

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

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## TSAI MING-LIANG, ONE OF CONTEMPORARY CINEMA'S MOST CELEBRATED DIRECTORS, TO RECEIVE A MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE

April 10–26, 2015

Astoria, New York, February 26, 2015—Tsai Ming-liang, the defining artist of Taiwan's Second Wave of filmmakers, will be the subject of a major retrospective at Museum of the Moving Image, from **April 10 through 26, 2015**—the most comprehensive presentation of Tsai's work ever presented in New York. Distinguished by a unique austerity of style and a minutely controlled mise-en-scene in which the smallest gestures give off enormous reverberations, Tsai's films comprise one of the most monumental bodies of work of the past 25 years. And, with actor Lee Kang-sheng, who has appeared in every film, Tsai's stories express an intimate acquaintance with despair and isolation, punctuated by deadpan humor.

The Museum's eighteen-film retrospective, *Tsai Ming-liang*, includes all of the director's feature films as well as many rare shorts, an early television feature (*Boys*, 1991), and the revealing 2013 documentary *Past Present*, by Malaysian filmmaker Tiong Guan Saw. From *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992), which propelled Tsai into the international spotlight, and his 1990s powerhouse films *Vive L'Amour* (1994), *The River* (1997), and *The Hole* (1998); and films made in his native Malaysia, *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* (2006) and *Sleeping on Dark Waters* (2008); to his films made in France, *What Time Is It There?* (2001), *Face (Visage)* (2009), and *Journey to the West* (2014); the retrospective captures Tsai's changing aesthetic: his gradual (but not continual) renouncement of classical cinematic techniques, an evolution that is also underscored by the shift from celluloid to digital.

Other highlights include *Stray Dogs*, what many thought would be Tsai's final film and which was lauded as one of the best films of 2014, and the ever astonishing *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003), Tsai's rueful backwards glance at the disappearance of the filmgoing culture of his youth.

All of Tsai's films that were made on film will be shown as imported, archival 35mm prints.

"There is no contemporary director who uses time and space with such rigor and

expressiveness as Tsai. His films are at once demanding and rewarding, and can only be truly experienced in a theatrical setting," said Chief Curator David Schwartz.

The Tsai Ming-liang retrospective was organized by Chief Curator David Schwartz and Assistant Curator of Film Aliza Ma. The short films and documentaries were programmed under Tsai and his producer's advisement. The program is presented with support from Taipei Cultural Center of TECO in New York. Special thanks to Homegreen Films, Central Motion Picture Corp., the Chinese Taipei Film Archive, and Fortissimo Films.

*Rebels of the Neon God* will have a much-awaited theatrical premiere, in a new digital restoration, at the Film Society of Lincoln Center and the Quad Cinemas in New York starting on April 10, 2015.

[Tsai Lee Lu coffee](#), produced by director Tsai Ming-liang and actors Lee Kang-sheng and Lu Yi-ching, will be available for purchase in the Museum Store.

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#### SCHEDULE FOR ' TSAI MING-LIANG, ' APRIL 10-26, 2015

Screenings will take place in the Sumner M. Redstone Theater or the Celeste and Armand Bartos Screening Room at Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Avenue in Astoria. Tickets are \$12 (\$9 seniors and students / free for Museum members at the Film Lover level and above). Advance tickets are available for purchase online at [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us) or in person at the Museum's admissions desk.

This schedule is also posted online [here](#).

#### ***Vive L'Amour***

**Introduced by Kent Jones. Screening followed by reception.**

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 1994, 118 mins. **Archival 35mm print.** With Chen Chao-jung, Lee Kang-sheng, Yang Kuei-mei. Winner of the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival and, for critic Robin Wood, Tsai's "finest," *Vive L'Amour* is the film that introduced him to an international audience, garnering comparisons to Antonioni's studies in urban anomie. Lee plays Tsai's emblematic onscreen double Hsiao-kang, who works in the funeral urn business and is unsurprisingly death-obsessed. When he goes to attempt suicide in a mostly vacant apartment building, Hsiao is distracted by the sounds of a steamy affair between a real-estate agent and a street vendor in an adjacent apartment. As Hsiao shadows them, a strange love triangle emerges, with tension building until the wrenching emotional outburst of the famous final shot.

#### ***Boys***

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2:00 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 1991, 50 mins. Digital projection. With Lee Kang-sheng. While preparing to shoot this short feature for television, Tsai discovered and auditioned a young man working as a

guard at a video arcade. This was Lee Kang-sheng, Tsai's muse-to-be, who has appeared in all of his feature films to date. Lee plays a junior-high student who bullies and blackmails a younger boy, then receives the same treatment at the hands of some older students. One of ten television features Tsai wrote between 1989 and 1991, *Boys* offers a rare glimpse into his apprenticeship period.

### ***The River***

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 3:30 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 1997, 115 mins. **Archival 35mm print.** With Miao Tien, Lee Kang-sheng, Lu Yi-ching. Talked into playing a dead body on a film shoot, Hsiao-kang agrees to lie face-down in the polluted Tamsui River, and shortly thereafter develops a mysterious neck pain. The lingering effects create tension in the apartment that he shares with his parents, which each member of the family escapes to pursue some kind of satisfaction on their own. Concluding with a startling eruption of repressed desire, *The River* is among Tsai's most divisive and uncompromising works.

### ***The Hole***

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 6:30 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 1998, 95 mins. **Archival 35mm print from UCLA Film & Television Archive.** With Yang Kuei-mei, Lee Kang-sheng, Miao Tien. Part-musical, part-apocalyptic fable, Tsai's fourth feature begins a week shy of the year 2000, as Taipei is in the grip of a mysterious epidemic. Lagging behind the evacuation, Hsiao-kang meets his downstairs neighbor when a plumber accidentally creates a hole connecting their apartments, a breach that gradually widens. Tsai contrasts the dreariness of the apartment block with the splendiferous production numbers set to the lip-synched music of Grace Chang, sequences that are lavish expressions of bottled-up desire.

### ***The Wayward Cloud***

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 6:30 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 2005, 112 mins. 35mm. Lee Kang-sheng, Chen Shiang-chyi, Lu Yi-ching. Perhaps the most misunderstood of Tsai's films finds Hsiao-kang working in Taipei's porn industry, and is brimming with expressive camerawork and colorful, often crassly humorous musical numbers, including a showstopping Black Widow number for Tsai mainstay Lu Yi-ching. "Tsai's least perfect film...and also his boldest" (Michael Koresky, *Reverse Shot*).

### ***Rebels of the Neon God***

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 1992, 106 mins. **Archival 35mm print.** With Chen Chao-jung, Jen Chang-bin, Lee Kang-sheng. Listless student Hsiao-kang drops out of cram school without telling his parents and follows around a pack of hoodlums, his fixation on one of them, Ah-tze, lingering in an unresolved space between kid-brother idolization and erotic longing. "A tender/tough survey of beautiful, dissolute Taipei youth on their nightly prowls of fluorescent-lit food courts and video arcades" (Dennis Lim, *The Village Voice*). *Rebels of a Neon God* features expressive elements which would disappear from Tsai's later work, including a propulsive synth theme and handheld camerawork.

***Sleeping on Dark Waters***

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 4:30 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 2008, 53 mins. Digital projection. A documentary on the shooting of the 2006 film *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* in Tsai's homeland of Malaysia, *Sleeping on Dark Waters* combines personal history with a privileged glimpse into the notoriously camera-shy director's working methodology. Preceded by ***Madam Butterfly*** (2009, 36 mins. Digital projection), Tsai's first shot-on-digital work, commissioned for the centenary of Puccini's birth.

***I Don't Want to Sleep Alone***

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 2006, 115 mins. 35mm. With Lee Kang-sheng, Chen Shiang-chyi, Norman Atun. In his first film shot in Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian-born Tsai returns home and looks empathetically at the city's polyglot migrant population. A matrix of dependency forms as a Bangladeshi living in a massive, abandoned building invites a Chinese drifter to share his mattress, and the drifter in turn becomes involved with a woman who is caring for the comatose son of her boss. "Culminates with a transcendent vision of doomsday love. Even by Tsai's elevated standards, the final shot is one of otherworldly beauty" (Dennis Lim, *The Village Voice*).

***Face (Visage)***

**Introduced by La Frances Hui, film curator at Asia Society**

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 6:30 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 2009, 138 mins. 35mm. With Lee Kang-sheng, Lu Yi-ching, Fanny Ardant, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Laetitia Casta, Jeanne Moreau, Mathieu Amalric. In Tsai's second film set in France—partially financed by and shot in the Louvre—Lee plays a director who arrives in Paris to shoot his version of *Salomé* and finds himself chasing an elusive vision. A cast including New Wave icons Jean-Pierre Léaud, Fanny Ardant, and Jeanne Moreau reflects Tsai's deep debt to French cinema.

***What Time Is It There?***

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 2001, 116 mins. 35mm. With Lee Kang-sheng, Chen Shiang-chyi, Lu Yi-ching. Hsiao-kang, now selling wristwatches on the streets of Taipei, has a fateful brief encounter one day with Shiang-chyi, a young woman about to leave for France. The film details their parallel stories, as she wanders a strange city alone while he begins to obsessively set Taipei clocks to Paris local time. "Filled with purposeful, if absurd, activity rendered gravely hilarious through Tsai's deadpan, distanced representation of extreme behavior" (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*).

***Journey to the West***

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 4:45 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 2014, 56 mins. Digital projection. Tsai's latest is a study in defiant serenity amid chaos. In the daytime hustle-bustle of Marseille, Lee Kang-sheng, dressed in the orange robes of a Buddhist monk, inches his way along the street at a snail's pace to the puzzlement of the passers by. *Journey to the West* is one of a series of films Tsai made with Lee's *Walker* character, drawing inspiration from the life of a seventh-century monk who traveled China in

search of Buddhist scriptures. Preceded by **Walker** (2012, 27 mins), in which Lee's monk makes his way through frantic Hong Kong.

### ***Stray Dogs***

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 2013, 138 mins. DCP. With Chen Shiang-chyi, Lee Kang-sheng, Lee Yi-cheng. Tsai's most majestically desolate feature stars Lee Kang-sheng as a father caring for two young children, all living in a shipping container while he works as a human signpost to advertise luxury real estate. Keeping the exact nature of interrelationships willfully vague, Tsai proceeds with a sort of dream-logic to a mysterious, cathartic conclusion that seems to summarize his body of work from *Vive L'Amour* to *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*.

### ***Past Present***

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 3:30 P.M.

Dir. Tiong Guan Saw. 2013, 76 mins. Digital projection. With Chen Shiang-chyi, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Ang Lee. Malaysian filmmaker Tiong Guan Saw's documentary creates perhaps the most intimate filmed portrait of Tsai by asking him to tell his story from the very beginning—the city of Kuching, where he was raised, and the cinemas where he religiously consumed kung-fu movies with his grandparents—before following him to Taiwan. Tsai's recollections are combined with testimonials from Lee Kang-sheng and Chen Shiang-chyi, as well as fellow filmmakers Ang Lee and Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Preceded by ***Walking on Water*** (Dir. Tsai Ming-liang, 2013, 30 mins.), in which Lee's *Walker* monk traverses the Kuching housing block that Tsai grew up in.

### ***Goodbye, Dragon Inn***

**Introduced by film critic Nick Pinkerton**

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 6:30 P.M.

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang. 2003, 82 mins. 35mm. With Lee Kang-sheng, Chen Shiang-chyi, Kiyonobu Mitamura. It's the last night for a crumbling Fu-Ho movie theater in Taipei, and the film is *Dragon Inn* (1966), the seminal *wuxia* epic by King Hu. The kinetic soundtrack contrasts the theaters melancholy, slow-moving denizens, including a female box-office attendant with a limp, a cruising Japanese tourist, and two of the stars of Hu's film. Filled with expertly timed sight gags, *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is Tsai's rueful backwards glance at the disappearance of the filmgoing culture of his youth. Preceded by ***The Skywalk Is Gone*** (2002, 25 mins. 35mm), a return to the characters of *What Time Is It There?*

### **MUSEUM INFORMATION**

Museum of the Moving Image ([movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)) advances the understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. In its stunning facilities—acclaimed for both its accessibility and bold design—the Museum presents exhibitions; screenings of significant works; discussion programs featuring actors, directors, craftspeople, and business leaders; and education programs which serve more than 50,000 students each year. The Museum also houses a significant collection of moving-image artifacts.

Hours: Wednesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-

Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Film Screenings: Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and as scheduled. Unless otherwise noted, tickets for screenings are \$12 (\$9 students and seniors / free for Museum members at the Film Lover level and above) will be available for advance purchase online at [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us). Screening tickets include same-day admission to the Museum's galleries.

Museum Admission: \$12.00 for adults; \$9.00 for persons over 65 and for students with ID; \$6.00 for children ages 3–12. Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free.

Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.

Subway: M (weekdays only) or R to Steinway Street. Q (weekdays only) or N to 36 Avenue.

Program Information: Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)

Membership: <http://movingimage.us/support/membership> or 718 777 6877

The Museum is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and located on the campus of Kaufman Astoria Studios. Its operations are made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation). The Museum also receives generous support from numerous corporations, foundations, and individuals. For more information, please visit [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us).