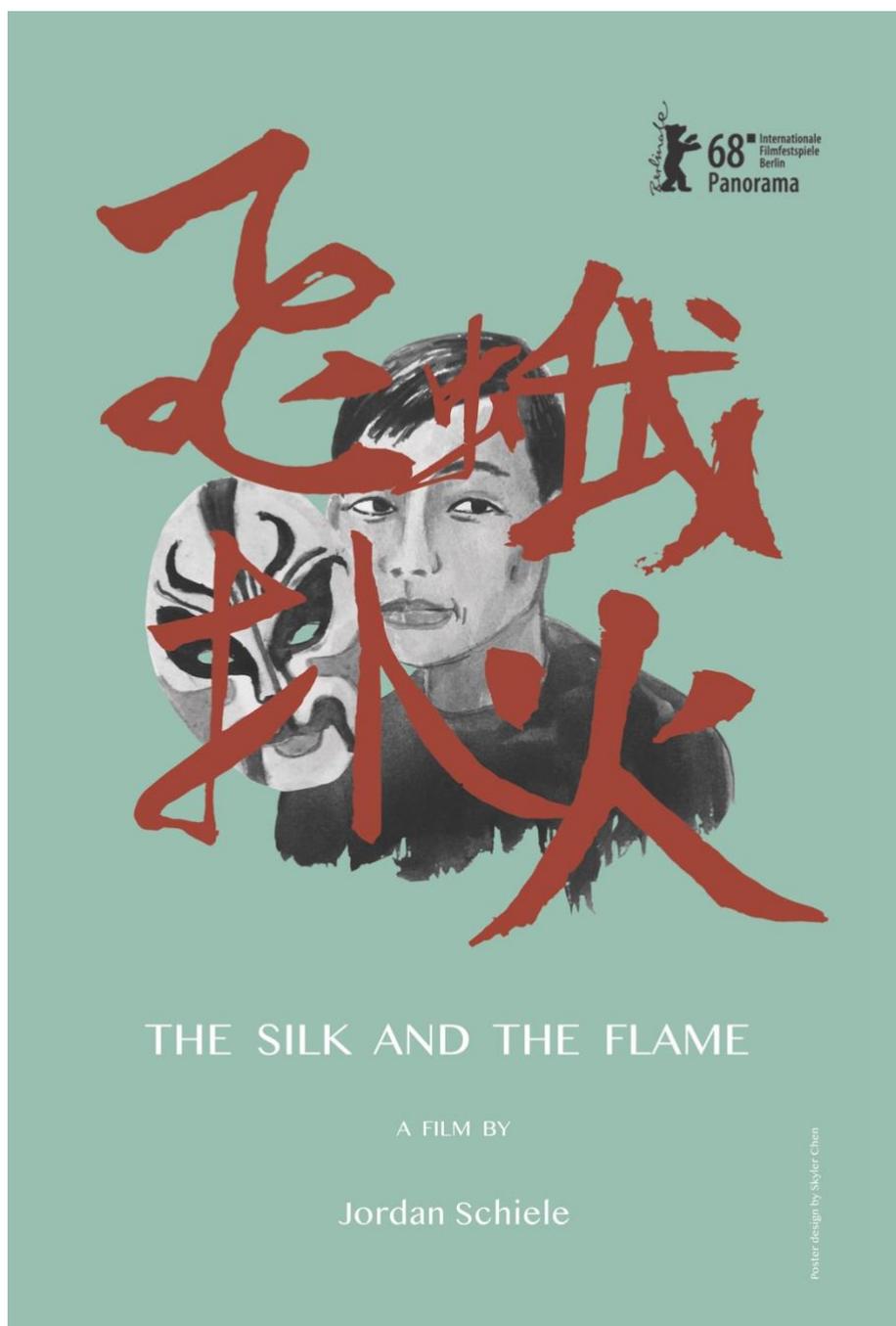


The Silk and the Flame



PRESS KIT

Festivals

Berlin International Film Festival (February 15th – 25th 2018) – Panorama Section

World Premiere

Short Synopsis

The survival of a rural Chinese family depends on Yao, a closeted middle-aged man whose father's dying wish is continuation of the family line. Yao travels from Beijing to a village of 300 people where his mother, who became deaf and mute after a medical accident, struggles to bring father and son closer together during the Chinese New Year.

Long Synopsis

The survival of a rural Chinese family depends on Yao, an unwed middle-aged man whose father's dying wish is continuation of the family line. Yao's mother, who became deaf and mute during the Cultural Revolution due to a medical accident, struggles to bring father and son closer together. Although her husband has suffered two strokes and is still able to speak, he has chosen not to. Yao is inexplicably silent about bringing home a girl. The film explores the relationship between a child and his parents, at a time when the largest human migration on earth takes place: the Chinese New Year. Yao travels from Beijing, the northern capital, to a village of three hundred people in the heart of the country, where his entire family lives and waits for his monthly salary and eventual homecoming. Like the majority of gay Chinese men and women, Yao lives a closeted life. Having solved every problem the family has faced in recent years— illness, poverty, educating his siblings' children and putting a roof over their heads— Yao struggles to solve the one dilemma in life that is closest to his heart: the kind of man he would like to be. We join Yao on his annual journey home and discover incredible challenges he and his family have faced during the volatile years of modern China, and the challenge that this new year brings, which in Yao's words, must be solved.



Contact Information

Director / Producer

Jordan Schiele
untitled films
New York, USA
untitledfilms01@gmail.com

PRESS AGENCY Berlinale

((NOISE)) Film PR
Dagny Kleber
m: +49 171 402 4803

Mirjam Wiekenkamp
m: +49 176 287 718 39

office@noisefilmpr.com
www.noisefilmpr.com

Crew

Writer & Director	Jordan SCHIELE
Cinematography	Jordan SCHIELE
Original Music	Wei-san HSU
Editing	Jordan SCHIELE
Sound	Feng LI
Sound Design	Chris Stangroom
Produced by	Jordan SCHIELE
Associate Producers	Hui LIU, Tai HE
Production Manager	Xi ZHAO
Post Supervisor	Melanie SCHIELE

Specs

Running time	87 minutes
Aspect ratio	presented in 1:1.78
Format	B&W
Country	United States
Languages	Mandarin Chinese Sign Language English

Main Subjects

Yao

A closeted middle-aged businessman who moved from rural China to Beijing and has supported his family since the age of 16. Although he has been the primary caregiver of his entire family, including his siblings' children, his parents believe that the survival of their family depends on Yao's marriage prospects and having his own kids.

Yao's Mother

Having married twice and illegally given birth to three children in the 1970s, she has struggled over the years to ensure the well-being of each member of their growing family. She has excelled at this challenge in spite of having suffered a terrible medical accident when she was a child and administered a harmful injection that left her deaf and mute. She is now responsible for taking care of her husband whom she hopes will recover from the paralysis that had been caused by two strokes.

Yao's Father

Orphaned and homeless for several years during the civil war in China, he later returned to his birthplace and taught the local people how to farm and build reservoirs. As an adult, he fell in love with a divorcee who was unable to speak and invented a sign language that their children and grandchildren subsequently used to communicate with her. In his later years, he suffered from two strokes, the second of which left him completely paralysed on the left side of his body. His last remaining wish is to see his youngest child and son, Yao, get married and have children. He believes this would cement the continuation of his legacy and the family line.



Filmography and Biography

Director/ Writer/ Producer/ Cinematographer/ Editor



Jordan Schiele was born in Brooklyn, New York, and began working on film sets in Shanghai. After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in legal studies and Mandarin Chinese from Oxford University and Bowdoin College, he graduated from New York University's Tisch Asia MFA Film Production program in Singapore with a dual concentration in cinematography and directing. His short films have twice been nominated for the "Louis Vuitton Journeys Awards" judged by Luca

Guadagnino in 2012 (Prank, special jury prize, world premiere Rome Film Festival), and Wong Kar Wai in 2010 (Canvas). His short film 5cm, a docu-fiction about dancers from the National Ballet of China, screened at the 2013 Locarno Film Festival and won the Special Jury Prizes at the USA Film Festival and Guanajuato Film Festival. Shi Nian Hou (Ten Years From Now) premiered at the 2011 Vancouver International Film Festival and won the Grand Prize for Best Graduate Short Film at New York University's First Run Film Festival. His first feature script, San Fu Tian (Dog Days), was a finalist in the Oscars' Nicholl Fellowship screenwriting competition, selected for the 25th session of the Residence of Cannes Film Festival and by EAVE (European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs)- Ties That Bind. In 2013, Jordan shot and directed a promotional film for Louis Vuitton featuring Sofia Coppola, Fan Bing Bing and Emma Watson at Cannes Film Festival, entitled, A New Kind of Love. In 2014, he directed a commercial with actress Gabriella Wilde for Estée Lauder, and in 2016, directed a fashion campaign with China's first supermodel, Liu Wen, also for Estée Lauder. His latest short film, Wu Gui (Turtle), world premiered as official selection of the 52nd New York Film Festival, won best narrative at New Orleans Film Festival, Asian short of the year at the Hong Kong ifva Awards (audience prize), and was awarded the Oscar- qualifying grand jury prize at the 2015 Atlanta Film Festival. He continues to work as a cinematographer, his previous films having premiered at Cannes, Tribeca, Locarno and New York Film Festivals, and contributed to the opening feature of the 2015 Golden Horse Film Festival in Taiwan- Distance- executive produced by Anthony Chen. San Fu Tian (starring Huang Lu, Bind Massage, and Luo Lan Shan, A Touch of Sin), was produced by Subi Liang

THE SILK AND THE FLAME by Jordan Schiele

and Pang Ho-Cheung, and had its world premiere as official selection at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival, nominated for Best Feature Film, the Teddy Award and Panorama Audience Award. With its theatrical release in Beijing, *San Fu Tian* later became the first entirely Chinese film written and directed by a foreigner to screen theatrically in China. His most recent feature fiction script, *Across the Valley and Into the Hills*, was selected by the Bridging the Dragon lab in partnership with Cannes, Berlin, Shanghai, Locarno and Venice film festivals. His documentary feature debut, *The Silk and The Flame*, was chosen as one of two docs to participate in the inaugural works-in-progress forum at Seattle International Film Festival (2017). It will have its world premiere in the official selection of the 68th Berlin International Film Festival.

Director's Statement

There is a proverb in Chinese: “Concealing truth is like wearing embroidered clothes and traveling by night.” There is beauty in truth, but if one cannot display it in the light of day, who will embrace it? No one sees the beauty of embroidered clothes in the dark of night. My friend Yao has cultivated a beautiful life for his family: a house for his brother and sister and their children, medical equipment for his disabled father and deaf mother, employees for their farm, yet his own life, the volatile subject of annual visits home during the lunar new year, has been concealed for nearly forty years. Both this subject, and the human being at its core, have reached a breaking point: a moment of crisis, a crisis of identity, legacy and truth.

There is a tradition in Yao's hometown: if a child is unwed and a parent dies, that child must wait four years to marry and have their own children. This custom has been practiced for hundreds of years. The weight of ancient history, and the turbulent history of modern China during which Yao became a man, have created a village that befits the setting of a fable.

At the center of this fable is Yao, an unwed middle-aged man who left the village as an adolescent, having graduated as the top student of his province with a population of 94 million, to attend an elite university in Beijing. Since then, he has started a successful company, built a three-story house for his siblings, supported the higher education of his nieces and nephews, and managed his parents' finances and treated their illnesses. He returns once a year, now gentrified, as the unspoken hero of the family and the village. He is a fixture of hope, pride and grave disappointment. He does not know how he will continue the family line. As many families in China believe, the survival of their family depends on Yao fulfilling his duties as a son.

“The Silk and The Flame” shares as much with a fable as it does with a documentary based upon facts. Most places in the world do not resemble Yao's village, but an individual's struggle with the societal definition of how one should live is a question that everyone asks or is eventually forced to ask. What inspired me to make this film was the desire to explore a profound question that Yao tackles on his visit home and the dramatic retelling of his parent's love affair during a time of political and cultural upheaval.

More than ever we are faced with questions of tolerance, truth and moral duty. “The Silk and The Flame” explores these topics by questioning the role that a family, and a society, plays in the development and happiness of a human being, by questioning what it means to be a dutiful child, a good neighbor, a moral person, a responsible parent. I hope an audience will reexamine their own lives and question what happens when a family does not communicate, and when a society encourages strict adherence to a moral code. In “The Silk and The Flame,” the three characters at the forefront— Yao, his mother and father, all share a burden— being unable to speak. Yao’s mother lost her voice through a medical accident. She desires to express herself clearly, but it is physically impossible. His father, unable to move the left side of his body, has chosen not to speak, because he believes that the god he worships, a being that resembles both Mao and Jesus in his dreams, has abandoned him. Yao supports his family in every way, despite the hatred his father has towards him, yet he is unwilling to speak openly about his identity and what he dreams of for his own life.