derivative knock-off. It is, without doubt, a devastatingly funky look at urban Asian-American life – specifically, dissatisfied twenty-somethings in L.A., in college, in dead-end jobs or in slackdom inertia. Not surprisingly, co-directors Justin Lin and Quebec-native Quentin Lee live in such a world. They made this feature between their UCLA film assignments. Also, it should not surprise that they share affinities with both the vernacular of American indie cinema and the gonzo spirit of Hong Kong's celluloid hits. But beyond its hip edits and bizarro plot concoctions – a sexually frustrated guy slowly tranforms into a werewolf; a gun-toting, blond-wigged lesbian invades the life of a suffocating housewife – the character's dilemmas and frustrations are real to both the chuppie set and the many Asians who don't have good pay, good job or a good-car. With humour, style and wicked parodies, Lin and Lee take Asian American cinema into a 90s Tarantino diaspora. *Shopping For Fangs* is our kind of fictitious pulp.

shorts program:
GenerAsian X

Sunday, November 23,
Bloor Cinema
5pm.

Hing Dai And The Man
director Patrick Yu, producers Patrick Yu & Kevin Fukanaga
(1997) USA, 14 min. Colour/16mm
Print source: Patrick Yu, 756 S. Orange Dr., LA, CA, 90036

The theme from Superfly introduce this short but dynamic moral tale about two drug runners – one Chinese, the other white – who are confronted by a motorcyle cop. The pig turns out to be a Chinese brotherman. Now what?

Silencio
director & Michael Arago
(1996) USA, 9 min. Colour/16mm
Print source: Michael Arago, 341 Baltimore Way, San Francisco, CA, 94112

A young Filipino in the 50s is moving quickly up the corporate ladder. His boss thinks he's Italian. But what will he do when one day walking with his boss he runs into his more obviously Asian uncle

Fish and Chips
director Justin Lin USA, 1996 col 16mm/11min. Print source: Asian Cinevisions.

Mini dramas unfold on both sides of the counter of a family run mom and pop restaurant.

Tough Bananas
director Keith Lock, producer Leslie Pardorr
Canada, 23 min. colour/16mm
Print source: Keith Lock, 174 Fulton Ave., Toronto, Ont.

Unlikely misfits bond together and stand up to the bad guys. They get cool hats. Then due to uptight parents, one betrays the other and joins the bad guys. Can a kid that dumps his Asian bro go the distance alone?

Cowgirl and Fish and Chips is part of the National Tour of the 20th Asian American International Film Festival organized and programmed by Asian Cinevison, a not-for-profit media arts center based in New York City.



Mouse
director & producer Greg Pak
(1997) USA, 11 min. Colour/16mm
Print source: Greg Pak, 561 Hudson St., #116, New York, NY, 10014

A young man and a woman discuss the semantics of abortion but there's a mouse in the house. The guy musters all his brains and dexterity to kill the mouse. The woman leaves. A story of mice and men.

Cowgirl
director Sunny Lee, producers Jamie Gordon & Sunny Lee
(1996) USA, 17 min. Colour/35mm
Print source: Sunny Lee c/o Polygram, 9333 Wilshire Blvd.,
Beverly Hills, CA, 90210

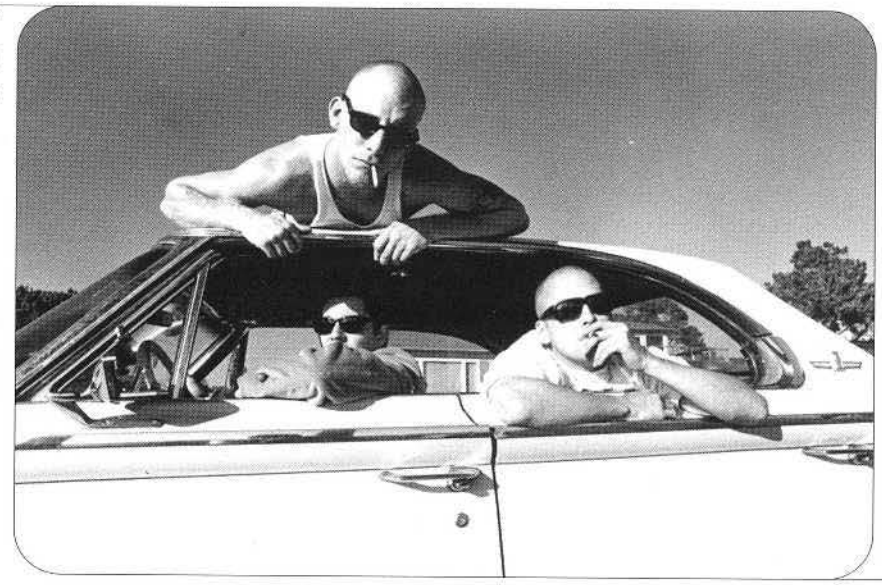
Genie award winning actress Sandra Oh stars in this delightful short about an Eastern girl with a Western heart. Its coming of age message: mothers don't let your daughters grow up to be cowgirls.

sunsets

Sunday, November 23, 1997
Bloor Cinema
7 pm

Sunsets
(1997) USA, 98 min. Colour/16mm
directors & producers Michael Idemoto & Eric Nakamura
Writers: Michael Idemoto & Eric Nakamura

Principal cast: Michael Idemoto, Nicholas Constant, Josh Brand
Print source: Michael Idemoto & Eric Nakamura, 615 Burlingame Ave., LA, CA, 90049



To call *Sunsets* an Asian *Boyz In The Hood* would be misleading not just because it's not about gangstas, but the film, while produced by two young men very cognizant of their roots, doesn't dwell very much on identity issues. Instead, this smart and mesmerizing picture shares with John Singleton's Compton classic a story about disenfranchised youth loose in the blight of south California. In this case, it's three aimless toughs cold chillin' through a summer of drinking, driving and delinquency. Of course, it's not going to be an endless summer. *Sunsets* has moments of remarkable intimacy between the vandalism and beer bath. The way Idemoto (who plays the moral centre of the gang) and Nakamura (who co-edits the way cool magazine 'Giant Robot') slowly take us into the more-complicated-than-it-seems world of the three friends is fascinating. Resplendently shot in grainy black and white, *Sunsets* certainly doesn't seem like the first film by a couple of guys who don't really have designs on a movie career. And with roughneck characters such as those in this film you also wouldn't expect such a touching and heartfelt movie.

automatic writing



Sunday, November 23, 1997
Bloor Cinema
9 pm

Automatic Writing
director & producer Ann Marie Fleming (1996) Canada, 82 min. Colour/16mm
Writer: Ann Marie Fleming
Principal cast: Kwok Wing Leung, Ann Marie Fleming, George Chiang, Daniel McIvor, Margaret Ozols.
Print source: Asian Cinevisions, 32 East Broadway, New York, NY, 10002

Closing night presentation

Toronto's Ann Marie Fleming has always been known for her quirky, imaginative works and her newest feature is her most ambitious project yet. As she herself describes, *Automatic Writing* is "not your average ghost story." A more apt description may be a combination of being Spinal Tapped and Joy Luck Clubbed at the same time. Formally challenging and irreverently self-reflexive, its playful premise has Fleming being visited by the spirit of her great, great grandfather who basically commissions her to make a film about his life. And make no mistake, the story is indeed the biographical tale of Fleming's forefather who was taken as a boy from a famine and war ravaged 19th century China to work in a San Francisco brothel. From this humble beginning, he winds up as a wealthy and respected surgeon by the time he returns to China thirty years later. The film's idea was inspired by Fleming's grandfather who asked her to write a novel based on his grandpa's diary. While the surreal and loopy narrative is likely worlds away from what he had in mind, *Automatic Writing* possesses all the requisite heart and soul. And for sure, it is cinematically a heck of a lot more interesting than another immigrant weepie.