

Imaging the Avant-Garde Taiwan's Film Experiments of the 1960s

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presented in association with

the Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival, the Taiwan Film Institute,
the Center for Asian American Media and Light Field
Live musical performance by Amma Ateria



Half a century ago, restrictions result[ing] from the political situation left a group of art and literature-loving young Taiwanese people with no other choice but to rely on translated books to imagine what Western art films were like; moreover, they carried out their own experiments on film. Half a century later, it seems that we can only rely on the fragmented written accounts that have survived and various theories to image what these lost films looked like. Unfortunately, 'not being able [to] see the real thing' becomes the common thread linking now and then.

Starting from [this] 'double imagination' [...] and based on historical documents from various sources, the Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival searched for the independent films made during that period. Our clues came from the artists, the *Theatre Quarterly*, the film students who studied abroad and those in the Hong Kong and Western literature and art worlds who were in contact with their Taiwanese counterparts. Under the unique circumstances at that time, these films might reflect the reality in some way, and we hoped that the rediscovery and revival of these works would provide us with extra materials and allow us to conduct a conversation with the 1960s, a period known for its modern, avant-garde and experimental spirit.

From what is described above, one can see that the so-called 'avant-garde' actually comes from imagination, and imagination itself might be some sort of avant-garde. These film experiments of the 1960s could be seen as the 'imaginary avant-garde' and our ambition to revive them is a kind of 'avant-garde imagination'. (Taiwan International Documentary Festival 2019 on Tour.

www.tidf.org.tw/en/category/shows2018/5326

Run (1966) by Han Hsiang-ning; 8mm screened as digital video, b&w, silent, 5 minutes, exhibition file from TIDF

On a morning in 1966, as requested by the director, artist XI De-jin ran around the Renai Road Roundabout, while an 8mm camera tagged along. The runner, wearing a striped outfit, keeps striding forward to some unknown finish line, his eyes looking around from time to time; suddenly, a crowd of motorcycles appears and engulfs him. (TIDF)

Life Continued (1966) by Chuang Ling; 16mm screened as digital video, b&w, silent, 14 minutes, exhibition file from TIDF

A pregnant woman awakes at the start of a day. The camera invites the viewers along with a placid, light-feeling view, as she goes about her day, taking into view unhurried pedestrians, tricycles, a traditional marketplace, and a plain city still unencumbered by high rise buildings. (TIDF)

Getting Ready for the Festival (1967) by Long Sih-liang; 8mm screened as digital video, color, silent, 5 minutes, exhibition file from TIDF

In these freckled, disjointed montages of everyday life, we see a faint hint of an upcoming festival as the theatre troupe sound its drums; the children either sit and gaze, or clamber to see the lead actress. This 8mm roll of film was found after LONG Sih-liang passed away in 2012 and is now shown for the first time in 51 years. (TIDF)

A Morning in Taipei (1964) by Pai Ching-ji; 35mm screened as digital video, color, silent, 20 minutes, exhibition file from TIDF

This is an early work by the director, who had just returned from Italy. As dawn gradually breaks, we see the neon lights of the city being swallowed by the morning light. The lens traverses through parks, churches, markets, factories, and finally follows the morning paper into the breakfast hours of a small white-collar family. (TIDF)

The Mountain (1966) by Richard Yao-chi Chen; 16mm screened as digital video, color, sound, 19 minutes, exhibition file from TIDF

In Chinese with English subtitles.

The director follows three art college students HUANG Yong-song, MOU Tun-fei, and HUANG Gui-rong as they enjoy an excursion into the mountains. As the song "California Dreamin'" plays, the three talk about their artistic ideals, how only KMT party members were eligible for scholarships, and their view on the Vietnam War.

This program is presented with the support of the Taiwan Documentary Film Festival and the Taiwan Film Institute and is presented in association with Light Field and Center for Asian American Media.

Taiwan Documentary Film Festival: www.tidf.org.tw

Taiwan Film Institute: www.tfi.org.tw

Light Field: www.lightfieldfilm.org

Center for Asian American Media: www.caamedia.org

Amma Ateria's performance is presented with technical support from Meyer Sound

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