

LONDON KOREAN FILM FESTIVAL 2018

Programme Announced for the 13th London Korean Film Festival 1 – 25 November

Launching its 13th edition today, the **London Korean Film Festival (LKFF)** announced its full programme of films and events. Running from **1- 14 November in London** before taking highlights around the country with its annual UK Tour, the festival will feature an in-depth special focus entitled **A Slice of Everyday Life**, along with an exciting mix of UK and International premieres, guests and events across a diverse set of strands; **Cinema Now, Women's Voices, Indie Firepower, Contemporary Classics, Artists Video, Animation and Shorts.**

Korea is regularly in the world news cycle of late due to some tense international political machinations. This year's festival moves from this global outlook to an intimate view of the day-to-day lives and struggles of the people of the country on the ground. The 13th London Korean Film Festival proudly presents a programme that incorporates and engages with many of the topical conversations taking place in society today, through the international language of cinema.

Highlighting the festival's dual commitment to championing the work of emerging directors and showcasing the talents of women filmmakers, this year's **Opening and Closing Galas** tick both boxes with an intriguing pair of female-led narratives. Opening the festival on 1st November, the UK Premiere of Jeon Go-woon's **Microhabitat** (2018, UK Premiere) follows a young woman (Lee Som, *Scarlett Innocence*) on a journey across the city and back into the lives of her former bandmates after being forced from her apartment. Having already picked up awards at Busan and Fantasia film festivals, this offbeat tour through the troubled lives of Korea's struggling thirty-somethings raises a number of topical issues relatable to London's own inhabitants. The festival will close in London on 14th November with **The Return** (2018) in which director Malene Choi, a Danish-Korean adoptee, blurs the line between fact and fiction to tell the story of a young woman returning to Korea in an effort to track down her birth parents. Lead actress Karoline (Karoline Sofie Lee), herself an adoptee, is captured in genuine interactions adding an emotional heft to this affecting story.

This year's **Special Focus: A Slice of Everyday Life** aims to escape the overtly dramatic to uncover the profundity found in the day-to-day, showing that skilled filmmaking can reveal the significant emotional moments that affect all our lives. This type of cinema is not unfamiliar to UK audiences with the country's celebrated history of social realist film, in particular the 'kitchen sink' dramas of Ken Loach (*Poor Cow, Kes*) and Mike Leigh (*High Hopes, Secrets and Lies*) offering insight into the social and political conditions of the country through the lives of its working class. East Asia offers its own examples, particularly in Japan where the famed framing of Yasujiro Ozu (*Tokyo Story, An Autumn Afternoon*) expertly captured the charm, humour, tensions and the very essence of typical Japanese life. More recently, Cannes regular Kore'eda

Hirokazu has mined the emotion of the everyday, and his quieter films which more closely follow the minutiae of the day-to-day (*Still Walking*, *Nobody Knows*) are arguably more successful than his more overtly melodramatic works. With *A Slice of Everyday Life*, the LKFF will offer up exemplary works from Korea, showcasing a range of life experiences and the power found within them.

The strand opens with the second feature from revered auteur filmmaker Hong Sangsoo, a film twenty years apart from his most recent film, *Hotel by the River*, which also features on the programme. **The Power of Kangwon Province** (1998) finds two holidaying ex-lovers reconnecting after years apart, as Hong starts to explore the complexities of male/female relationships that he would so successfully tackle throughout his career. Also from that year, the much-loved **Christmas in August** (1998) follows the growing connection between a terminally ill man and a regular customer at his photo studio with the subtly affecting direction of Hur Jin-ho transcending the film's melodramatic premise, **This Charming Girl** (2004) then scratches beneath the surface of the everyday life of a post office employee to reveal the hidden depths and unspoken traumas that can be found in those around us.

Life on the margins is examined in **Grain in Ear** (2005), which finds acclaimed Korean-Chinese director Zhang Lu (*A Quiet Dream*) chronicling the day-to-day existence of an outsider in his minimalist portrayal of a Korean minority woman living in north eastern China, Kim So Yong's **Treeless Mountain** (2008) finds an impoverished mother sending her two young daughters to live with an alcoholic aunt in the countryside, and Park Jungbum's **The Journals of Musan** (2010) looks at two north Korean defectors scraping through life in the south.

Bleak Night (2010) explores the violently shifting relationships between three high school boys with fine performances from its young male cast, while director Park Jungbum is back again and this time taking the lead role of a construction worker struggling to support his family in his second feature **Alive** (2014), veteran actress Youn Yuh-jung then stars as an elderly sex-worker who takes a young boy under her wing just as her job takes a dangerous new path in **The Bacchus Lady** (2015).

The life of a famous actress might not seem 'everyday' to most people, yet its reality for Moon Sori who mines the comic tragedy of an aging thesp in a youth obsessed industry for her directorial debut, **The Running Actress** (2017, UK Premiere). LGBT drama **The Poet and The Boy** (2017, UK Premiere) sees a male married poet develop unexpected feelings for a younger man working in a doughnut shop, Lee Kanghyun's award-winning debut **Possible Faces** (2017, UK Premiere) follows the parallel lives of a couple after breakup, while parental bonds are the focus of **Mothers** (2017, UK Premiere), the follow up film from Lee Dong-eun, director of last year's indie success *In between Seasons*. Winner of the Grand Prize in the Korean Competition at this year's Jeonju Festival, powerful drama **The Land of Seonghye** (2018, European Premiere) provides a deeply affecting portrait of one woman's struggle for survival in our money orientated society.

Korean Cinema continues to excite as one of the most successful national cinemas in the world, with internationally renowned directors and stars producing blockbuster fare that shakes the box office both at home and abroad. Programmed by film critic and East Asian cinema specialist

Anton Bitel, The **Cinema Now** strand offers the best of these hit titles to London. Yim Soon-rye (*Forever the Moment*) gets stomachs rumbling with **Little Forest** (2017), a nourishing foodie adventure into the heart of rural Korea and starring *The Handmaiden*'s Kim Tae-ri, while equally charming romantic adventure **The Princess and the Matchmaker** (2018, International Premiere) sees a princess, played by popular comic actress Shim Eun-kyung (*Miss Granny*), fall for the astrologer tasked with testing her suitors for celestial compatibility. **Love+Sling** (2017, International Premiere) continues the comedy as popular character actor Yoo Hai-jin (*1987: When the Day Comes*) takes centre stage as a wrestling obsessed father that gets into trouble when his son's crush develops an infatuation with him. For darker thrills, Choo Chang-min's crime thriller **Seven Years of Night** (2018, European Premiere) serves up revenge reminiscent of Park Chan-wook's best work when a cruel father seeks vengeance after the accidental death of his daughter, in **The Witness** (2017, European Premiere) fear of putting his family in danger stops a man from reporting a brutal murder allowing the killer to stay one step ahead of the dogged detective on his tail, there's courtroom drama in **Heart Blackened** (2016, UK Premiere) as a wealthy CEO (Choi Min-sik, *OldBoy*) seeks to use his money and influence to clear his daughter of the murder of his fiancé. Plus, there's the latest work from Korea's leading auteur, and director of our opening and closing films in 2017 and 2016 respectively, Hong Sangsoo. **Hotel by the River** (2018, UK Premiere) is the wintry tale of an elderly poet, his adult sons and two women that arrive on the scene.

In recent editions the LKFF has highlighted **Women's Voices** in cinema with strands dedicated to the work of women filmmakers backed up by roundtable discussions and panel events featuring directors, actresses, and leading voices in contemporary feminist film criticism. This year is no different as they present selected highlights from Seoul's International Women's Film Festival: Kim Bo-ram's **For Vagina's Sake** (2017, UK Premiere) offers a timely, open and vibrant discussion of menstruation countering current myths and outdated views, in **Hit the Night** (2017, UK Premiere) a woman quizzes a man about his sexual habits with the pretence of researching a screenplay, documentary **Grown Up** (2017, International Premiere) sees a sister attempting to learn to live with her younger sibling who has grown up in a home for people with severe mental disabilities, **A Blind Alley** (2017) finds two school girls navigating their budding feelings for each other, **Playground** (2017) features a nursery school teacher with a traumatic past reacting adversely to a situation in her class, and **Testimony** (2018) confronts toxic masculinity in the workplace.

Asian cinema expert, film critic and commentator Tony Rayns returns with another finely curated selection of the best of Korea's independent film scene with **Indie Firepower**. This year the focus is on Park Kiyong and his three fiction feature films focusing on short-term sexual relationships. Co-written with Bong Joon-ho (*Okja*, *Memories of Murder*), shot by cinematographer Christopher Doyle (*In the Mood for Love*) and selected for Berlin International Film Festival, **Motel Cactus** (1997, UK Premiere) peeks behind the curtain of a love hotel in the Gangnam area of Seoul, the heavily improvised **Camel(s)** (2001) offers an acting masterclass as it tells the story of a middle-aged man and woman as they meet for an illicit tryst, while Park's latest offering **Old Love** (2017, UK Premiere) is a touching, reflective film that sees two care-worn former lovers meet again by chance. Also in the strand are works from two emerging indie directors, Kim In-seon builds on her award winning shorts by mixing comedy and drama to winning effect in debut feature **Adulthood** (2017, International Premiere) and Choi Changhwan

tackles Korea's version of the 'zero-hours' contract in **Back From the Beat** (2018, European Premiere) and exploitation of immigrant workers in **Even No Shadow** (2011, European Premiere).

With **Contemporary Classics - Lee Myung-se and 1990s** Dr. Mark Morris takes us back to the not-too-distant 90s to examine a defining decade of Korean cinema via one of its most important filmmakers. As the politically turbulent 80s ended, fledgling filmmaker Lee Myung-se had built up a decade of experience under the tutelage of popular director Bae Chang-ho (the subject of last year's Classics Revisited strand) and was ready to strike out on his own. He did just that, producing a trilogy of films throughout the decade on the subject of love. **My Love, My Bride** (1990) bristles with comic energy as it charts the ramshackle romance of a mishap-prone young couple in a novel visual style, including animated thought bubbles inspired by the director's love of manhwa comics. Flights of fantasy colour **First Love** (1993) as a young woman from a country town falls, unfortunately, for a boozy older writer. The film presents an early role for fine actress Kim Hye-soo who electrified in last year's *Coin Locker Girl*. **Their Last Love Affair** (1995) charts more racy territory as it navigates an affair between a poet and the writer who critiques his poems. Excitingly, Lee's latest work, short film, **Can't Live Without You** (2017) will also be screened.

Back at the historic Phoenix Cinema to take over their popular Kid's Club, the festival's **Animation** strand introduces young viewers to Korea's beloved Pororo the penguin as he embarks on a tropical escapade in **Pororo, Dinosaur Island Adventure** (2017, European Premiere), award-winning **The Shower** (2017, UK Premiere) breathes new life into a classic short story that tells the delicately moving tale of a little boy and the girl he meets by a stream.

The best works from the **Mise-en-scène International Short Film Festival** are on show, with six entries: **The Monologue** (2018) sees an actress tempted back into the spotlight after retiring to care for her child, **Morning of the Dead** (2018) revolves around a comic battle of wills between two cinephiles over a limited edition copy of George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, **Shadower** (2018) looks at the fallout between two best friends after they're threatened by bullies, **Tail** (2018) features a civil servant secretly spying on the North Koreans he helps to resettle, **Hysteria** (2018) looks at a family's failure to address their daughter's mental breakdown and **Passing Over the Hill** (2018) finds an elderly woman on a venture into Seoul using the poetry of her late son as a guide.

The **Artist Video** strand, in collaboration with LUX | Artists' Moving Image, focuses on two distinctly experimental visual artists. The boldly confrontational Kim Kyung-mook, one of Korea's leading LGBTQ+ filmmakers, gives voice to the voiceless and marginalised of society including, homosexuals, transsexuals, sex workers, North Korean defectors and disenfranchised youth, **Grace Period** (2015, co-director Caroline Key) is his experimental documentary on female sex-workers as they clash with the police, and **Me and Doll-playing** (2004) is his confessional debut which addresses his confusion over his sexuality. Kwon Hayoun combines innovative CGI animation with a documentary approach and her works **Model Village** (2014), **Pan Mun Jom** (2013), **Lack of Evidence** (2011), **489 Years** (2016) focuses on Korea's Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the forbidden border between North and South Korea.

Guests confirmed for this year's festival and available for interview include:

- Director **Jeon Go-woon** – *Microhabitat*
- Actress **Karoline Sofie Lee** – *The Return*
- Director **Lee Myung-se** – *My Love, My Bride, First Love, Their Last Love Affair, Can't Live Without You*
- Director **Park Kiyong** – *Motel Cactus, Camel, Old Love*
- Director **Kwon Hayoun** – *Artists Video*
- Director **Kim Bo-ram** – *For Vagina's Sake*
- Director **Jeong Ga-young** – *Hit the Night*
- Film critic & Programmer **Jang Byungwon** (Jeonju International Film Festival)
- Author **Jeong Yu-jeong** - *Seven Years of Night*

London venues include: Picturehouse Central, Regent Street Cinema, ICA, Phoenix Cinema, Close-up, LUX, Rio Cinema, Birkbeck's Institute of Moving Image, Kingston University, National Film & Television School, British Museum and KCCUK.

The festival tours to: Glasgow Film Theatre, Edinburgh Film House, Manchester HOME, Sheffield Showroom, Nottingham Broadway Cinema, Belfast Queen's Film Theatre until 25 November 2018.

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To apply for Press Accreditation and for any interview requests and images please contact: Publicist Marek Steven: marek@witchfinder.co (+44 7961 163 908)

Notes to Editors

About London Korean Film Festival:

The London Korean Film Festival will return to celebrate its thirteenth year from 1 -25 November 2018, running for two weeks in London before embarking on an ambitious tour around the UK.

The London Korean Film Festival has grown from humble beginnings to become one of the longest running and most respected festivals dedicated to Korean cinema in the world. We've built a name upon presenting lineups consisting of everything from the country's most successful blockbusters to thought-provoking independents from its finest auteurs. Across a variety of finely curated strands we aim to cater for general audiences, committed cinephiles, children, and everyone in between.

The 13th London Korean Film Festival is organised by the Korean Cultural Centre UK with the support of the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism, Korean Film Council and Korean Film Archive.

More about the KCCUK:

Since being opened by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in January 2008, under the jurisdiction of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, the KCCUK has gone from strength to strength in its role of enhancing friendship, amity and understanding between Korea and the UK through cultural and educational activities.

As well as presenting a diverse range of ongoing monthly events focused on Korean film, drama, education and literature, the KCCUK regularly welcomes Korean luminaries from many cultural fields to discuss their work, organises the annual film festival as well as traditional and contemporary musical performances and holding a number of exhibitions throughout the year, allowing artists to showcase their talent. From the KCCUK's central London location (just off Trafalgar Square), the institution's dedicated cultural team work to further develop established cultural projects, introduce new opportunities to expand Korean programmes in the UK and to encourage ongoing cultural exchange.