

Honorary Fellow – Citation

Mr Johnnie To Kei-fung

Born in 1955 in Hong Kong, the internationally renowned film director and filmmaker Mr Johnnie To Kei-fung is a backbone of Hong Kong's film industry.

In 1999, the “Hong Kong Director in Focus” was first set up at the 23rd Hong Kong International Film Festival, and the first director introduced was Mr Johnnie To. After that, he has been awarded Best Director of the Hong Kong Film Awards three times: *The Mission* (2000), which also earned him Best Director award at the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival, *PTU* (2004) and *Election* (2006). In 2006, *Election* also received Best Film and Best Director awards from the Hong Kong Film Critics Society. In 2007, *Election 2* was again chosen as Best Film, and Mr To became the “Filmmaker in Focus” at the 36th International Film Festival Rotterdam in the same year. He was also a central figure at the Retrospective Exhibition of the Australia Centre for Moving Image in 2008, and a recipient of Officer of the French Order of Arts & Letters conferred by the French Ministry of Culture in 2009. Mr To's first foreign-language film *Vengeance* was a purely Hong Kong film, and received the Black Lion Award at Rome's Courmayeur Noir in Festival in 2010.

Mr To's productions have received commendations from international film exhibitions held in Venice, Cannes, Berlin, and Toronto, etc. His high achievement in film art is widely recognized.

In 1972, at the age of 17, Mr To joined the artist training programme of Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB). Later, he assisted Wong Tin-lam in producing a number of TV drama serials. He worked day and night wholeheartedly and gained a lot from his painstaking efforts, but had never thought of becoming a director or filmmaker, nor of devoting all his time to a film-editing machine out of curiosity. He began to develop an instinctive passion for his job. He would not have expected an opportunity to become a director after 1977, filming such well-known TV drama serials as *Chinese Folklore*, *Yesterday's Glitter* and *Legend of the Condor Heroes*. Nor would he have imagined paying so much effort for the next twenty or thirty years to dramatizing ties of friendship among killers and the ups and downs of triad society on the screen, to creating

film language, genre and artistic world, and to showing his concern for society and human situations, and in the process, receiving so much recognition and support from the audience.

Mr To has many productions of various genres, from martial arts to shoot-outs, from imaging to narration, and from witty contests to love-chasing. They are all filled with the bitterness and sweetness of life; some are touching, some are black comedies, and some arouse people's sympathy. He is good at grasping the audience's psychology, but maintains the courage and spirit of exploring new content and style. Thus his films are broadly welcomed, such as *All about Ah Long* (1989), *The Heroic Trio* (1993), *Needing You...* (2000), *Love on a Diet* (2001), *Running on Karma* (2003), *Breaking News* (2004), *Throw Down* (2004), *Exiled* (2006), *Eye in the Sky* (2007), *Sparrow* (2008) and *Vengeance* (2009). In the past 25 years, he has directed and produced more than 50 films. The turning point of his production was forming "Milkyway Image" in collaboration with Wai Ka-fai in 1996, which allows him to devote his effort to producing films with local flavour and creativity. They continue to nurture new directors and improve the ecology of the film industry. Milkyway signifies Mr To's progress towards a climactic point in his film career, exemplifying the fact that filmmakers should be "original authors". Making films, like doing anything in life, requires devotion and curiosity derived from passion, pursuit and persistence derived from vision. It was not without reason that in 2008, critics selected him as one of the representatives of Hong Kong popular culture in the past 30 years, honouring him as "the Citizen To of Cinema".

The changes of time propel society. Mr To reminds today's young people: to return to fundamentals and get ready to go, to seek breakthroughs, so as to provide a new force to the continuing transition of Hong Kong's film industry, culture and society.

Since 2005, Mr To has been a Council member and Chairman of the Film & Media Arts Group of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, and initiated the "Fresh Wave Short Film" Competition and Film Exhibition to actively promote film production and film culture among the younger generations. He has a never-give-up attitude towards the film industry, and has high expectations of the educational and cultural sectors. He reckons that Hong Kong's achievements did not come easy, and we should try our best to give more opportunities to young people.

Mr Chairman, Mr To is a filmmaker who has truly lived up to its name. In his cinema, artistic form blends with thought and affection; his aesthetic sense finds sustenance in the human world. We see his perseverance in dynamism, his flexible approach in his quietly told stories. He has boundless creativity and is very caring; he is always working hard and making great effort to sustain and develop a film culture in Hong Kong. For all the above achievements, may I now present Mr Johnnie To Kei-fung to you for the conferment of an honorary fellowship.

Chinese citation written and delivered by Prof Stephen Chan Ching-kiu