

WIP P Ningdu



REGION: Hong Kong, The Netherlands, USA

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:
Animation | Digital Format | Mandarin | 85mins

DIRECTOR:

LEI Lei

PRODUCER:

LEI Lei

Isabelle GLACHANT

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Pre-sales, Festival Screening

BUDGET: US\$ 951,797

SECURED BUDGET: US\$ 770,000

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2019 *Breathless Animals*

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

Caught between semi-gods and mass madness, in a world of propaganda images, surrealist collage and pop-art animation, the Lei's struggle to live through China's tumultuous movements.

SYNOPSIS

Maomao recalls the struggles of his family amid China's Great Leap Forward. When Dad is compelled to work in the countryside, the already sick Mum passes away. As the system forbids Dad to live with his children, the three kids are kept in an orphanage. Locked in cages, Maomao and his two sisters become birds. Around them, masses are burning iron and steel. They start gigantic constructions which infuriate the River Dragon. A carp appears who turns into a woman and helps the children regain their human shape and settles with them at home, becoming their adoptive mother. When Dad finally returns, harmony and happiness embrace this new family. Shortly afterwards, a new revolution starts. When the house is blown away, the sisters are pushed to fly away. Dad and the kids are separated again. In the fields; people are burning flags and transforming into insects in a collective trance, while giant fruits and vegetables invade the world. Above, Gods of Clouds observe the chaos. Maomao and his new Mum are sent to the countryside where they try to adapt, while Dad in another village is asked to confess his political past. They all wait for the day to reunite...

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2013, I read my father's article about an oral history *Changes of My Family* and began to interview my family members about their memory. When I listened to them, I realised that everyone had a different story about the same time. These stories are like shadows projected on the walls of a cave. I try to understand my family and history by reading them. As in a movie theatre, the audience experiences dreams through these pieces of shadows. If the cinema uses the language of dreams, the greatest charm of animation language is "dreaming in a dream". In my animation documentary *Ningdu*, I try to connect personal stories with collective memory with different visual layers. All characters, mountains, and rivers are made of modelling clay, while I continue my stylistic approach of collage of the historical archives like the *China Pictorial* magazine, old family photos and official documentaries footage. But questions always stand behind images: Where does the memory come from? How do we distinguish reality from fiction? Who defines history? I hope that *Ningdu* will be a brave step for me. And the rights to dream and to interpret dreams must be given to the audience.

DIRECTOR

LEI Lei

Born in 1985 in China, Lei Lei is an independent animator and artist, graduate of Tsinghua University with a Master's Degree in Animation. His works include short animation films *Recycled* (Grand Prix of Shorts & Non-Narrative Films at Holland Animation Film Festival 2013) and *Hand Colored No.2* (opened at Annecy International Animation Film Festival 2017). Since 2018, he teaches at California Institute of the

Arts. His first feature, *Breathless Animals*, made its 2019 world premiere at the Berlinale Forum. His new short film *A Bright Summer Diary* was in Ammodo Tiger Short Competition at Rotterdam IFF 2020.

PRODUCER

LEI Lei

(same as director)

Isabelle GLACHANT

Isabelle Glachant began her career in cinema as executive producer of *Shanghai Dreams* (Jury Prize, Cannes 2005). Since then she has participated in Wang Xiaoshuai's films including *11 Flowers* (2011), the first official Chinese-French co-production. Glachant founded the Hong Kong-based production company Chinese Shadows and France-based Shasha & Co Production, which produced among others Wang Bing's *Three Sisters* (Venice Orizzonti Best Film Award, 2012), Mouly Surya's *Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts* (Cannes Directors' Fortnight, 2017). Appointed Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters by the Ministry of Culture (France), Glachant has been UniFrance's Greater China representative since 2012.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Chinese Shadows

Founded in 2008, Hong Kong-based production company Chinese Shadows represents Asian established voices and new talents by introducing their work to the world and producing Asian films with an international reach. The current line-up includes coming projects by documentary master Wang Bing, artist Lei Lei, and Indonesian helmer Eddie Cahyono.