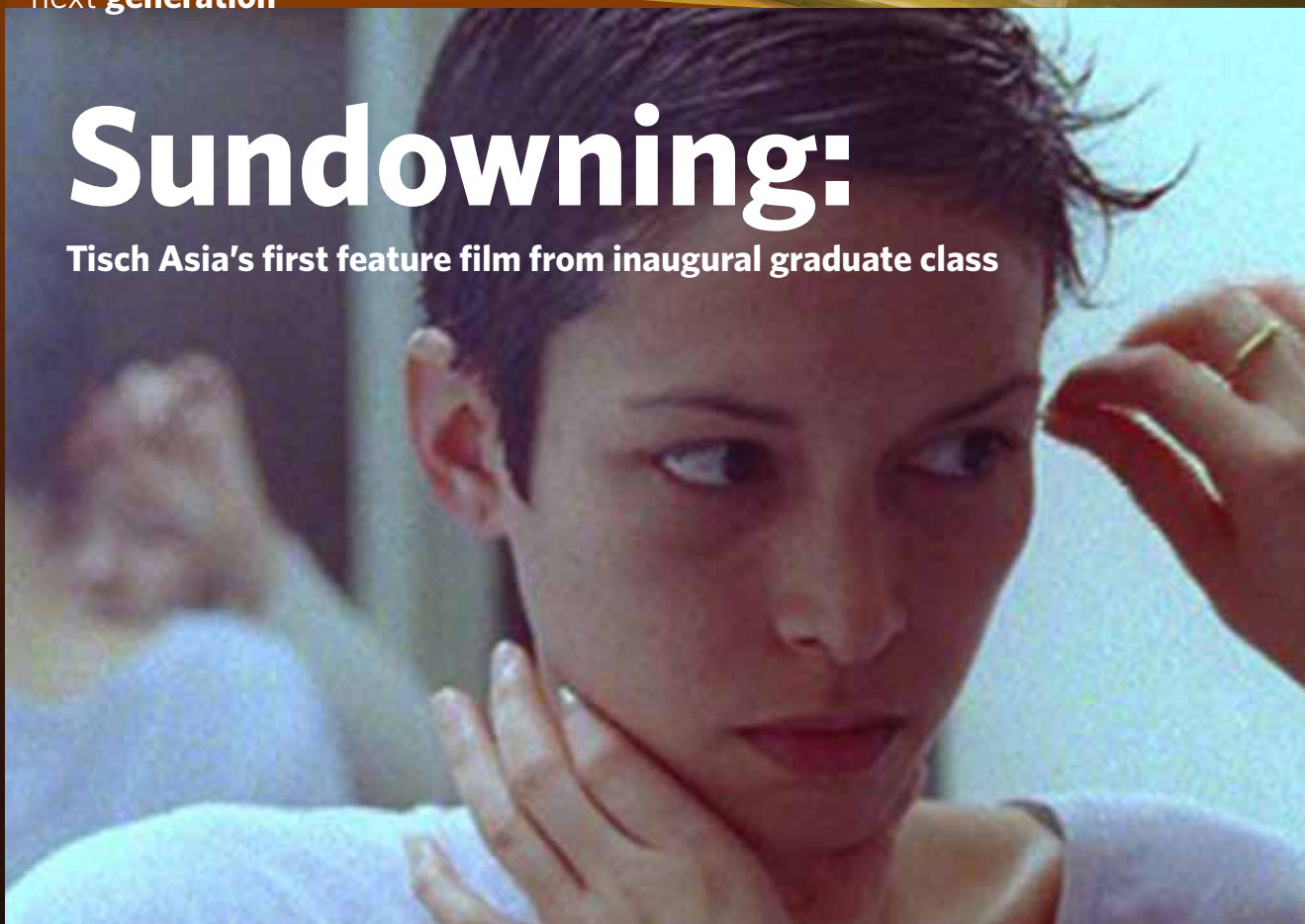


Sundowning:

Tisch Asia's first feature film from inaugural graduate class



When Stephanie Bousley arrived at the Tisch Asia campus in Singapore to attend a new film program, she had no idea of the challenges she and her fellow students would face. Bousley was part of the inaugural class in the three-year MFA curriculum, and *Sundowning* was the school's first feature film thesis project. Many barriers would have to be overcome along the way – cultural, language, weather and scarce resources. Bousley's collaborators on the film included director Frank Rinaldi and cinematographer Kiran Chitvanis.

Chitvanis, a New Mexico native, studied political science and international relations at Princeton University for her undergraduate degree. She went to India the summer before her senior year to research and shoot a documentary that would be part of her requisite senior thesis. That sealed her passion for narrative filmmaking. Her next stop was the Asian campus of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, which opened in 2007.

"I relished the opportunity to study in a new environment and culture," she recalls. "I was suddenly dealing with more stringent rules for what could and could not be used or accessed. I learned that 'no' doesn't necessarily mean that something cannot be done, but rather that you need to find a different way to do it."

For *Sundowning*, the filmmakers referenced such films as *Hotel Monterey*,

Jeanne Dielman and *Rock My Religion*, as well as various films from John Cassavetes and John Carpenter.

Sundowning is a coming-of-age-story that explores the relationship between Shannon, a 24-year-old woman suffering from early onset dementia, and her caretaker Susan.

Chitvanis describes two specific looks the filmmakers created within the movie. "During the 'public' scenes, when the two main characters interact with each other, we implemented a rigorously controlled look with locked off shots and highly designed compositions," she says. "For 'private' scenes, or moments in the film when they are alone, we applied a vérité style with more free form, handheld camera movement. The controlled aesthetic established at the start of the film deteriorates as the story unravels and Shannon's condition worsens."

The lighting strategy was designed to feel as naturalistic, yet as clean as possible. The filmmakers also encountered limited power supplies on location, including at such significant locales as the Singapore Flyer (the world's largest Ferris wheel) and the Botanical Gardens, and at celebrations of the Buddhist holiday Vesak. "We had an assortment of high wattage lights in an array of color temperatures, using gels to correct when desired. We didn't pay too much attention to creating an exact tungsten balance. We went with what we liked the look of, instead of being technically exact."

Part of that look was created using KODAK VISION3 500T Color Negative Film 7219 for indoor scenes, and KODAK VISION3 250D Color Negative Film 7207 when outdoors. "A number of the key visual references were films from the 1970s," Chitvanis says. "To create a similar look, and rather than spending the time and money to drastically manipulate digital HD footage in post, we opted to shoot film. Today's new film stocks are so clean that we chose to shoot in the Super 16mm format to help replicate the texture of those older films."

The filmmakers also learned another valuable lesson: by loading an old ARRI 16SR 2 camera with the newest film stocks, they were economically equipped as well as cutting edge. "To keep the images crisp and give ourselves the option of a more shallow depth of field while shooting in small rooms, I worked with a set of prime 35 mm lenses on the Super 16 camera. There was also a set of tilt-shift lenses for select moments," Chitvanis relates.

The film was processed normally and transferred at Filmworks/FX back in Los Angeles, with post work done at Technicolor in Bangkok, who offered competitive student rates. "Their quality and services are incredibly professional and definitely worth the trip," says Bousley.

For more on *Sundowning*, visit www.sundowningthemovie.com.

For more on Tisch Asia please visit www.tischasia.nyu.edu