

The

Standard (Circulation/Reach:
200,000)

P19|Weekend Glitz|By Disu Dang

Word Count: 420 words

2023-07-28

Korean screen queens

The Korean film industry is coming into its own thanks to dramas such as Squid Game.

And now it is time for a sub-section of the industry to shine. The **Women Direct**. Korean Indies! program of the **Hong Kong Arts Centre**, focuses on independent films directed by Korean female directors.

The program has been running for three years, with 10 films screened in the last two.

Eight - an even mix of features and documentaries - will be screened this year, each followed by a talk with the directors.

"We picked films covering different topics, because we wanted to show the different aspects of life that women have to deal with in Korea," said Jacqueline Tong, program manager of **Hong Kong Arts Centre**.

Jeong-sun, directed by Jeong Ji Hye, stems from her concerns with digital sex crimes.

When Joeng was still in college in 2018, she heard about Webhard Cartel, which streamed webcam footage without the consent of the women involved.

Surprisingly, she found that most of victims were middle-aged.

"It's not only younger women, like it's portrayed in the media."

In 2019, she wrote the script for Jeong-sun, in which a middle-aged worker in a food factory finds herself in a sex video scandal.

The film won the Grand Prize at Joenju International Film Festival 2022 and the Grand Jury Prize at Rome Film Festival 2022.

"I didn't expect to win at all so I already went back to Korea before the ceremony at Rome," she said.

"But I'm really happy this film, which can be regarded as very Korean, can also be appreciated by the European audience."

Also not to be missed is Climbing, an animation by Kim Hye Mi.

It tells the story of a female professional climber who struggles with an accidental pregnancy that could disrupt her career.

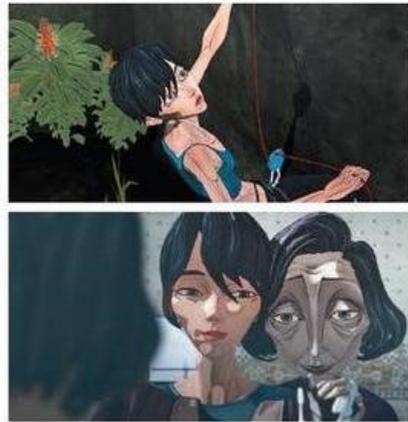
"The biggest inspiration for the film is my own experience," Kim said. "I was pregnant when making the film, and it felt like the biggest physical and mental change in my life."

Her first feature-length animation was quite a challenge. "It was difficult to form a narrative longer than 60 minutes, and process including 3D animation was hard at first."

Tong said the program chose *Climbing*, its first animation, as an effort to highlight female animators.

"Female filmmakers have been not as many as males, so we think it's good to show their professional side and give them a spotlight to show their works," she said.

The **Women Direct** Korean Indies! program will be screening until August 13.



■ Clockwise from top far left: screenshot of *Climbing*; director Joeng Ji Hye; two scenes from *Jeong-sun*; two scenes from *Climbing*; director Kim Hye Mi; and two scenes from *Jeong-sun*.

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■ The main character *Jeong-sun* is a middle-aged food factory worker.

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