

WIP U White Building



REGION: Cambodia, France

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:

Drama | Digital Format | Khmer | 100mins

DIRECTOR:

Kavich NEANG

PRODUCERS:

Davy CHOU

Marine ARRIGHI de CASANOVA

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Pre-sales, Festival Screening

BUDGET: US\$ 567,256

SECURED BUDGET: US \$467,255

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2019 *Last Night I Saw You Smiling*

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

Samnang, 20, faces the demolition of his lifelong home in Phnom Penh and the pressures from family, friends, and neighbours that intersect in this moment of sudden change.

SYNOPSIS

Raised in Phnom Penh's landmark tenement, the White Building, 20-year-old Samnang and two friends, Tol and Ah Kha, dream that their dance routine can reach the stage of a television talent contest. Their youthful habits are upended, however, when Ah Kha reveals he will soon leave Cambodia. Months later, the White Building is less busy; Samnang's neighbours debate about the government's compensation offers to residents to move out due to the building's impending demolition, but Samnang increasingly worries about his father's worsening health. Samnang's father, the local chief for the building, neglects his own leg infection while unsuccessfully attempting to bring together his divided neighbors, traumatised by a painful collective history. As Samnang's own nightmares converge with the deep fears shared by his parents and this shrinking urban community, Samnang begins to understand that the stable environment he has always called home is on shaky ground. He comes to recognise his own generation's responsibility to determine its own future. But it is too late; the building is demolished. Samnang stays with relatives in the countryside, far from Phnom Penh, but plans a return to the city soon, even if he remains unsure of the right step to take.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Sometimes I do not know whether I live in my dreams or in reality. I have a recurring dream about the White Building, the place where I grew up. My film's protagonist, Samnang, is a passive, dreamy teenager. As I was, Samnang is confused by the surreal images of Cambodia's recent development around him. He dreams of things he does not understand. Samnang's father, in contrast, tries to unite the residents. But he fails. He is also so wedded to tradition that he cannot heal his foot infection. His challenges symbolise the entrenched trauma of Cambodia's older generation. Samnang, his independent sister, and his parents must grapple with the family conflicts which the modern Cambodian social context often exacerbates. But Samnang is not trapped by a traumatic past. He comes to understand that he and his generation can try to take action. They dare to believe again. But sometimes action means letting go of something. Even when Samnang finally sheds his passivity, he loses his home. Although friendship and family relationships may remain, is that enough to heal the wounds of the past, to allow the possibility of a different future? What is there around us without the walls we called home?

DIRECTOR

Kavich NEANG

Kavich Neang (b. 1987, Phnom Penh, Cambodia) has directed five short films since 2011. He first studied under Rithy Panh, and in 2013, he joined Busan's Asian Film Academy. In 2014, he co-founded Anti-Archive alongside Davy Chou and Steve Chen. He joined Cannes Cinefondation Residence in 2017-18. His documentary, *Last Night*

I Saw You Smiling (2019), won the NETPAC Award at IFFR, the Special Jury Prize at Jeonju, Best Image at Janela de Cinema in Brazil, and two awards at Tokyo FILMEX. He is now completing his first narrative feature, *White Building*, due to premiere in 2020.

PRODUCER

Davy CHOU

Davy Chou is a Khmer-French filmmaker and producer. In 2009, he created French production company Vycky Films. In 2014, he co-founded the Cambodian production company Anti-Archive. Chou gained attention with his documentary *Golden Slumbers* (2011) and his feature *Diamond Island* (2016). He has produced films by Kavich Neang, Adrien Genoudet, Irene Dionisio, Jacky Goldberg, and Nontawat Numbenchapol.

Marine ARRIGHI de CASANOVA

Marine Arrighi de Casanova graduated from La Fémis in 2010 and created the French production company Apsara Films in 2013 after having worked at Les Films du Lendemain. She has produced several features, by Lucie Borleteau, Judith Davis, and Marion Laine.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Anti-Archive

Anti-Archive is a Cambodian company created in 2014 by filmmakers Davy Chou, Steve Chen, and Kavich Neang, with Park Sungho joining in 2016 and Daniel Mattes joining in 2020. Anti-Archive produces and co-produces films by the emerging generation of filmmakers in Cambodia. Their films have premiered at Cannes, Locarno, Busan, Torino, and Rotterdam.

Apsara Films

Apsara Films, a French company created in 2013 by Marine Arrighi de Casanova alongside Isabelle Tillou and Lucie Borleteau, has produced a variety of feature and short films which have been successful at international festivals, including Locarno, Palm Springs, Clermont-Ferrand, and Rotterdam.