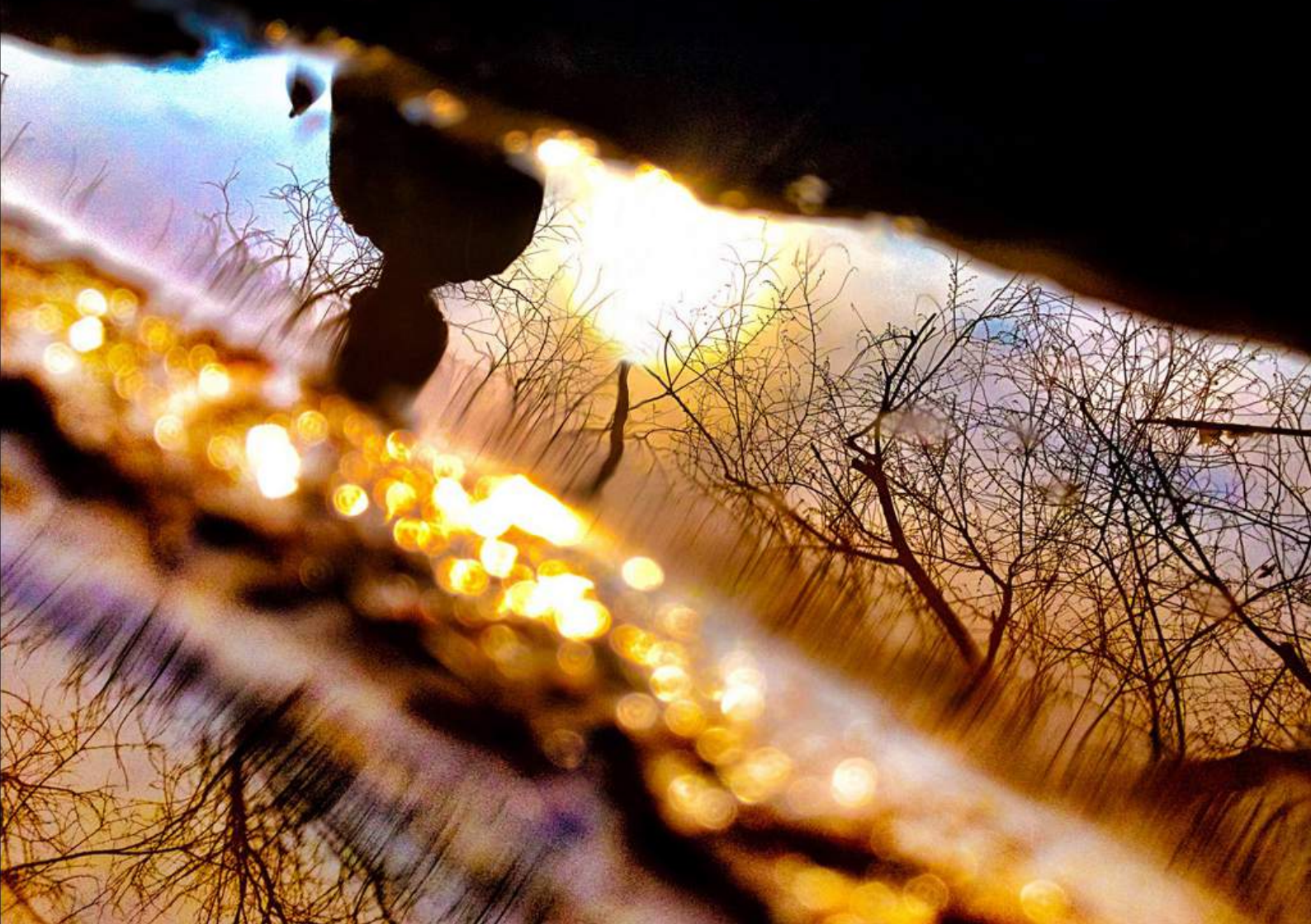


the egg

A FILM BY **ALESSANDRO TRAPANI**



This is a project for a comedy-drama with a Chinese protagonist, directed by an Italian filmmaker, to be shot mainly in Italy and partially in China. A story about a long trip. A story about art, creativity, family and friendship.



Logline

When a famous Chinese artist, who has traded his affections for success, finds out his estranged daughter is about to get married in Sicily, he decides to embark on a journey to that distant land to find her. During a trip that will take him to the most unusual parts of the region, Ming Lu will experience difficult situations that will test his character and motivations and will make him understand that finding his daughter also means reconnecting with the true source of his creativity.







Synopsis

Ming Lu is a well-known conceptual artist in his 50s, but his success was reached at the expense of his family's breaking apart. During the inauguration of his latest exhibition he hears through the grapevine that his estranged daughter Jing, whom he has completely lost contact with, is about to get married in Sicily, a distant land he hardly knows about. Suddenly realizing the extent of his emotional loss, he decides to make the trip to that faraway place, with the purpose of finding his daughter.



In Sicily, Ming Lu meets Blanche, a refined Eurasian woman in her 30's, who will be his translator assisting him on his journey, and Mike, an eccentric Sicilian in his 50's from the underworld, who will act as a local guide through that mysterious land. Following a thread that was given to him by a Chinese fishmonger in the main market in Palermo, the three set off towards an animal farm on the other side of the island where Jing is supposed to be working. When they arrive at the farm, the first thing Ming Lu notices is an ostrich brooding over her giant eggs. This awakens the memory of a painting he made where his daughter was portrayed holding a giant egg and he reacts by entering the hutch to seize one of them, but in doing so he angers the male ostrich and just manages to escape, causing Blanche's and Mike's hilarity. At this point a Chinese girl comes out of the farm. Ming Lu gets very emotional and approaches her but only to realize with great disappointment she is not Jing. The fishmonger got it wrong.



With the help of Blanche and social media, Ming finally manages to locate his daughter in the town of Catania and the trio heads back on the road. However, on the way there Ming Lu gets robbed and loses his passport. He decides to go to the police, but as Blanche confesses her permit of stay had expired and Mike is not comfortable around the authorities, he ends up going in alone. Ming Lu fails to properly explain the situation to a suspicious agent, who takes him for a clandestine, and ends up imprisoned in a refugee camp. At first Ming Lu is totally disheartened, but soon realizes he's not alone there and starts observing the sorrow but also the dignity in the people surrounding him. Soon he connects with Salif, a musician from Mali who's trying to rejoin his family in Denmark. The two of them conceive an escape plan and during the night, manage to break through the fence finding Mike and Blanche waiting for them outside.



The next day the group arrives in Catania and go for lunch in a Chinese restaurant. Chatting with the owner, Ming Lu finds out about a Chinese girl who is studying at the local conservatory and who, a few weeks before, had a celebration dinner there for her engagement to an Italian student. Blanche shows the owner a photo of Jing. It's her! At the conservatory, Mike proves his cleverness by managing to get from the reticent secretary the address of the Italian family, where upon they show up shortly after. Ming Lu is very nervous, and tries to put on his best smile but, to his great disappointment, the family reveals that Jing and their son already got married and are away on their honeymoon. To his surprise Jing left a letter for him, where she reveals it was her who sent him news of the wedding, but later, troubled by contradictory feelings, decided she wasn't ready to see him again. Besides, if he was reading that letter now it would mean a lot to her and maybe in the future it would be possible to see each other again. Ming Lu leaves the egg, which he finely decorated, as a gift to his daughter and takes leave.



康范余吳
英西柳余吳
京傑則全桐文
張吳聯
高全德偉
馬高
忠左明
許配渡
電海分

To bid his newfound friends farewell, Mike takes them on top of the volcano Etna. Here in a misty atmosphere Ming Lu thanks everyone for their support. In honor of them he takes out the precious bottle of liquor that was meant for his daughter's wedding and makes a toast. Each one of them then makes a declaration about their future plans, and Ming Lu announces that he has decided to stay in Italy a little longer in order to follow his renewed flare of creativity.



Six months later, a new exhibition of Ming Lu takes place in Milan. His art has shifted back from conceptual to figurative, consisting in several portraits of the people he encountered during his trip. Many of them are of immigrants in refugee camps, but one is of Jing, holding the ostrich egg. Ming Lu and his daughter are there, finally reunited, contemplating the center of the room where a mysterious giant egg is shining a bright light on them.



When I was a teenager, I first came in contact with Chinese culture during a summer spent studying philosophy. It was thanks to an unconventional professor who opened my mind by introducing me to the study of "I Ching" (The Book of Changes) and the fundamental Taoist text by Lao Tze, the "Tao Te Ching". From then on I have been deeply fascinated by the mysteries of this ancient culture whose philosophy often led me to perceive these differences as a parallel universe whose existence consistently knocked at the doors of my Western point of view.

The urge to understand what it all meant led me to put under scrutiny the basis of my own culture and at times even questioning its values. I later came to realize that making these kind of comparison was not favoring a wholesome awareness. In fact, we don't have to choose one side over the other, as it is in the integration of both cultures that one could find more interesting and prolific results. I tried to analyze this in a previous work of mine, "Lin Fei", where a Chinese immigrant in Rome manages to overcome his mental block only when he decides to take the plunge and immerse himself in this other world he is now living in.

In that short movie I also tried to connect to a certain tone that belong to the Far East "cinema d'auteur", which can easily be perceived as exclusive, addressing to a restricted audience. Now I decided to delve further into that subject, but this time I chose to infuse the drama with comedic tones, as I intend to address the topic to a wider audience.

The idea at the base of the movie, is that of a man who has lost his way, and this primarily stems from a range of narrative needs. On the one hand, there is the desire to understand what it means for a man to find his bearings in a foreign country and to observe how this unfolds as a self-discovering trip led by the need to resolve the relationship with his estranged daughter. While on the other hand, there is the desire to examine how the artist is able to cope with being in a foreign environment and how this sense of uneasiness interestingly possesses the cathartic healing power which is vital to his transformation as a human being, as a father and eventually as an artist.

My challenge then is to create a story that could be enjoyed by both a Western and Asian public. To achieve this, I centered the characters around universal themes that everyone can relate to, as cultural differences are not what motivates the action. Instead, it is through the intricate framework of people and the human relationships that the dynamics of this story will play out.

From an Italian point of view it will be interesting to follow the story of a Chinese man that doesn't fit into our common perceptions. He's not the poor immigrant working 20 hours per day or the fellow countryman who's exploiting him, which is how we usually perceive Chinese people here. Instead he's a successful artist who comes to Italy for completely different reasons, but is stereotyped that way as soon as he ventures alone onto our territory.

On the other hand, from a Chinese point of view, it will be interesting to follow the actions of a fellow countryman in such an exotic country. Here is a contemporary man, a prominent artist who is trying to regain his estranged daughter's affection and has to wander in a foreign country - that despite being a place universally perceived as the mother of Western art - will also turn out to be interspersed with deep contradictions and hope.

Alessandro Trapani

The egg is a universal symbol of life which in the movie assumes the character of a red thread. As an object, the ostrich egg reappears here and there in Ming Lu's life.

We see it in Jing's hands, when Ming Lu portrays her in a big composition about the Cultural Revolution; it then reappears at the farm as a reminder that Ming Lu has to insist when he finds out that the first attempt to find his daughter was a failure. It later becomes a message of reconciliation, when he leaves it as a present for her. It finally reappears in the end, casting its light over the reconciled father and daughter, acquiring the symbolic value of new life.

The story is set in Beijing (China) and in various parts of Sicily (Italy), including its countryside, the towns of Palermo, Catania and Mount Etna.

I decided to set the story in Sicily because it's a mysterious land, full of history, art and contradictions, that I thought would be the ideal background for a story of affective research and soul discovery.

I want my protagonist to be tested by the unknown land he ends up into. Sicily can be a challenging place that one moment seduces with incredible natural settings and an astounding artistic heritage and the second after bewilders with its daunting social issues and degraded urban environment. My intention is to show all of this: from the artistic beauties of Palermo to the run-down market of Ballarò, from the uplifting countryside landscapes, to the depleting life conditions of a refugee camp. The trip will end up on the volcano, where incredible views of the island can usually be enjoyed. Our characters though won't be able to do so, as they will instead find themselves in a misty, more poetic environment, that will allow them to open up and reveal themselves to each other.



It begins in Beijing in a contemporary art gallery...



...a troubled night comes to a resolution on the Hangzhou canal in Beijing.



An explosion of life at Ballarò Market - Palermo



On the road, through the Sicilian countryside



Getting lost. "What am I doing here?" - The Enchanted Garden



An epiphany - The ostrich farm



The robbery. All of a sudden at a traffic light..



Ending up in a refugee camp

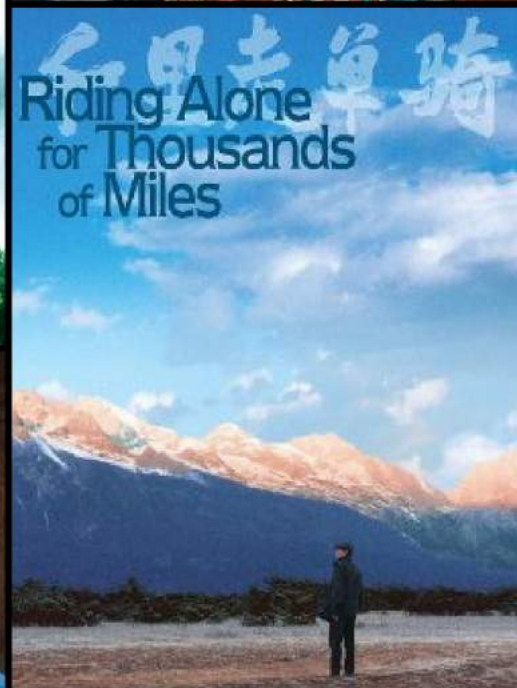


A farewell on Mount Etna

The film has the tone of a light drama. If I had to look at some movies as a reference point, it would be "Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles", by Zhang Yimou as an inspiring example of how to portray the inner transformation of a character who has to face a long trip in a foreign country. "Sideways", by Alexander Payne would be another point of reference. Here I have been inspired by the light comedic style used to recount the serious issue of an identity crisis. The last very inspiring example is "Eat, Drink, Man, Woman", by Ang Lee, a true masterpiece in terms of character development and the complex relationship between a father and his three daughters.



骑行
Riding Alone
for Thousands
of Miles





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MING LU

Ming Lu is the centre, the pillar of the story. He has three dimensions, the artist, the man and the father and the three are obviously interconnected. What I really like in Ming Lu is how he doesn't hesitate to take action when he realizes that having become a commercially successful artist coincided with him neglecting his daughter. I like the courage he shows in facing the unpredictable consequences of his decision to go and look for her, an action that will turn his life upside down. Ming Lu is a man of his times and is fully immersed in reality. However he has to straighten a few things about himself that constitutes the unresolved aspects of his personality. The art he expresses at the beginning of the story is a reflection of this painful unresolved side of him. It is something he has put in motion when he severed his link with the real source of his creativity: his daughter. That is why his objective in finding her coincides with the subconscious desire to reject his present status as a very successful commercial artist. This will prove to be a trajectory that will lead him to become a complete artist, one whose aim is in interpreting reality without compromising his own artistic integrity.

I see the possibility of this role being played by a real artist. It should be someone who feels an affinity with the character. Might this search prove to be too arduous, I will have no problem in giving the part to an actor.



BLANCHE

Blanche is a beautiful woman, who knows how to be practical and to give the right advice at the right moment. Her ambitions of becoming an art historian in Italy has been frustrated by the lack of opportunities, so she had to resort to interpreting. Living in Italy has satisfied her desire of being close to such an incredible artistic heritage, but deep inside she feels that this period is coming to an end. Helping Ming Lu with his search will inspire her to understand that she has to move on. Therefore going back to China in search of her own roots appears to be the most natural decision to her.

BLANCHE



MIKE

Mike's character was inspired by a real person that I met in the Ballarò market in Sicily during a photographic journey. He's a scoundrel with a soft heart and that is why he never really made it in the underworld. He loves poetry, writes poems and considers himself an artist. For this reason, he respects Ming Lu a lot and thinks that in a way they're similar, as Ming is a painter and himself a poet, to the extent that at one point he even calls him "colleague".

Mike used to have a Chinese girlfriend who worked for the fishmonger, but she decided to go back to China to be with her son and now Mike is heartbroken. In the end, following Blanche's advice, he will decide to propose to her so they will be able reunite.

MIKE



SALIF

Salif is a musician from Mali who had to flee his country because of the ban that was put on music by an integralist group that took power in his region. His plan is to re-join his wife and daughter who are already in North Europe, but unfortunately the extremely difficult conditions of his trip to Italy and him ending up in a refugee camp, eventually depleted his will. Meeting Ming Lu revives his desire to go ahead and results in the escape plan. He then decides to follow Ming Lu for a little while as he feels an affinity with him, also because of their common attempt to reunite with their families. In the end he decides to get back on track and head North. Ideally I would like this part to be played by a real African musician.

SALIF



JING

Even though Ming Lu's daughter is hardly seen in the movie, she is a constant underlying presence. She is what motivates Ming Lu to move forward in the story. When she was a little girl, she used to be Ming Lu's true source of inspiration, his muse. She used to be very attached to her father, but when he rejected her, she refused to see or even communicate with him any longer. This resulted in a huge empty space in her heart, a space so painful that she had to bury it deep within herself. Anyway Jing has the strength of making the first move on the path towards reconciliation with her father, and even though she hides herself until the very last moment, in the end she will be there next to him and thus will resume her role as Ming's muse.

JING



I firmly believe that all the tools a director has - and by tools I mean acting, photography, set designing, etc. - should always serve the higher purpose of expressing in an artistic way the content of the story, be it emotional or intellectual. They should never prevail over that purpose.

The visual style of this movie will mainly reflect the emotional state of its characters, but will also be affected by the conditions and characteristics of the settings the action is taking place in. The Chinese part at the beginning will be photographed in a clean and cool style, with a prevalence of brown tints, but when Ming Lu arrives in Sicily, a contrast of blue and yellow tones will prevail and at moments the style will then acquire a grittier, even cruder tone. This will be especially the case when Ming Lu gets robbed and ends up in the refugee camp. A good reference of that visual style would be "Gomorra", by Matteo Garrone. Great attention will be placed on the composition of all shots and camera movements, with the purpose of always serving the narrative needs and never focusing on the technique alone.

Color grading will also be of great importance, in order to give the image the most cinematic look possible. Shooting will be done in raw format. For what concerns the set design, I am planning on using only real locations and whenever necessary, apply careful interventions in order to enhance their character.



Mild tones, desaturated photography, with enhanced blacks for outdoor daylight shooting in Sicily.

Leonard Tee producer



Leonard Tee is a Malaysian film producer of Chinese origin who has worked extensively in the Malaysian film industry, primarily with independent directors. Several of the films he produced made it to the international film festival circuit. Leonard's move into the film industry started when he established the Malaysian office of film auteur Tsai Ming-Liang's Homegreen Films in 2006. That same year, he was co-producer for Tsai's "I Don't Want to Sleep Alone", which was screened at the Venice Film Festival.

In 2007, he produced "It's a Dream", directed by Tsai Ming Liang. It was presented at the 2007 Venice Biennale and was part of the omnibus "To Each His Own", a collective film which features a collection of 33 shorts directed by some of the most important auteurs in cinema and was produced by

Cannes Film Festival. The film was eventually added to the permanent collection of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. This collection, including the film, was presented in several countries across the world. The following year he produced Tsai's short film "Madame Butterfly" (2009).

Leonard remained active in the Malaysian film industry in the current decade, producing "The New Village" (2013), the first Malaysian epic Chinese film, directed by Malaysian director Wong Kew Lit; and Tsai Ming Liang's "Walking on Water" (2013), one of the episodes from Letters from the South, a collective movie about the Chinese diaspora to South-East Asia. This film was screened at the Hong Kong Film Festival and Taipei Golden Horse Awards and was selected for a special screening at Busan International Film Festival 2013.

In 2014, he produced William Kwok-Wai's "Day and Night", an omnibus release of 3 short films consisting of 3 Malaysian filmmakers: Ho Yuhang's "Trespassed", Charlotte Lim's Bite and Yeo Joon Han's Beside Manners, reflecting their personal feelings about the health of Malaysian society. This film was screened at the Singapore Chinese Film Festival in 2016 and in the

International Film Festival of Rotterdam. One of the shorts of this portmanteau, "Trespassed" by Ho Yuhang, won best film in 2015 for the FT/Oppenheimer Funds Emerging Voices Awards.

In 2015, he produced "You Mean the World to Me", directed by Saw Teong Hin, which in 2017 was in competition at the Granada Film Festival in Spain and at the Manila Film Festival. Leonard's most recent producing credit is 2017's "The White Girl", directed by Christopher Doyle and Jenny Suen. Despite being a very recent production, several international film festivals have already expressed interest in this film for a world premiere.

In addition to his film producing credits, Leonard has also been involved in theatre, producing several stage plays, including Emily of Emerald Hill (2014), where he worked closely with actress Pearly Chua and songstress Yudi Yap.

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Flaminio Zadra

producer



Flaminio Zadra has alternated his passion for cinema with a journalistic career. In 2001 he moved to Hamburg (Germany) where he actively collaborated, both in the creative and productive phase, with director Fatih Akin in his new-born Corazon International film company. He later moved back to his hometown Rome, where he joined Dorje Film as Head of productions. Since then he has produced and co-produced numerous short films, documentaries and films by international authors like Fatih Akin, Julie Bertucelli, Sergei Bodrov, Idrissa Ouédraogo, Etgar Keret, Pablo Trapero, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Zhangke Jia, Hany Abu-Assad and Jafar Panahi.

Flaminio is now opening his own production company, in collaboration with producer Pilar Saavedra Perrotta, which will be based in Rome.

The films produced by Flaminio have participated in many major film festivals and have been awarded numerous prizes. In 2006 "Takva", by Özer Kiziltan, won the Fipresci Prize at the Berlin Film Festival; "The Edge of Heaven", by Fatih Akin, won the Palme d'Or for Best Screenplay at the Cannes Film Festival in 2008, while "Soul Kitchen", also by Fatih Akin, won the Special Jury Prize at the 2010 Venice Film Festival. "Ufo In Her Eyes", by Xiaolu Guo, was selected for the Toronto Film Festival in 2011. "Blanka" by Kohki Hasei, was screened at the Venice Film Festival and won best film at the Kolkata International Film Festival in 2015, while "In the Fade" by Fatih Akin, was awarded the Palme d'Or for the Best Female Performer at Cannes Film Festival 2017, and the very recent Golden Globe in 2018. Presently Flaminio is developing two new projects: "Vivaldi", a film on the famous composer, directed by Bille August, and "The Story of my Wife", by Academy Award nominated Hungarian director Iláiko Enyedi.

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Alessandro Trapani

director



Alessandro Trapani graduated in Film History and Critique at La Sapienza University of Rome, with a thesis about the aesthetic value of the dream sequence in Luis Buñuel's cinema. He later attended a filmmaking course at the New York University and an acting class with Susan Strasberg. Alessandro also comes from a family with a long tradition in film business. His grandmother Isa Bartalini was the first woman to become an assistant-director in Italy, working for many of the great directors of her time, while his mother Lilia Hartmann is a well-known international casting director.

His professional experience spans on different levels of the film industry, either in cinema, television and commercials. He started his career in 1995, soon becoming a first AD and alternating this role with casting directing.

He has gained invaluable experience working with many international directors like Ridley Scott, David Lynch, Anthony Minghella, Martyn Burke, François Girard, Takata Masahiro, Kosai Sekine, Jane Campion, Jingle Ma, Liliana Cavani, Garth Davis and with actors like Gerard Depardieu, Philippe Noiret, Sharon Stone, Keira Knightley, Michael Pitt, Silvester Stallone and Richard Gere.

In 2005 he started directing his own projects, spanning from short movies to music videos, from documentaries to video-art. Many of these were selected in international film festivals. One of them is "Lin Fei", a short movie about a Chinese Taiji master in Rome, that was in competition at the Medfilmfestival and the Salerno International Film Festival in 2007. Alessandro is also a passionate photographer, having started taking pictures from a very young age. His photography has always been a fundamental part of his creative process.

He is presently shooting a documentary about a group of Syrian refugees in Rome and their effort to integrate. He has also other projects in preparation, one being a documentary series about the endangered foods of Italy and another a documentary about bringing music to the people who never left the Fukushima Prefecture in Japan.

Jacelyn Parry

Composer, actress,
art director, producer



Jacelyn Parry is half Chinese and half Australian. She was born in Malaysia and grew up between Singapore and Australia and now lives in Rome working as a composer, music producer, sound designer, creative consultant and actress.

She graduated from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in Australia and has since released albums such as 'East to West' with the label (ConcertOne) who has published with the likes of Ennio Morricone, Riz Ortolani and Maria Bethania. One of her compositions from the album 'Lin Fei' was featured as the opening title track for the 2011 edition of the European Spiritual Film Festival held in Paris. Her music has been utilized on Rai TV and featured on Radio Vaticano and has written music for documentaries. Her latest album of jazz music 'In Quiet Tones' is currently published in the UK.

Jacelyn has worked on the Grammy winning album of Kanye West's 'College Dropout'. As a journalist, she has written for the world's first audiophile Italian magazine 'Souno' interviewing Marantz guru Ken Ishiwata. She has also acted in several films in Italy of which she has played the leading role in 'Vendetta Chinese' of the Manetti Bros.

She has performed live with several of Italy's top jazz musicians such as Giovanni Tomasso for La Repubblica in Perugia, Umbria Jazz festival 2014; with Jazz pianist of the year, Mirko Signorile, Giuseppe Bassi and Roberto Ottaviano. Her song 'Playing Little Games', was featured on the international film 'Something Good' by Luca Barbareschi.

Jacelyn continues to perform live in Europe and with the 'Come to My home ensemble' in Morocco. She is actively writing music for various media outlets, publishers, documentaries, short films and mixing albums for various independent groups.

Screenshots from a short by
Alessandro Trapani

LIN FEI





Write:
Li Hong Wei
John Liu
Jacelyn Deng Li Parry

Cinematography:
Racul Torreal
Music:
Jacelyn Parry

A short film by Alessandro Trapani

LIN FEI 林飞





Perfect!



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Various photos utilized were sourced from the following: Adobe Stock Photos, internet search, 500px, 123rf.

Screenshots from Lin Fei, a short by Alessandro Trapani, P.53-56.

Graphics, art and website by Jacelyn Parry

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