

**Programme Announced for the 14th London Korean Film Festival
1st-24th November 2019**



The **London Korean Film Festival** (LKFF) has launched its full programme of films and events for the upcoming 14th edition, taking place from **1st-14th November in London** before embarking on the annual tour **18th-24th November**. The **Special Focus**, and much of this year's festival programme, will highlight the historic milestone of 100-years of Korean cinema along with an exciting mix of UK and International premieres, guests and events across a diverse set of strands; **Cinema Now, Women's Voices, Documentary, Hidden Figures: Ha Gil-jong, Artist Video, Animation and Mise-en-scène Shorts**.

Korean cinema continues to excite global audiences with a steady stream of titles that satisfy both artistic and commercial appetites. This year alone has seen Bong Joon-ho win the Palme D'Or with *Parasite* at the Cannes Film Festival and Lee Chang-dong's *Burning* (2018) released to critical praise in UK cinemas, while *Train to Busan* (Yeon Sang-ho, 2016), *The Handmaiden* (Park Chan-wook, 2016) and *Little Forest* (Lim Soon-rye, 2018) have all found recent success. Now, with 2019 marking the centenary of Korean cinema, the LKFF will shine a light into the past to offer insight into the full and fascinating history of a groundbreaking national cinema that has lead up to the acclaimed hits of today.

This celebration of Korea's cinematic history is established with the festival's **Opening Gala** on 1st November, *The Seashore Village* (1965). With the LKFF now in its 14th year, this marks the first time a retrospective title has been selected to open the festival. Newly restored, and presented in the UK for the very first time, the film tells the story of a young woman, Hae-soon, living in a village heavily populated by women who have lost their husbands at sea. A vivid portrait of the hardships faced by the women of the village and their methods of coping through sisterly comradeship and an understanding of the natural world around them, the film features striking monochrome cinematography. Courtesy of veteran director **Kim Soo-yong**, now in his 90s, who made his film debut in 1958 with *A Henpecked Husband* and went on to make over

100 films in a long and distinguished career, the revered filmmaker will be present on opening night to discuss *The Seashore Village*, his life in film and 100 years of Korean cinema. Continuing the festival's championing of new independent cinema, the LKFF will hold its **Closing Gala** on 14th November with new directing team **Lee Jihyoung** and **Kim Sol's *Scattered Night*** (2019, UK Premiere). Told through the eyes of two young children who must wait as their separating parents messily make their way towards a decision on which of them will take which child post-divorce. Minimalist and free of melodrama, the film offers an intimate and heart-breaking child's eye view of a crumbling family dynamic.

The **Special Focus** strand, **A Century of Korean Cinema**, follows on from a landmark collaboration with the British Film Institute and the Korean Film Archive earlier this year, 'Early Korean Cinema: Lost Films from the Japanese Colonial Period' which presented the country's oldest surviving films, produced during the turbulent period of occupation during the Second World War. The LKFF 2019 will continue where that acclaimed season ended, launching into a full programme of cinema spanning the decades and featuring works from Korea's visionary filmmakers of the past and leading up to the early works of prominent directors spearheading the nation's cinema today.

Special Focus: A Century of Korean Cinema is a unique programme featuring pivotal titles exploring the nation's rich cinematic history and incorporating UK and European premiere film screenings of culturally-important retrospective titles, many newly restored, and introduced by leading filmmakers and critics from Korea and the UK, along with Q&As, forums, workshops and unique events.

The oldest film to feature in the Special Focus programme is **Yun Yong-gyu's** touching melodrama ***A Hometown in Heart*** (1949) which follows an orphaned young monk as he traverses temple life while longing for the return of his mother. Moving into the 1950s, two titles are presented: one of which shows the harsh reality of the Korean war, while the other shines a light on the society left in its wake. **Lee Kang-cheon's *Piagol*** (1955) finds a group of communist fighters waging war among mountain villages under the harsh leadership of a zealous commander. With its nuanced depiction of communists the controversial film was originally banned for a perceived pro-communist message. From legendary director **Shin Sang-ok** (who would later be kidnapped and forced to make films for the North Korean leader Kim Jong-il) comes ***The Flower in Hell*** (1958), set against the back-drop of occupied post-war Korea. Disaster befalls the lives of prostitute Sonya as she schemes to find a new life for herself by seducing the younger brother of her hustler boyfriend Young-sik who makes money by stealing from the US military.

The 1960s saw a proliferation in the rich number of films from savvy directors who found ways to bypass strict government censorship. These would highlight and comment on pressing societal issues and have become some of the finest examples of classic Korean cinema. This fascinating and turbulent period is well represented in the programme. ***Aimless Bullet*** (1961) from **Yu Hyun-mok**, one of Korea's most respected filmmakers and a key figure of the period, presents a powerful, downbeat view of postwar struggle as a low-level clerk attempts to earn money for his family, including a war veteran brother, a traumatised mother and a sister who is sliding into prostitution. ***A Coachman*** (**Kang Dae-jin**, 1961) finds a single father similarly struggling to provide for his family, but through hard work, perseverance and a little romance, light is ultimately found amid the darkness. ***A Woman Judge*** (1962) is the country's second-ever film from a woman director, **Hong Eun-won**. It follows a young woman determined to become a judge and find a meaningful place in society, despite the protestations of various individuals around her, including her own mother and husband. The film is ahead of its time in

critiquing a range of conservative and outdated attitudes that traditionally hold back an intelligent, determined woman working hard to find fulfilment outside of the home.

In **Kim Soo-yong's** *Bloodline* (1963) the societal conflict is generational, as three sets of parents attempt to force their children to forego personal ambitions in order to make money to support their families. Set in the immediate post-war period, the younger generation demand freedom to choose their own path as they look ahead to a brighter future. *Goryeojang* (1963) is the first of two films from the idiosyncratic **Kim Ki-young**, director of the classic *The Housemaid* (1960). The title refers to the practice of families abandoning relatives in the mountains once they reach old age (as seen in Imamura Shohei's 1983 classic, *The Ballad of Narayama*), a custom practiced in a small village where the film is set, as society begins to buckle under the strain of famine and starvation. *leoh Island* (1977) incorporates the director's highly stylised filmmaking into a psychosexual mystery thriller in which a man investigates a murder on an isolated island inhabited only by women. Next comes three titles from prolific auteur **Lee Man-hee** whose influence has extended well beyond his tragically short life, with 51 films produced before his death at the age of 43 in 1975. *The Devil's Stairway* (1964) is a dark mystery thriller in which a chief surgeon murders the woman with which he is having an affair, only to become tormented by her spirit. *Homebound* (1967) follows the wife of a bedridden writer as she stumbles upon a chance at true happiness beyond the confines of her tragic circumstances, while Lee's masterpiece *A Day Off* (1968), presents an agonisingly bleak but beautiful look at a young couple's life in 1960s Seoul, and was originally banned by the authorities for its bold but sombre depiction of Korean society.

Heading into the 1980s, and the nation's struggles are reflected by filmmakers in works commenting on wealth disparity, corruption and materialism among other critical social issues. **Im Kwon-taek** put Korean film on the map in this decade as he moved away from a more commercial filmmaking style, announcing himself as a true auteur who would be celebrated at Cannes, Venice and Berlin where he earned an honorary Golden Bear in 2005. Here the legendary director is represented with the exemplary *Ticket* (1986), which looks at the lives of three newlyhired sex workers in a small seaside town. **Lee Jang-ho**, celebrated with a retrospective at the 2016 LKFF, was another filmmaker combining a commercial sensibility with a keen artistic eye to great effect throughout the 1980s. *The Man with Three Coffins* (1987) finds Lee in experimental mode as he tells a non-linear, dream-like story that addresses issues of displacement after the Korean War, as a man wanders the countryside looking for a location to scatter his dead wife's ashes. From **Park Chul-soo**, who would become a leading voice in Korea's burgeoning second New Wave, a *A Pillar of Mist* (1986) follows the plight of a married couple and was the winner of the Grand Bell Award (Korea's Academy Award equivalent). **Jang Sun-woo**, a filmmaker who would achieve acclaim whilst also troubling censors with his bold tackling of controversial subjects, is here represented by *The Age of Success* (1988) which mixes anarchic comedy with a sharp skewering of rampant 1980s capitalism. Screened in the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes, *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* (1989) is a meditative reflection on the lives of three Buddhist monks that director **Bae Yong-kyoon** shot with a single camera over the course of seven years.

Slowly emerging from the political turmoil of the 1980s, Korean cinema would continue to grow in reputation in the 1990s as filmmakers gained increasing international recognition with their work and new artists appeared, many of whom are still finding commercial and critical favour around the world to this day. Based on the accounts of a real-life war correspondent, **Chung Ji-young's** epic drama *North Korean Partisan in South Korea (Nambugun)* (1990) humanises characters on both sides of the divide. In *A Single Spark* (1995), **Park Kwang-su** shines a light on the country's strong protest practices as he follows a young law school student inspired by

the life of a manual worker who burnt himself to death in a demonstration over unfair labour practices. **Hong Sangsoo** has earned a status as one of Korea's leading auteurs. This reputation was cemented with his first film *The Day a Pig Fell into a Well* (1996), which follows four intertwined lives in a fragmented, self-reflexive chronology and bares many of the great director's established trademarks. **Lim Soon-rye** has found success as a woman director telling powerful stories often concerning women and marginalised lives with hits including *Forever the Moment* (2008) and last year's *Little Forest* (2018). Presented here, her debut *Three Friends* (1996) is a biting satire that finds three young men, each one considered something of a social misfit, whose lives are disrupted when they must report for military service. The romance film continues to hold a place in the heart of Korean cinema goes and **Chang Yoon-hyun's** *The Contact* (1997) is an excellent example as love blossoms over the airwaves when a radio DJ plays a Velvet Underground track. Already widely acclaimed, **Lee Chang-dong** has recently earned new accolades following a return to filmmaking with *Burning* (2018) which saw him win the Fipresci International Critics' Prize at Cannes. *Peppermint Candy* (1999), Lee's second work, looks at different episodes of a man's life to portray a tragic personal story which, in true Lee style, further comments on Korean society as a whole.

The **Cinema Now** strand once again showcases the best of contemporary Korean cinema with a diverse and exciting line-up including some of Korea's finest recent titles, including festival sensations and domestic box office hits from the past year. In Hong Sangsoo's latest feature *Grass* (2017, UK Premiere), a writer (Kim Minhee, *The Handmaiden*) eavesdrops on conversations in a cafe as their stories begin to intertwine. Carefully-crafted and deceptively-simple, *Grass* bears all the hallmarks of the Korean auteur and premiered to acclaim at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2018. The first of two titles on real-life incidents is the critically-acclaimed *Birthday* (2018, UK Premiere) which comments on the emotional toll of the Sewol Ferry tragedy of 2014 in which 299 people lost their lives when a passenger ferry sank en route from Incheon to Jeju. Director **Lee Jong-un's** moving film focuses on one grieving family as it sensitively tackles the aftermath of an event sadly burnt into the contemporary Korean consciousness. Travelling back to the early twentieth-century **Joe Min-ho's** period drama *A Resistance* (2019, European Premiere) is based on the true story of Yu Gwan Sun, a political activist who became a symbol for the struggle for Korean independence against Imperial Japanese rule. For those who like their cinema full of thrills, *Idol* (2018, UK Premiere) is an action-packed and blood-soaked neo-noir from director **Lee Su-jin**, while **Lee Byeong-heon's** *Extreme Job* (2018, UK Premiere) is a hilarious action-comedy that follows an inept police squad on a narcotics bust as they work undercover at a fried chicken joint, and has become one of Korea's most successful films of all time at the domestic box office. **Lee Min-jae's** *The Odd Family: Zombie On Sale* (2018, UK Premiere) is an undead horror-comedy with a lot of heart that proves there's still life in the age old zombie formula. A captivating meditation on human nature, *Height of the Wave* (2019, UK Premiere), follows a police officer, Yeon-soo, who is transferred to an isolated island with her daughter when the actions of the locals start to cause alarm. Winner of the Special Jury Prize at this year's Locarno Film Festival, the film is the latest from LKFF favourite **Park Jung-bum** (*Alive*, *The Journals of Musan*).

Presented by the LKFF in conjunction with the Barbican's **Hidden Figures** film programme, this celebration of renowned director **Ha Gil-jong** shines a light on the work of one of Korean cinema's most iconoclastic auteurs. Rising to prominence in the 1970s, a dark period for Korean filmmaking as the Park Chung-hee led government exerted its control through strict censorship, Ha Gil-jong stood out with a radical, politically-charged voice, challenging contemporary society through the language of film. *The Pollen of Flowers* (1972), is a provocative first-feature in which a relationship between a businessman and his protégé (with forbidden sexual undertones) goes awry with the introduction of the younger man into the home of the boss's

mistress. ***The March of Fools*** (1975), a perennial favourite and Ha's best known film, is a college comedy that offers a snapshot into 1970s student life, with dark undertones that reflect on the prevailing dictatorship of the time, and ***The Ascension of Han-ne*** (1975) mixes elements from traditional ghost stories and shamanic practices to tell the story of a woman who is saved from suicide only to later fall prey to the gross antagonism of the village shaman.

The LKFF continues its work highlighting **Women's Voices** in cinema, with this now-regular strand that has reinforced and expanded upon issues raised in its films with roundtable discussions and panel events featuring directors, actors and leading voices in contemporary feminist film criticism. This year celebrates the work of first-time women directors with four films: **Cha Sung-duk's *Youngju*** (2018, UK Premiere) finds a young woman forced into the role of parent to her wayward younger brother as she forms an unlikely relationship with the man who accidentally killed her parents, **Ahn Ju-young's *A Boy and Sungreen*** (2018, International Premiere) finds an awkward schoolboy attempt to track down his father with the help of his more forthright female best friend, **Shim Hyejung's *A Bed sore*** (2019, International Premiere) tackles issues of treatment and care for the elderly as family wounds fester when a stubborn bed sore develops on a bed-ridden grandmother, and intimate documentary **Yukiko** (2018, UK Premiere) finds director **Young Sun Noh** trace a family history scarred by war.

Following last year's LKFF Documentary Fortnight, which focused on exemplary independent works based around themes of social justice and resistance, this year's **Documentary** strand highlights the work of two of the country's political film collectives which developed in the 1980s. Firstly, the Seoul Film Collective, who from 1982 to 1987 produced a number of films that contributed to the collective social and political reform movement that developed in South Korea throughout the decade. ***Water Utilization Tax*** (1984) presents the four month economic struggle of farmers in the Gurye county area and exposes their difficulties and organised response, while ***Blue Bird*** (1986) was born from conversations with farmers about their life and working conditions. ***The Night Before the Strike*** (1990) comes from film collective Jangsangotmae and depicts the repression of a group of low-pay factory workers by their company managers as they attempt to unionise. Though banned the film was exhibited in unofficial venues such as Jeon-nam University, where the government sent in riot police to stop the screening and seize copies of the film. Ironically, over 300,000 people would eventually see the film making it the most viewed independent film of that year.

In the spirit of this year's Special Focus, the **Animation** strand will showcase a classic Korean animated film, along with a colourful new feature for children. From **Shin Dong-Hun**, a pioneer in Korean animation, ***A Story of Hong Gil-dong*** (1967) concerns folk hero Hong Gil-dong, the spurned, son of a nobleman. Taking to the countryside of Korea, he soon discovers he has supernatural abilities which he puts to use righting the many injustices he encounters on his travels. Considered lost for 40-years, this is the oldest surviving Korean animated film, while ***Astro Gardener*** (2019, UK Premiere) is a fun and lively fantasy adventure packed full of creative creatures and with an important ecological message.

The **Shorts Strand** highlights award-winning works discovered at Korea's prestigious **Mise-en-scène Short Film Festival** (MSFF). Having been a platform to launch the career of many directors now working within the Korean film industry, this year the festival invited past winners Jang Jae-hyun (***The Priests***, ***Svaha: The Sixth Finger***) and Lee Kyung-mi (***Crush and Blush***, ***The Truth Beneath***) to sit as MSFF Directors and lead the search for new and uniquely creative shorts. In this year's selection is: ***Freckles*** (2019), a bittersweet tale of first love that finds one young girl tasting romance after a drunken first kiss whilst at fat camp, ***To Each Your Sarah*** (2019) sees one woman forced to rebuild her life after leaving a cheating husband, ***Goodbye***

Bushman (2018) revolves around two brothers whose Africa-inspired games take a strange turn when they come across their own real-life 'bushman' in the woods, **Milk** (2019) follows a hotel maid working to afford baby formula and forced to commit a petty crime, **Yuwol: The Boy Who Made the World Dance** (2018) is a charming musical following a young boy with the infectious urge to dance, **Camping** (2019) holds dark thrills as a woman is kidnapped whilst at a remote camping spot with her husband, **The Stars Whisperer** (2019) involves a young girl with hearing difficulties who forms a new relationship over a day spent skipping school, and **The Lambs** (2019) is centered on a pastor and a member of his congregation who share a dark connection and an obsession over a dead woman.

The **Artist Video** strand, in collaboration with LUX | Artists' Moving Image, focuses on two distinctive voices in experimental film work. Director and cinematographer **Yoo Soon-mi** presents a visually dazzling portrait of North Korea in her documentary **Songs from the North** (2014, UK Premiere), which interrogates the shared memory and collective history of the North and South Korean people and in **Dangerous Supplement** (2005) we gain an insight into the artists' early work, particularly the theme of memory that informs her later pieces. Three works are presented from visual artist **Park Chan Kyong**, with **Sets** (2000) examining the North's perception of South Korea by looking at the constructed sets of South Korean streets and buildings housed at the National Film Studio of North Korea, **Flying** (2005) examines the North-South divide via footage of flights in and out of Pyongyang and from the streets of the northern capital and **Believe It or Not** (2018) (produced by Park's brother, acclaimed director Park Chan-wook) is a short narrative piece inspired by the many people who have made the dangerous journey across the border.

Guests available for interview:

- **Kim Soo-yong** - Director of *The Seashore Village & Bloodline*
- **Kim Sol** – Director of *Scattered Night*
- **Chung Ji-young** - Director of *North Korean Partisan in South Korea*
- **Chang Yoon-hyun** - Director of *The Contact*
- **Lee Byeong-Heon** - Director of *Extreme Job*
- **Shim Hyejung** - Director of *A Bedsore*
- **Cho Joonhyung** - Senior Researcher, Korean Film Archive
- **Yoo Un-seong** - Korean film critic, co-publisher of Okulo a journal of cinema and the moving image, and programmer at Jeonju International Film Festival (2004-2012)
- **Darcy Paquet** - Seoul based film critic, lecturer, and author (*New Korean Cinema, 2010*), awarded the Korea Film Reporters Association Award

London venues include: Regent Street Cinema, Picturehouse Central, Close-up Film Centre, Phoenix Cinema, Rio Cinema, ICA, Barbican, British Museum, LUX, Birkbeck's Institute of Moving Image, and KCCUK.

The festival tours to: Edinburgh Film House, Watershed Cinema Bristol, Belfast Queen's Film Theatre, Glasgow Film Theatre, Manchester HOME, Nottingham Broadway Cinema, until 24th November 2019.

To apply for Press Accreditation and for any interview requests and images please contact festival publicist Christopher O'Keeffe: chris@witchfinder.co (+44 7413 157 011)

Notes to Editors

About London Korean Film Festival:

The London Korean Film Festival will return to celebrate its 14th year from 1st-24th November 2019, 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 14th 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.