

**FILM AT REDCAT IS PROUD TO BE PART OF THE
CROSS-ANGELES RETROSPECTIVE "ALSO LIKE LIFE:
THE FILMS OF HOU HSIAO-HSIEN" BY PRESENTING A
NEW 35MM PRINT OF FLOWERS OF SHANGHAI**

Mon May 4 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

\$11 [members \$9]

Recognized as one of the most important achievements in narrative film today, the breathtaking cinema of Hou Hsiao-hsien, the leading figure of the Taiwanese New Wave, is the subject of an international retrospective that spans more than three decades. As one of the participating venues, REDCAT is showing a new 35mm print of Hou's richly textured masterpiece *Flowers of Shanghai* (*Haishanghua*, 1998, 125 min.). An heir to the great modernist legacy—with its use of elegantly staged long takes, performances by many non-professional actors, and a radically elliptical mode of storytelling—Hou has created a body of work that, through its stylistic originality and historical gravity, has opened up exciting new horizons for the medium.

***Flowers of Shanghai*
(*Haishanghua*, 1998, 125 min.)**

Hou's unique artistry and perspective is on full display in *Flowers of Shanghai*. Based on a famous 19th-century Chinese novel, Hou Hsiao-hsien's 1998 drama is set in several Shanghai brothels, known as "flower houses," – a claustrophobic artificial paradise where courtesans and their upper-class clients smoke opium, argue about money, and indulge in witty gossip. Opening with a brilliant seven-minute take, the film unfolds in a distanced, almost dreamlike manner as it captures the various interactions and trysts of the inhabitants and customers, perfectly mirroring the heady decadence of their insular world; the languid yet precise cinematography throughout gives it the seductive power of an opium-induced dream... Despite garnering acclaim on the international film festival circuit back in 1998, *Flowers of Shanghai* never received a proper theatrical release in the United States.

"[An] emotionally shattering masterpiece...*Flowers of Shanghai* is one of the most sublimely beautiful films I've ever seen, and one of the most unbearably sad. To watch these characters break one another's

hearts, and then to have your own broken, is to experience something that the movies rarely grant us--perfection."

—Manohla Dargis, *LA Weekly*

"With *Flowers of Shanghai*, his first genuine period picture, Hou has refined realism into the ultimate artifice, has demonstrated that the elusive bloom of love that persists in all his bleak melodramas is inevitably crushed by our elaborate means of possessing it. But as a final, cryptic image of a man and a woman and an opium pipe suggests, these flowers are perennials."

—Peter Keough, *The Boston Phoenix*

International retrospective organized by Richard I. Suchenski (Director, Center for Moving Image Arts at Bard College), in collaboration with the Taipei Cultural Center, the Taiwan Film Institute, and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of China (Taiwan). The book Hou Hsiao-hsien (Columbia University Press, 2014) has been released in conjunction with this retrospective and is available on Amazon.

Series presented in association with the UCLA Film & Television Archive and American Cinematheque. Additional screenings will take place at these venues between Fri Apr 3 to Saturday June 20. Please visit www.cinema.ucla.edu/events/2015/also-like-life-hou-hsiao-hsien and <http://www.americancinemathequecalendar.com/content/also-like-life-the-films-of-hou-hsiao-hsien> for more information.

ALSO LIKE LIFE: THE FILMS OF HOU HSIAO-HSIEN
Friday, April 3 – Saturday, June 20

An indispensable figure of Taiwan's national cinema and artistic culture, Hou Hsiao-hsien's contribution to the expressive range of contemporary, international cinema positions him as a decisive and timeless voice for the medium itself. This incredible fact should not be taken for granted. The national cinema culture from which Hou emerged, hedged in by foreign competition, scant resources and a resort to genre tropes, did not outwardly promise an auteur of such importance. But Hou made a virtue of necessity, experimenting his way toward an economical and deeply expressive stylistic virtuosity that became a clarion voice of the New Taiwanese Cinema of the 1980s, defined by more personal, socially engaged and stylistically searching cinematic statements. It may seem ironic that a filmmaker so intensely Taiwanese, engaging specific questions of national identity and destiny, might prove so resonant an artistic voice on the world

stage. Though attentive to Taiwan's ethnic tensions, its fraught and tangled histories of occupation, martial law and its dizzying economic development, his perspective nonetheless features a marvelously attenuated aesthetic distance, characterized most recognizably as a matter of long takes and improvisation. But the stylist is also a philosopher, attentive to the margins and fringes of his own dramatic space, open to the possibility of human entropy, and sensitive to history's pall, which he evokes with a rueful and unblinking sadness.

Presented as part of the Jack H. Skirball Series.