

# TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

THURSDAY, SEPT. 22  
7 P.M. • HUMANITIES  
QUADRANGLE  
ALICE CINEMA

## YI YI: A ONE AND A TWO...

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM  
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



"It's a story about individuals. The film is my observation—indeed, my belief—that everyone in the world is equal. It's a kind of idealism. But I put it in a very human way. It's not too deep or philosophical."

— Edward Yang on *YI YI*

Internationally acclaimed as one of the greatest films of the 21st century, Edward Yang's *YI YI* stands as the crowning achievement—and final film—of a filmmaker whose career lasted less than twenty years. At the Cannes Film Festival in 2000, Yang was awarded Best Director and the film itself was nominated for the prestigious Palme d'Or, and its stature has only grown since.

Edward Yang, born in Shanghai in 1947 and raised in Taipei, didn't set out to be a filmmaker. Yang's decision to try his hand at filmmaking sprang from an unlikely series of events: he received a graduate degree in electrical engineering at the University of Florida in 1974, and then decided to attend film school at USC. After one semester there, disillusioned with its focus on commercial Hollywood fare, Yang dropped out, recalling, "I realized I didn't have any talent at all. I didn't have what it takes to get into the film business, so I dropped out. I recognized that I better not dream this dream because I didn't have what it takes."

Yang followed his family to Seattle, where he found a job at the University of Washington's Applied Physics Laboratory. Cinema was never far from this mind, though; while designing navigation technology for U.S. military submarines by day, Yang watched films at night, with his directorial dreams still on the back burner. One night, he caught a repertory screening of Werner Herzog's *AGUIRRE, DER ZORN GÖTTES*, which convinced him to pursue work in the field once more. His first chance came when a friend asked him to write a script, which became the film *THE WINTER OF 1905*, directed by Wei-Cheng Yu, starring legendary director Tsui Hark, and released in 1981. As Yang often said, seeing Herzog's film "turned me around."

While making his second feature film, *TAIPEI STORY* (1985), Yang also began crafting the script for what would eventually become *YI YI*, fifteen years later. He credited Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan with encouraging him to return to his script after many years, having lived enough to feel that he was ready to make the film. "I owe a debt to Stanley Kwan," Yang noted, explaining that a conversation they shared about the way a death in the family can set off a chain-reaction spurred him to revisit his dormant script, where the matriarch's illness has the same effect.

Another inspiration for Yang's story was his lead actor: the role of NJ is played by Wu Nien-jin, the prolific and acclaimed screenwriter and director whose skill in front of the camera came to light when he was cast in a series of beer and food commercials. "If he hadn't been around, I probably wouldn't have started writing the story," Yang noted.

Yang's ambitious exploration of the problems facing a multi-generational family received acclaim as an intimate epic, a sprawling film with a nearly three-hour running time that still feels clearly focused on a small group of characters, exceptional in their un-exceptionalness. As Yang told an interviewer in 2001, "It's basically a story about people. This time it's not so much about city life or what's going on in Taipei. It's about human beings, about some simple lives. I've focused on things that happen to a family—about how the individual members react and respond to things that happen to the others. It's a simple slice of life from the 20th century."

Edward Yang died just short of his sixtieth birthday at his home in Beverly Hills, California, in June, 2007.



WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **EDWARD YANG**

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **WEI-HAN YANG**

PRODUCED BY **PONY CANYON FILMS**

(2000) 173 MINS.

STARRING **NIEN-JEN WU, ISSEI OGATA,  
ELAINE JIN, KELLY LEE, JONATHAN CHANG,  
HSI-CHENG CHEN, and SU-YUN KO**

**DID YOU KNOW:** AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH, EDWARD YANG WAS PREPARING *THE WIND*, AN AMBITIOUS ANIMATED MARTIAL ARTS FEATURE CO-PRODUCED WITH JACKIE CHAN. YANG HAD COMPLETED A SKETCHBOOK OF 56 CONCEPTUAL DRAWINGS FOR THE PROJECT SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH.

**NEXT UP:** "YOU KNOW WHAT THE FELLOW SAID: IN ITALY, FOR THIRTY YEARS UNDER THE BORGIIAS, THEY HAD WARFARE, TERROR, MURDER AND BLOODSHED, BUT THEY PRODUCED MICHELANGELO, LEONARDO DA VINCI, AND THE RENAISSANCE. IN SWITZERLAND, THEY HAD BROTHERLY LOVE, THEY HAD 500 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY AND PEACE, AND WHAT DID THAT PRODUCE? THE CUCKOO CLOCK." **THE THIRD MAN** SCREENS **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, AT 7PM.**