

Singapore Dreaming tells the story of a family struggling to maintain their mutual trust as they endure the changes brought by modern life. When cinematographer Martina Radwan read the script, her eye for drama was drawn to the conflict between the family's physical closeness and their emotional distance.

Yen Yen Woo and Colin Goh wrote the script and co-directed the film. The visual style they developed with Radwan balanced elements of Asian and western cinema.

"Everything in the first half of the movie, especially around the parents and their apartment, was designed to have an Asian feel," says Radwan. "We looked at the prints of the Japanese painter Hiroshige as inspiration and tried to translate his lyrical paintings of landscapes into images of a small apartment in a typical Singaporean public housing complex."

The result was many static wide shots from elevated perspectives, including many graphic elements like diagonal lines dividing the frame.

The tiny apartment in which the early scenes were filmed made it difficult for Radwan to cut or model light. "I wanted to create separation through colors, knowing that there was very limited room for lighting units and time," she says. "I always envisioned the apartment with green walls. There's something about green that signals decay for me, whether it's emotional, financial or in this case, the decay of old values."

The green walls were complemented with red, a color that symbolizes luck in the Chinese culture. The bold color, along with the pastels chosen for wardrobe, helped Radwan create separation in the tight spaces.

A rigid camera with few cuts helped communicate the regimentation of the father and the trapped feeling of his children. When she did choose to move the camera, the emotional impact was heightened. Later in the film, when the family wins the lottery, framing is closer and the pace is increased through editing.



Radwan finds a Singapore dream

The filmmakers used the Super 16 film combined with a HD-resolution digital intermediate process at RhinoPost, resulting in a 35mm print for theatrical distribution. Radwan used KODAK VISION2 500T 7218 film for interiors and night exteriors, and KODAK VISION2 100T 7212 film for day exteriors.

"Because we were planning the blow-up, I was very aware of the grain," says Radwan. "The 7218 has a beautiful grain structure that barely becomes visible. We were careful to maintain some detail in the highlights and brought them up in post. The slightly less contrasty feel of 7212 captures the extreme feeling of heat and humidity, typical for Singapore."

Radwan also noticed mixed color temperatures in Singapore and brought that sensibility into the film. "Home interiors are often lit in a cold florescent blue light," she says. "Street exteriors are lit in a very warm orange light.

It's sort of the opposite of what you expect. I decided to use and even enhance it for our film."

The filmmakers noticed a specific turquoise light in *Saint Jack*, a film directed by Peter Bogdanovich and photographed in Singapore by Robby Muller.

"As homage to Robby Muller, I decided to use that color in the kitchen of our hero's apartment as a constant light source," says Radwan. "It has a strange emotional effect because it is eerie and beautiful at the same time."

Film Technical Services, an accredited Kodak Imagecare Program lab in Singapore, did the processing. "Knowing that the facility was approved by Kodak and periodically checked put me at ease," says Radwan. "I was impressed with their consistency and cleanliness."

Working in an unfamiliar country, Radwan felt unconstrained by convention. "I'm attracted to the idea of taking existing light and pushing it further to loosen up the interpretation," she says. "As an artist you can create more freely. I used mixed lighting to underline the constant emotional conflict that characterizes this family." ■

