

Korean Cultural Centre UK presents

KOREAN FILM NIGHTS 2017

JULY TO AUGUST

Patch-

works

Unwrapping My Korean Cinema

Welcome to Korean Film Nights 2017, our year-round programme of film screenings and talks. Each year the programme is curated around a specific theme, and for 2017 the Korean Film Nights has been further divided into three distinct mini-seasons, each comprised of six films. During each season, the screenings will take place every Thursday evening and run for the duration of that season. This year, we have invited guest programmers to offer their selections for each season. The series of programmes began with an exciting season of horror titles curated by Dr Colette Balmain in February and March. The second season on migration was curated by the students from the *Film Studies Programming and Curation MA* at the National Film and Television School. For the final programme in this series, we have invited students from the *MA Film Programming and Curating* course at Birkbeck University to devise a selection of films. The Birkbeck Master's degree covers the historical, intellectual and conceptual understanding of film programming, curatorial practice and moving image culture.

Running through July and August, *Patchworks: Unwrapping My Korean Cinema* is the final season of 2017's Korean Film Nights. The title is a play on Kim Hong-joon's *My Korean Cinema* (2002–2006), an 8-episode essay film that explored the director's relationship with the history of Korean cinema. With each of the 8 episodes tackling a separate facet of the history of Korean cinema, our programme will focus on two episodes within the film: *Smoking Women & For the March of Fools*. Our programme of six Thursday night screenings will then be further separated into two mini-strands of three nights each. These two mini-strands will be comprised of five features and a short film programme in which *My Korean Cinema* will be cinematically 'unwrapped'.

In the *Smoking Women* episode, Kim Hong-joon proposes that in 1930s Korean cinema, women were primarily visual vessels of sexual desire. The presence of a smoking woman on screen, for him, became emblematic of 'easy virtue'. Over the first three screenings, our programme seeks to question the longevity of this ideal in Korean cinema, and to propose a new role for women in contemporary Korean film. The two features, *It's Not Her Sin* from 1959, and the 2016 documentary *The Knitting Club* present Korean women as everything from victims of circumstance through to creators of their own destiny. Meanwhile, the contemporary shorts reflect today's more nuanced understanding of the female experience.

For the second half of the programme, we focus on *For the March of Fools*, the second episode from Kim Hong-joon's essay film series. This episode is a reflection on the impact the 1975 film, *The March of Fools*, had on Kim as a filmmaker. Taking protest and the idealism of youth as the film's main themes, our corresponding response is a series of films that reflect the changing face of protest in contemporary Korean cinema. This mini-strand will commence with a screening of the seminal film, *The March of Fools* (1975), and be followed by a new feature, *Garak Market Revolution* (2017) which can be seen as a spiritual sequel to the original film. The programme will finish with Kim's own narrative film *La Vie en Rose* (1994) which explores the connected theme of youth.

PROGRAMME NOTES

The history of Korean cinema is as vibrant and varied as the history of Korea's sovereignty. The film industry and the films which emerged from it have often been at the mercy of political events, from the the Japanese colonial era to the Korean War, through to domestic governmental interference in recent decades. This disruptive and turbulent history became the creative starting point for filmmaker and critic Kim Hong-joon and his ruminative essay film *My Korean Cinema*. Using an eight episode structure as a means of dissecting both his personal story and that of Korean cinema, the film becomes a meditation on how memory has influenced the narrative of Korean history. Taking just two themes from the eight episodes, our programme looks to build on and extend the methodology presented by Kim Hong-joon: how does cinema reflect the history of a nation, and can the resulting films be revisited and programmed to create a new perspective from which this history can be viewed?

The first half of the programme responds to the episode entitled *Smoking Women*. A play on words, Kim Hong-joon examines the identifiable tropes and stereotypical roles of women in films produced during the 1930s. To extend upon this idea and question its longevity, the programme opens with a film produced during the golden age of Korean cinema in the late 1950s and 1960s. *It's Not Her Sin* (1959) is a film which questions the very role that women played in society: are women agents of their own sexuality or submissive to social norms and consequential judgment? Whether or not this feature can answer that question, the following screening of shorts acts as sure fire proof that the role of women within present day Korea has evolved beyond the historical stereotype.

Bringing these questions into the present day, the shorts night, entitled *Women Now*, covers a diverse array of women's stories: from coming-of-age in *Sea Child*, to questioning relationship conventions in *Momo* and *Mrs. Young*, through to the societal position of aging women in *Son's* and critiquing sexualisation in *Plastic Girls*. The final feature in this strand is *The Knitting Club* (2016). A moving documentary concerning the changing role of women in present day Korea, its focus on themes of activism and unity thematically bleeds into the following screenings.

The second half of the programme addresses Kim Hong-joon's essay film, a love letter of sorts to the classic 1975 film, *The March of Fools*. A story about love and dreams in a college environment, *The March of Fools*

breaks all the rules of what is expected of young students at that time. It is about finding your own way in life, but also how your dreams don't always tie in with reality. He comments nostalgically that the film's protagonists remind him of himself as a student, with the film becoming a key text which shaped the form and direction of his own career in filmmaking. Tapping into its depiction of the youthful idealism and the sincere belief in the ability of protest to force and make change, the films selected in this half of the programme are representative of the thematic legacy left by the film on Korean cinema. Protest is a word charged with many different meanings, be it revolt against the government, society, parents or old patriarchal structures. *The March of Fools* seeks to explore alternative yet constructive ways of questioning authority to create change.

Garak Market Revolution (2017), the most contemporary feature in this strand, is a reworking of themes based around an unexpected method of protest while looking at the detrimental impact that larger corporations have had on local, rural life. Meanwhile, the short film *A Tent* (2016) considers a protest which is centred on workplace disputes and equal rights for the workers. Our programme concludes with *Le Vie en Rose* (1994), Kim Hong-joon's own take on the theme. Ultimately it's a story about refusing to give up under nearly impossible circumstances, in this case the pressure felt from both organised crime and the government on the employees of a comic book shop; *La Vie en Rose* is perhaps Kim Hong-joon's own answer to the legacy of youth and protest in contemporary Korean cinema.

Melissa Conneely, Johan Hallstrom & Catherine Nichols

It's Not Her Sin

그 여자의 죄가 아니다



SOUTH KOREA, 1959

DIRECTOR: SHIN SANG-OK

CAST: JU JEUNG-NYEO,
NO NEUNG-GEOL, CHOE EUN-HUI,
PARK GYEONG-JU

104 MIN / ENG SUBS

Produced during the 'golden age' of Korean cinema, *It's Not Her Sin* tells the story of Seong-hui, wife of the diplomat Baek Sang-ho. After shooting at her husband's mistress, Yeong-suk, Seong-hui is arrested by the police. With the media reporting a love triangle between the three, Yeong-suk is called in for questioning. With a prosecutor and Baek Sang-ho in attendance, Yeong-suk begins to talk about her past and her relationship with Seong-hui.

With a plot echoing Korean noir films of the 1950s, *It's Not Her Sin* offers a more nuanced understanding of womanhood and its circumstances. What would at first glance seem to be another entry into the 'femme fatale' genre, Seong-hui is instead presented as a victim of circumstance, rather than an agent of her own demise.

(CN)

Shorts Night: Women Now

This night of six short films illustrates how the experiences of women in Korea have changed since the 1930s as shown in Kim Hong-joon's film, *Smoking Women*. Made by a mix of men, women, expats and emigres, the programme presents an image of the 'millennial woman': one who is finally in charge of her own destiny. (CN)



Like A B1 중급불어

SOUTH KOREA & FRANCE, 2015

DIRECTOR: YANN KERLOC'H

15 MINS / ENG SUBS

In Seoul, a Korean girl is passing the French oral exam DELF. Yet the examiner's questions lead her to speak unexpectedly about her difficult family story. With the stress, her low level of French gets worse, then unconsciously, she starts to express herself with gestures.



Sea Child 바다아이

UNITED KINGDOM, 2015

DIRECTOR: MINHA KIM

7 MINS / ENG SUBS

A poetic, almost silent hand-drawn animation, *Sea Child* follows Sora, a young girl on the verge of coming-of-age in downtown Seoul. Woken by a nightmare, the young Sora decides to follow a group of men into the city, in the hope of finding her mother. This moving and atmospheric short powerfully argues that notions of femininity and sexuality are learnt qualities, passed down from generation to generation.



Momo 모모
SOUTH KOREA, 2016
DIRECTOR: YUN JOO CHANG
15 MINS / ENG SUBS

In this refreshing take on millennial relationships, Sohee meets up with her ex-girlfriend Areum who is about to set off to live abroad in Germany. Given custody of Momo, the cat they once shared, Sohee brings the pet home to her current girlfriend Yujin and it becomes a reminder of her former relationship. This film is testament to how feelings of love and loss have not changed over the years.



Mrs Young 영희씨
SOUTH KOREA, 2014
DIRECTOR: BANG WOO-RI
26 MINS / ENG SUBS

Mrs. Young-hee is a middle-aged woman who runs a corner shop with the help of her son. Her life is irreversibly changed when a young man who looks just like her first love walks in, bearing bad news. In this delicate tale director Bang Woo-ri paints a rounded picture of womanhood shaped by past experiences and real emotions.



Son's 아들의 것
SOUTH KOREA, 2006
DIRECTOR: LEE SU-JIN
18 MINS / ENG SUBS

A gentle meditation on the role of aging women in society, *Son's* follows the life of an older mother in rural Korea. Living alone by a mudflat, she waits for her son to visit. Echoing her isolation in the quiet, routine life she leads, director Lee Su-jin's film is a love letter to forgotten women, redressing the imbalance of older women not seen on the big screen.



Plastic Girls 플라스틱 걸즈
SOUTH KOREA, 2017
DIRECTOR: NILS CLAUSS
7 MINS / ENG SUBS

An aesthetically experimental journey, sitting somewhere between Wong Kar Wai and Gaspar Noe, director Nils Clauss' short personifies the erotic 'plastic girls': sexually suggestive mannequins that greet shoppers at the entrance of commercial establishments. The film also reads as a quiet protest, suggesting that society still has some way to go before women are no longer signifiers of sexual desire.

3 AUGUST, 7PM | KCCUK

The Knitting Club

야근 대신 뜨개질



SOUTH KOREA, 2016

DIRECTOR: PARK SO-HYUN

98 MINS / 12 CERT. / ENG SUBS

When a group of women working in an office get bored with the hardened angry faces that they meet on their way to work on the grey urban mornings, they decide to do something about it. In an effort to make the city a happier place for all, they start a knitting club.

“Coming to work in the morning, everyone is stone faced in this cold grey city... wouldn't it be great to do something to make people smile?”

As the women become closer friends they realise that they have more in common than they thought. With an inspiring soundtrack and presenting a beautiful way in which people can come together, this documentary is an inspiration for change and for creating alternative platforms for discussion.

“Going from knitting that changes the city, to knitting that changes lives.”

(JH)

10 AUGUST, 7PM | KCCUK

The March of Fools

바보들의 행진



SOUTH KOREA, 1975

DIRECTOR: HA GIL-JONG

CAST: YUN MUN-SEOP,
HA JAE-YOUNG, LEE YOUNG-OK,
KIM ILL-YOUNG, KIM YEONG-SUK

105 MINS / 15 CERT. / ENG SUBS

In his *My Korean Cinema*, Kim Hong-joon refers to *The March of Fools* as a film that made a profound impact upon him. The film was directed by Ha Gil-jong, a director who was known for being somewhat of a rebel himself and who unfortunately passed away all too soon. His film is about the dreams of youth and freedom, of love and possibility, but also of realising that life does not always turn out the way one had hoped.

Majoring in Philosophy at college, Byeong-tae becomes acquainted at a group meeting with Young-ja, who majors in French Literature. With the influence of rapidly propagated Western culture, these stylish 70s youngsters are dealing with the agonies of family, school and jobs. Though this agony is coloured with humour and self-scorn, it points towards a bright and promising future.

The March of Fools was recently deemed the best Korean film of all time in a KOFA poll of the top 100 Korean films.

(JH)

Garak Market Revolution

장기왕: 가락시장 레볼루션



SOUTH KOREA, 2017

DIRECTOR: JUNG DA-WON

CAST: JUNG DU-WON, CHOI SI-ON, PARK YE-YEONG

88 MINS / 15 CERT. / ENG SUBS

In this sweet alternative story of youth and protest, a young man with a college degree takes a job at the local *Garak Market* without telling his parents. Being teased by younger peers for not having a white collar job and getting harassed by his boss, his life is not exactly ideal, but after discovering his extraordinary gift for playing the traditional oriental chess game, *jang-gi*, and falling in love with a girl who fights to make the world a better place, he might have just found a possibility to change the world for himself and his friends.

SCREENING PRECEDED BY:

A Tent 천막

SOUTH KOREA, 2016

DIRECTOR: LEE RAN-HEE

25 MINS / ENG SUBS

In this short, three men who used to work in a guitar factory are on their 3,169th day of protest. Living in a tent, making music for the streets, these men become a comic reminder to not let principles go before reason.

(JH)

La Vie en Rose

장미빛 인생



SOUTH KOREA, 1994

DIRECTOR: KIM HONG-JOON

CAST: KIM EUN-SOOK, CHOI CHONG-WON, CHOI JAE-SUNG

93 MINS / 15 CERT. / ENG SUBS

+ A CONVERSATION WITH THE DIRECTOR

La Vie en Rose feels like a Tarantino movie set in a comic book shop. It's a film that works over many genres, ranging from martial arts to vengeance, from coming-of-age to finding your place in life. *Clerks* (Kevin Smith: 1994) meets *High fidelity* (Stephen Frears: 2000) as Seoul's youth try to create and protect the place and the community they've come to love. "Should I stay or should I go?" is a question many young people ask themselves, whether they are from the country or the city, from the east or the west. It is a story about refusing to give up even under impossible circumstances; it's about refusing to give in to the destructive forces of everything from organised crime, to governmental bans and crackdowns on illegal activities; it's also about trying to build something together, a community you feel you can belong to, where the outcasts, half criminals and homeless can also feel welcomed.

(JH)

25 AUGUST, 7PM | BIRKBECK CINEMA

A Talk on 'Homage Film' with Kim Hong-joon



Special Event

The director of *My Korean Cinema* and *La Vie en Rose*, Kim Hong-joon, will give a special talk the following day (25 August) at Birkbeck Cinema for the Moving Image. He will speak about a few of his 'homage films' in relation to the idea of the 'essay film'.

Excerpts from the following five short homage films will be presented:

- *The Cinematic World of Im Kwon-taek: Four Keywords- Tradition, Love, History and Road* (2010)
- *12 Shorts for Chung Chang-hwa Retrospective* (2011)
- *Life Imitates Film: Looking Back on Choi Eun-hee* (2013)
- *Kim Ki-deok: A Frontier-man of Chungmu-Ro* (2016)
- *Ahn Sung-ki: A Persona of the Korean Cinema* (2017)

This is open to the public, booking information can be found on the film page of our website. kccuk.org.uk

ATTENDING KOREAN FILM NIGHTS

Admission is free, but booking is required for each screening. To reserve your place, please visit www.kccuk.org.uk

Selected titles from this programme will be shown again at various venues outside the KCCUK under *Korean Cinema Echoes*. Please check our facebook and twitter pages for the most up-to-date information. The programme and venue may be subject to change, please confirm at the time of booking.

Information on Deptford Cinema screenings:

www.deptfordcinema.org

39 Deptford Broadway, London SE8 4PQ

Information on Birkbeck Cinema screenings:

www.bbk.ac.uk/arts/research/birkbeck-institute-for-the-moving-image/events

43 Gordon Square, London, WC1H 0PD

 twitter.com/koreanfilmfest

 Facebook: #theLKFF



Korean Cultural Centre