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## **Announcement of the 26th JEONJU IFF**

### **Korean Competition for Shorts and Local Cinema Selections**

- A total of 30 selections for the Korean Competition for Shorts, including 23 fiction films, 3 documentaries, 3 experimental films, and 1 animation
- *“breaking through fears and compulsions in their own ways...”* - Juries comment on the selections
- 5 selections for Local Cinema

The JEONJU International Film Festival(JEONJU IFF, Festival Co-Directors Min Sungwook and Jung Junho) announced the selections for the Korean Competition for Shorts and Local Cinema.

The 26th JEONJU IFF Korean Competition for Shorts received 1,510 films from November to January, marking a record for two consecutive years for its submission. The 26th JEONJU IFF finally selected a total of 30 films including 23 fictions(one fiction-animation genre), 3 documentaries, 3 experimental films, and one animation.



▲ Korean Competition for Shorts Still Images

For the Preliminary Juries of Korean Competition for Shorts, director Kangyu Garam, an award-winning filmmaker whose work *Lucky, Apartment*(2024) featured in the 25th JEONJU Cinema Project. Critic and director Kim Byeonggyu, co-director of *The Walk*(2023), which was featured in the 24th JEONJU IFF Korean Competition for Shorts. Actress and director Moon Hyein, known for *The Fifth Thoracic Vertebra*(2023) and *Inserts*(2024), and the winner of the 23rd JEONJU IFF Best Director Prize for *Transit*(2022). Director Choi Chang-hwan, who has been consistently making films since winning an award in the Korean Competition at the 19th JEONJU IFF for *Back From the Beat*(2018). Programmer and film critic Kim Bo Nyun, representing Cinematheque Seoul Art Cinema. Critic Jung Ji-hye, a Board Member of the Busan International Film Festival and a jury member for multiple festivals. Lastly, JEONJU IFF programmer Moon Seok.

The jury members commented on this year's selections, stating: *"In an environment where video production has become commonplace, our seven jury members found ourselves reevaluating the fundamental meaning of creating short films."* Regarding the tendencies in this year's films, they observed: *"the relationship between the camera-wielding 'I' and the world, and the relationship between completion and incompleteness, we sensed both the sensibilities and certain fears of contemporary filmmakers."* Regarding their selection criteria, they explained: *"We focused on works that break through*

these fears and compulsions surrounding ‘Korean short films’ in their own ways.” They further noted, “the 30 films selected for this year’s Korean Competition for Shorts represent our attempt to capture diverse approaches that explore the two dynamics as they negotiate, make compromises, and conduct discussion on the tensions between the camera-wielding filmmaker and the world, and between completion and incompleteness.”

Meanwhile, Local Cinema selections, dedicated to filmmakers and producers based in Jeonbuk State, university students from Jeonbuk, or films where at least 50% of the shooting locations are in Jeonbuk, received a total of 46 submissions: 39 short films and 7 feature films. Among these, the following films were selected: *Galbi* (directed by Song Esther, Lim Yeonju), *The Roots* (directed by So Ji-in), *SLOWLY* (directed by Kim Haejin), and *Womb Mates* (directed by Noh Heejeong) for short films. For the feature film, *The Burglars* (directed by Kim Taehwi). Among the five selections, *SLOWLY* will be screened in the Korean Competition for Shorts, while the remaining four will be featured in the Korean Cinema section.



▲ Local Cinema Still Images

For the Preliminary Juries of Local Cinema, Lee Haneul, head of the independent cinema community Nonamecinema, who has contributed to Jeonju's film culture; director Kim Hyunjung, whose works *Ghost*

*Play* (screened in the Korean Competition for Shorts at the 24th JEONJU IFF) and *Letters Unreeling* (screened in the Korean Cinema section at the 25th JEONJU IFF) have gained recognition; and JEONJU IFF programmer Moon Seok.

The Preliminary Juries for Local Cinema remarked, “*We were impressed by the diversity of themes and forms, as well as local filmmakers’ consistent participation and experimental approaches.*” Regarding the five selections, they stated, “*This year’s selections explore relationships that transcend conventional family and social frameworks. Stories centering on women’s bodies, emotions, and choices stand out, with impressive approaches that expand boundaries—sometimes provocatively, sometimes with quiet assurance.*” Furthermore, they added, “*This Local Cinema reaffirms the potential of regional filmmaking through creators’ distinctive styles and explorations,*” heightening anticipation for the selections.

The 30 official selections of Korean Competition for Shorts and the five Local Cinema selections will be screened at the 26th JEONJU IFF. The festival will be held from April 30 (Wed) to May 9 (Fri) throughout Jeonju.

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### ***Commentary on Korean Competition for Shorts***

Recently, an independent film that was released directly through theaters without the help of a distributor wrapped up its run with a final audience count of 1,184. Whether you consider this many or few, it is dishearteningly low given the film’s appeal. Other independent releases through various channels face similar struggles. Looking up audience figures for Korean independent films I’ve enjoyed in recent years reveals sobering numbers: 1,431, 1,385, 844, 698... This year, JEONJU International Film Festival received a record 1,510 entries for the Korean Competition for Shorts. To put it simply, Korean independent/short filmmaking has become an ecosystem where filmmakers outnumber viewers. I should correct myself: it has been this way for a long time. (The examples cited in this paragraph are mostly fictional, and any resemblance to actual cases is purely coincidental.)

These may be mere numbers, but they present a clear picture of our current landscape. Neither the claim that “creative democracy has flourished with many people participating in filmmaking” nor the opposing view that “only the talented few should make films” seems accurate. These numbers simply bring us back to contemplate the fundamental role of filmmaking. What drives someone to make a film? Why must this

creative impulse find expression through cameras and microphones? Most importantly, what should a completed film share and communicate? In an environment where video production has become commonplace, our seven jury members found ourselves reevaluating the fundamental meaning of creating short films. Rather than offering a clumsy diagnosis of trends in the submitted films, we would like to highlight two contrasting dynamics where we observed certain compulsions and fears.

The first is the relationship between the camera-wielding “I” and the world. Characters in many fiction films disconnect from social relationships, becoming absorbed in extremely private domains (family, lovers, lost memories), nervously severing connections with society, or choosing to blow them up entirely. Encountering strangers through film now seems increasingly difficult and unfamiliar. A considerable number of films focus on the filmmaking process and sites themselves rather than shaping social spaces, attempting to connect with others through videos and recordings around us rather than through direct engagement. This reveals both the sensibilities and certain fears of contemporary filmmakers, who seem safely confined within their familiar environments and spaces. In the same context, we find it concerning that the number of documentary submissions that patiently capture their subjects has decreased. The time devoted to research and waiting—observing others’ lives and reflecting on the relationship between camera and subject—has diminished. Instead, there has been a marked increase in what might be called “essay-like” approaches that reconstruct seemingly unrelated historical materials through distinctive intellectual montage. While fascinated by the free-flowing thought systems and flexible forms these works present, we wonder if this trend stems from creators’ compulsion and impatience to quickly translate their personal intuitions and interests into tangible short films.

The second is the relationship between completion and incompleteness. Short films now regularly have substantial production budgets, professional crew, and recognizable actors. While the diversification of audiovisual elements in short films is certainly welcome, this technical standardization reflects something more than an internal change in film. Today’s Korean short films are trapped within a circuit of film schools, production grants, film festival screenings, awards, jury reviews, and instant audience feedback. This system demands every work to function as a finished product. The environment where the path to becoming a mainstream filmmaker has narrowed to securing industry validation through acclaimed short films also plays a significant role in this system. In the rush to produce polished works and become accomplished directors, Korean short films seem to have forgotten their performative possibilities inherent in incompleteness and process. Short films should be a space of practice, where creators can present unique methodologies and rules despite unresolved narratives, imperfect filming and lighting, awkward

performances and movements, or limited filming conditions. The jury found ourselves drawn to adventurous attempts that embraced creative possibilities even if their level of completion felt awkward and monotonous, rather than technically accomplished films that overlooked innovative possibilities.

We focused on works that break through these fears and compulsions surrounding “Korean short films” in their own ways. With multiple jurors collaborating, we avoided creating a one-sided list. Nothing could be more antithetical to cinema than imposing a single perspective. In other words, the 30 films selected for this year’s Korean Competition for Shorts represent our attempt to capture diverse approaches that explore the two dynamics as they negotiate, make compromises, and conduct discussion on the tensions between the camera-wielding filmmaker and the world, and between completion and incompleteness. We extend our sincere gratitude and respect to everyone who submitted their work and contributed to these productions.

#### **The Preliminary Juries of Korean Competition for Shorts**

KIM Byeonggyu, KANGYU Garam, KIM Bonyeon, MOON Hyein, JEONG Jihye, CHOI Changwan, MOON Seok

#### ***Commentary on Local Cinema***

This year’s JEONJU International Film Festival for the Local Cinema section received 39 short films and 7 feature films. We were impressed by the diversity of themes and forms, as well as local filmmakers’ consistent participation and experimental approaches. We selected 4 short films and 1 feature film, each demonstrating their distinctive qualities and commitments to craft.

The selected works are: *Galbi* by directors Song Esther and Lim Yeonju, *The Roots* by So Ji-in, *SLOWLY* by Kim Haejin, *The Burglars* by Kim Taehwi, and *Womb Mates* by Noh Heejeong. Notably, it is significant that a feature film was selected in the Local Cinema for the first time in several years. *The Burglars* earned praise for its provocative premise and directing skills, showcasing the potential of regional feature filmmaking.

This year’s selections explore relationships that transcend conventional family and social frameworks. Stories centering on women’s bodies, emotions, and choices stand out, with impressive approaches that expand boundaries—sometimes provocatively, sometimes with quiet assurance.

*Galbi* by directors Song Esther and Lim Yeonju cleverly unpacks subtle family tensions through ironic situations. Its concise direction builds unexpectedly humorous dialogue and situations. *The Roots* by So Ji-in captures the gaps in relationships and subtle emotions through the interactions of three women with different vulnerabilities. Despite being a family, the characters maintain distances that are difficult to be bridged, highlighted by the actors' rhythmical performances and emotional expressions. *SLOWLY* by Kim Haejin offers a fresh exploration of the boundary between life and death through the contrasting events of the mother's passing and the aunt's childbirth. Its perceptive direction and delicate narrative create a compelling coming-of-age story. *The Burglars* by Kim Taehwi balances an intriguing premise with confident direction, supported by strong performances. Starting with the unusual, whimsical relationship of home burglary, it charmingly progresses through tension and humor toward mutual understanding. *Womb Mates* by Noh Heejeong examines perspectives on women's bodies through an inventive premise. Drawing on black comedy elements, its commitment to pushing the characters to their logical conclusion creates a solid narrative.

The submissions for this year's Local Cinema featured notably unfiltered emotional expression and honest narratives centered on relationships. We also observed active attempts to explore and experiment with new forms through original concepts and genre conventions.

This Local Cinema reaffirms the potential of regional filmmaking through creators' distinctive styles and explorations. We look forward to creative innovations in the future and sincerely thank all directors and production teams who submitted their works.

**The Preliminary Juries of Local Cinema**

KIM Hyunjung, LEE Haneul, MOON Seok

**The 26th JEONJU IFF Korean Competition for Shorts Selections**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Genre</b>
<i>Toe to Toe</i>	SHIN Yuseok	fiction

<i>mistletoe</i>	HWANG Hyeonjee	fiction
<i>When the Trees Sway, the Heart Stirs</i>	LEE Jiyeon	documentary
<i>More than you can imagine</i>	KWON Jiyong	fiction
<i>Two Hours</i>	LEE Jaewon	fiction
<i>Those who leave buy flowers</i>	NAM Sohyeon	fiction
<i>In Our Day</i>	KIM Soyeon	fiction
<i>milu</i>	PARK Yeji	fiction
<i>A Pear Tree In The Star Village</i>	SHIN Yul	documentary
<i>SLOWLY</i>	KIM Haejin	fiction
<i>Vanished Season</i>	KIM Daehan	fiction
<i>The Third Direction</i>	LEE Seohyun	fiction
<i>A Girl Who is Afraid of Turning to Stone</i>	YOON Ohseong	fiction
<i>Breathing and Whispering</i>	JEON Junehyuck	experimental
<i>Planet Spoilia</i>	LEE Se-hyung	fiction/ animation
<i>The Possessed</i>	SON Taegyum	fiction
<i>Reviving The Engine</i>	JUNG Hyein	fiction
<i>Quiet Fires</i>	Daniel LEE	fiction
<i>My neighbor baby</i>	CHEY Zunseek	fiction
<i>Top Right Corner</i>	LEE Chanyeol	fiction
<i>The Empty Pot</i>	KIM Gyudong	fiction
<i>All The Ways We Disappear</i>	SONG Siyoung	experimental
<i>Still Sunset</i>	JANG Keunyoung	fiction

<i>World premiere</i>	KIM Seonbeen	fiction
<i>Inline</i>	LIM Keunyoung	fiction
<i>Mystery of humanity continuing, and Lovers</i>	JANG Hyeonseo	fiction
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	PARK Youjin, JIN Hyeonjeong	fiction
<i>Delay Via Damage</i>	LEE Seo-jin	experimental
<i>Being and Nothingness</i>	KIM Jiwoo	animation
<i>Dear S</i>	LEE Ga-eun	documentary

**\*\* 30 titles, Korean alphabetical order**

### The 26th JEONJU IFF Local Cinema Selections

<b>Title</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Section</b>
<i>Galbi</i>	SONG Esther, LIM Yeonju	Korean Cinema/Shorts
<i>The Roots</i>	SO Ji-in	Korean Cinema/Shorts
<b>SLOWLY</b>	KIM Haejin	Korean Competition for Shorts
<i>The Burglars</i>	KIM Taehwi	Korean Cinema/Feature
<i>Womb Mates</i>	NOH Heejeong	Korean Cinema/Shorts

**\*\* 5 titles, Korean alphabetical order**