

Film

Edited by Benita Lee



From art to design

As the annual A Design Film Festival returns, **Benita Lee** highlights the top five to watch

It's been four years since the inception of A Design Film Festival (DFF), but still it manages to serve up new and noteworthy elements. Most notably, this year's edition is set to a theme for the very first time: 'On a scale of art to design', inspired by the increasingly blurred boundaries between art and design.

Once again organised by multidisciplinary studio Anonymous (the creators of DFF), the fest also includes other firsts such as a new venue at Shaw Theatres Lido; three curated short films – *Work, Buy, Consume, Die; Obey the Artist* and *Florentijn Hofman: Larger than Life* – questioning the notion of whether art and design are mutually exclusive; a debut collaboration with funky Japanese t-shirt label North East, offering a limited edition collection of tees created by seven international designers; and an inaugural opening film – *Hakusho: The Story of Rice* by Yu Yamanaka (the man behind *Tema Hima*) – making its world premiere here, alongside an introduction and Q&A session by the director.

Out of the 12 films to catch, two are making their world premieres, while six are making their debut in Asia. The topics of architecture, fashion design, photography, street art, graphic design and food design are but a few in the extensive line-up, so if you're not

sure which ones tickle your fancy, read on for the top five recommendations by Felix Ng, Creative Director of Anonymous.

Art & Craft

7 & 13 Sep

Dir: Sam Cullman, Jennifer Grausman, Mark Becker. 89 mins.

Here's a new twist on art and the authenticity of it – Mark Landis, an American painter, spends his days imitating (to the best of his ability) art masterpieces. Yes, he's an art forger. And he's managed to pull the wool over countless top curators' eyes. Yet he never makes any monetary demands; he simply gifts his counterfeits to art museums in the US, convincing them to accept the donations by making up phony background stories and fake aliases. What follows is an intricate look at Landis' obsession and that of the curator who gave chase when he unearthed this secret – which begs the question: is Landis an artist in his own right?

He says 'It's a witty, light and vulnerable film, [showing the] intriguing strength behind one of the most illustrious art forgers in the US.'

Microtopia

7 & 13 Sep

Dir: Jesper Wachtmeister. 55 mins.

The world is becoming a smaller place, what with technological advances that connect us and population hikes that push us into smaller habitats. It's all about living with the bare minimum in this documentary, which explores the idea of downsized dwellings, off-the-grid lifestyles and portable houses as potential solutions by architects and artists.

He says 'If you could only watch one film this year, I would say *Microtopia* – it's about living better with less.'

Finding Vivian Maier

6, 13 & 14 Sep

Dir: John Maloof, Charlie Siskel.

83 mins.

During Vivian Maier's lifetime, she was but a nanny secretly prone to bouts of darkness and violence. Now posthumously regarded as one of the greatest street photographers of the 20th century (after her box of negatives was uncovered in 2007), she remains quite the enigma, even with the pieces of her untold story coming together with tales by those who knew her – or thought they did.

He says 'News about Vivian Maier has been covered extensively online and offline, from photography journals to mainstream media. The film uncovers the story behind one of the most prolific yet undiscovered photographers of the 21st century, so we're expecting this to be the first sold out one.'

Hakusho: The Story of Rice

5, 7 & 13 Sep

Dir: Yu Yamanaka. 45 mins.

A quietly compelling film by the director of *Tema Hima*, this four-part documentary about food design and Japanese culture was initially crafted for *KOME: The Art of Rice* exhibition. As the title indicates, it portrays the story of the humble grain – from the rice fields in China to a community in Ishikawa where the deity of the rice harvest, Tano Kami, is ushered in with great fanfare. DFF marks the debut of the film's screening in its entirety.

He says 'If you loved *Tema Hima*, this is a semi follow-up to it. Directed once again by Yu Yamanaka, it's a beautiful film on how rice is made, used and also demonstrative of life in general.'

Yves Saint Laurent

6, 7, 13 & 14 Sep

Dir: Jilil Lespert. 106 mins.

Yves Saint Laurent – it's a name we all know and love (some more than others), one that sits among the top names in fashion history. This biopic of the revolutionary haute couture designer chronicles his ups and downs amidst a meteoric rise to fame – from an up-and-coming name selected to be the chosen successor of Christian Dior to his self-destructive ways ('If I can't express myself, I'll die!') and, finally, his comeback with the founding of his eponymous fashion house.

He says 'It's a beautiful film that's painful and vulnerable to watch as you witness how he destroys his own life, relationships and career.'

A Design Film Festival is at Shaw Theatres Lido from **5-14 Sep**.

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