

NEW FILMMAKER: FRANK FU

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By Mónica Delgado

Frank Fu is a young filmmaker living between EEUU, Australia and China. With his first film, **Orange Confucius**, he comes across a multi-disciplinary artist with transgressive intentions.

Orange Confucius is an experimental film carrying elements of performance, happening, intervention and documentary, since it captures different passages in the filmmaker's life and his girlfriend in their various trips around the world, drawing a personal cartography that includes explicit sex, mythical tales and conversations with friends.

We interviewed Frank in Lima, during Transcinema Film Festival, where the world premiere of his film took place.

Desistfilm: You originally come from the field of visual arts and performance, and that shows in your film: the happenings and interventions peek in various moments. How did this relation between performance art and film came to be?

Frank Fu: It helps me to think differently when I think about filmmaking. I started a master of directing in a film school but they teach you techniques and stuff like that. But to become a director is really something else, it's different. So my visual art background, which is performance art background gave me a different way of approaching filmmaking which expanded my eyesight when I saw things, and to consider what is art, what is artistic and all this other elements, when it comes down to shooting. So I don't normally write a scene and then shoot like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 but rather it's like a study of whatever you feel interested in visually. So I go from there, to what really bothers me inside, and then I go from there to explore it. I don't see much difference between filmmaking, performance and so, they are just techniques which constitute a big body of work.

Desistfilm: Your film is a cartography but also an itinerary. You establish a map, from China to Canada, from Rome to Los Angeles, a way to show the unease with the space or territory, or the rootlessness. Was this intentional or comes from the idea of collage that shapes your film?

FRank Fu: For me, the film has its own inner logic. From the beginning and through the progress of the film there is a change of spaces, different places: some places symbolize family, some of them symbolize inner search, some places stand of a different kind of philosophy, all of those things are what is really happening to this character. Her (the lead actress) and me, are like cosmic twins, so we start this journey through the idea of family, then inner truth, the idea of cinema and the film gets into a smaller and smaller place where it just focuses on her, her existential crisis, her growth between all this places.

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Desistfilm: In a small part in your film you mention Peru. How do you include this country in this travel course?

FRank Fu: That was actually a very interesting thing. I met this person, this taxi driver in Los Angeles, and he starting talking. Maybe we are all connected? Maybe the universe it all connected and we don't know when or how or where. So he started talking, and we recorded it, and then we put that in the film, and not until today, when I watched the film I realized that "oh, we're in Peru, and we're watching this character talking about Peru" That was a perfect fit! And even myself was surprised. That's really a connection, because if you think about it it's so coincidental that he talked about his Peruvian wife, and he found his wife in the US, so the first thing they did when they married is come to Peru, and we were like "that's very interesting, maybe that'll happen to us through the film" (laughs)

Desistfilm: How did the production worked with the protagonist, that according to credits, also makes the music? How was the process to make this film like?

Frank Fu: I feel this film was a collaboration. A collaboration that happened in many levels: between coworkers, in the production, and then you have this intimate level, as a couple, in the movie, and then you have a trust relationship throughout the film process. I'm very lucky that she has many skills and uses them in the movie, not only composing the music and performing, but also suiting that music to the mood of the film, which I think it fits perfectly. I was blessed to have her and a film that can open in many directions, and also this kind of privacy that allowed us to show this kind of taboo to the public. There's nothing to hide, in terms of production. It was remarkable how the producers that watched this intimate world unravel decided to support the film. It was great. We both were very involved in the making of this film, and the final product is the result of that.

Desistfilm: How would you describe, from your experience in art, the phenomena of avant-garde in this new century panorama?

Frank Fu: We live in a different time, and sometimes I feel like I live in the wrong time, maybe I should've lived in the 1970's, so my art can be more acceptable and there were more people supporting me (laughs), or supporting the general sense of avant-garde. I think nowadays contemporary art has changed, the way that people perceive it is also different. But there will always be an audience for avant-garde or performance, experimental art. It's just who, and where, and how to find them. It's very tricky. The audience is there, now you need new ways of showing your work, things like Netflix, Hulu, DVD, Bluray. But still, I feel we had more freedom in the 70's and 80's. Maybe we've become more stupid (laughs).

Desistfilm: You have mentioned that your film has a surrealist touch. What was your inspiration to make this first film? What are your references?

Frank Fu: I just made the film. When I make something, I want cut myself off from all the works that other people have done, because you want make it original. So, for me, when I was doing my master's I watched 370 films throughout the year: Herzog, Von Trier, Lynch, Jodorowsky, Bergman, Kurosawa, Ozu. I watched ALL the films. That's the best way to study, to learn cinema. That was a good education. But when I'm doing art, I try to cut myself from all that. I somehow find that all those masters had their time and space, but now, what I'm doing it makes me, myself, so I try to find what is really meaningful to me, why I want make art, how important is for myself. The ideas start running from the most mundane things, like taking a shower. So it all depends.

