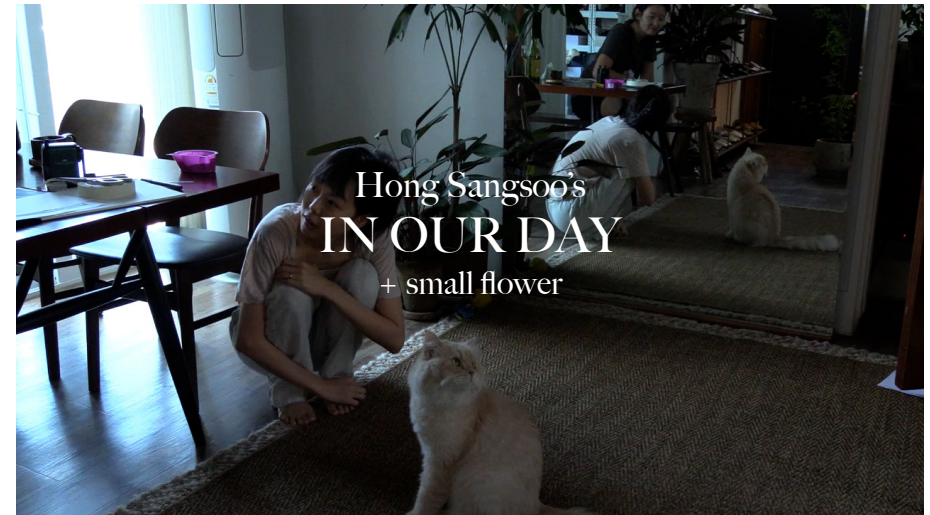


Acropolis Cinema presents:



After listening to her cousin for a bit, Kim monologues about leaving behind her acting career. Things were going well for her, but working with a new collaborator, whom she chooses not to name, changed things, made her previous work as a performer seem ridiculous and artificial. This unburdening carries the whiff of autobiography—since beginning work and partnership with Hong, she’s appeared solely in his films, eleven to be precise. Park Chan-wook’s 2016 *The Handmaiden* seemed poised to catapult her to international renown, but she made a turn towards a different kind of filmmaking life (occasionally even serving as production manager on recent Hong films). Similarly, squint gently and the poet Hong, now past the age where drinking and carousing hold much allure, and settling into status as a bemused teetotaling prophet beloved by counterculturally inclined youth, certainly recalls his namesake. We could read autobiography against the grain all over *In Our Day*, but, as with so much we might want to intuit and discern from Hong’s films, and have tried to over the years (think of the parsing around *On the Beach at Night Alone*, a film which certainly *seemed* a response to the revelation of the director’s affair with his muse), it may all be a dead-end.

Sangwon’s cousin leaves unsatisfied in her search for the key to acting—in one of the film’s funniest jokes she literally disappears from the movie in the span of a cut. Meanwhile, in response to his earnest and very lost admirer, the poet offers: “What we should do is be thankful for the small things. To the best of our ability, appreciate what is in front of us, and be thankful, that’s all.” It’s a greeting card sentiment rendered profound in Hong’s unstable narrative contraption. Us, the cat, returns to observe things—is his name a signal that he’s a fluffy feline locum for the audience at large? Probably too tidy a move for a filmmaker who loves a solution-free puzzle. There’s clearly a joy in this way of meaning making/short-circuiting for Hong. His concerns and production methods feel too loose to be the work of a true obsessive (he’s bragged about showing up on set without an idea of what to film); his prolificacy feels at this point like working a muscle to stay limber. My analytic impulse suggests there’s something about his continual return to themes and devices that begs to be unpacked via the usual critical toolkit. But the protagonists of *In Our Day* literally told me not to try so hard—to just sit back and enjoy. I’m compelled by this idea. And yet... ♦

Coming soon to Acropolis:

-*Beijing Watermelon* (Dir. Nobuhiko Obayashi, 1989)—Los Angeles premiere of new 2K restoration, June 8 at 2220 Arts + Archives

-*Zigeunerweisen* (Dir. Seijun Suzuki, 1980)—Los Angeles premiere of new 2K restoration, June 20 at the Culver Theater

May 26, 2024 – 2220 Arts + Archives

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Sangwon (Kim Minhee), an actress recently returned to South Korea, is temporarily staying with her friend, Jungsoo (Song Sunmi), and her cat, Us. Elsewhere in the city, the aging poet Uiju (Ki Joobong) lives alone, his cat having recently passed away. On this ordinary day, each of them has a visitor: Sangwon is visited by her cousin, Jisoo (Park Miso) and Uiju, by a young actor, Jaewon (Ha Seongguk). Each of them wants to learn about a career in the arts. But they also have bigger questions. Both Sangwon and Uiju have ramyun noodles for lunch and they both add hot pepper paste to their ramyun noodles, not a very common thing to do. As our friends talk and drink the day away, similarities between these encounters multiply and we begin to realize they may be more than just mere coincidence.

With his 30th feature film, Hong demonstrates a new level of mastery of his art, using long, deceptively elaborate shots to articulate the simplest of pleasures: an inter-species encounter, the discovery of a new drink, a game of rock paper scissors. Kim and Ki lead an outstanding cast of the most natural of performers. *In Our Day* is a film to drink of deeply, to share with friends, and afterward, to reflect on what matters most.

Preceded by:

small flower (Dir. Hong Sangsoo, 2022)

A short film created in 2022 for a retrospective at the Centre Pompidou and repurposed as a greeting for audiences at the New York Film Festival, *small flower* resurfaces again: as an almost direct quote by Kim Minhee's character in *In Our Day*.

TRT: 85 min

Picking Up the Pieces by Jeff Reicherdt

The following article was originally published by Reverse Shot, May 17, 2024

Current life expectancy for South Korean males stands at 86.3 years. Hong Sang-soo, the ROK's most prolific filmmaker, turned 63 last October. Given this, we should reasonably expect at least 30 more features under his aegis to appear in the usual festivals and limited theatrical engagements before he shuffles off this mortal coil. Give or take. By 2047, *In Our Day*, his 30th movie, will represent something like the midpoint of Hong's career, an issuance from that heady moment in the 2020s when he just started to crank, instead of what a filmmaker's 30th often portends: a genteel autumnal issuance from a mollycoddled auteur winding off into oblivion. With a career like Hong's, it's hard not to speculate—what is he up to, where are we in the arc of the damn thing, how do we delineate one period from the next, how many more of these are we gonna sit through, what does it all mean? This is both because the films themselves, in their cozy scenarios

actions that will come to play a crucial role in her work until the end of her career. More of chance-marked domesticity, openly pick at life and why we live it, but also because, in this moment somewhere in the midst of Hong's career, we're all blindly tugging on different parts of the elephant. We can't ascertain exactly what's in front of us because we can't really see it yet.

I've watched and enjoyed 28 or 29 of the extant features, including *In Our Day*, yet in retrospect wouldn't be able to articulate the differences between, say, *Like You Know It All* and *Our Sunhi* if placed under threat of death. In this way, I'm probably like many of you out there reading this. There was a moment, long about the middle of the last decade, with the release of the quantum-warped *Hill of Freedom* and *Right Now, Wrong Then*, when it seemed liked Hong was entering something like an imperial phase—here were two films in rapid succession that committed to smashing our relationship with traditional storytelling. *Hill of Freedom* broke its narrative into quark-like bits, scrambled them freely, and found a new kind of coherence, while the two halves of *Right Now, Wrong Then* operated on principles akin to the phenomenon of spooky action at a distance—I suspect they know of each other. Hong Sang-soo—cinema's Large Hadron Collider. Yet, just a few years later, he'd ditch the idea of technical collaborators (i.e. film crews) so he could make films even more quickly, now often acting as writer, director, producer, cinematographer, editor, and composer. The films since the shift are marked by halting pans and janky zooms, blotchily overexposed corners of frames, a lackadaisical commitment to familiar editing rhythms, Casio-cheap scores. These aren't complaints. There are so many that it can be hard to remember them all beyond vague identifying markers. There's the one that's out of focus on purpose. The one with the good cat gag. The one that takes place on different floors of a building. The one on the beach. The one by the river. They all seem less soju-soused of late (Hong has switched to makgeolli), but perhaps that's my memory playing tricks on me.

For the big three-oh, Hong hasn't decided to do anything special to celebrate, no big shifts from recent formula. *In Our Day* sets two unconnected, rhyming narratives against each other for scrutiny—like looking at two paint samples from the same spectrum side by side and parsing the differences. (I believe this is the first such configuration he's tried, but don't quote me.) Each begins with two characters, and then, after an introductory scene between them, a third is introduced. In the first, Sangwon (Kim Min-hee) is a retired actress staying with her friend Jung-soo (Song Sunmi), and cat, Us. She feels a bit shiftless, which isn't immediately helped by the arrival of her niece (Kim Seungyun), who wants advice on how to jumpstart her own acting career. Elsewhere, in another modest apartment, older poet Hong Uiji (Ki Joo-bong) genially entertains a film student working on a documentary about him when an intense fan (Ha Seong-guk) arrives with a battery of broad questions that recalls the similarly pointed inquiries of Sangwon's cousin. All of a sudden, the cat disappears. Stringed instruments figure in both stories, and there's a curious echo where Sangwon and Hong take their ramyun noodles with pepper paste, which is, as it so happens, uncommon. There are overly descriptive text cards interspersed that help move things along and provide helpful context—is this new to his cinema?