

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA CELEBRATES KUNG FU PURIST LAU KAR-LEUNG IN A 10-FILM RETROSPECTIVE

The Grandmaster: Lau Kar-leung

July 5–17, 2018

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

NEW YORK, June 11, 2018— The Museum of Modern Art presents a retrospective of the celebrated martial artist, choreographer, and film director Lau Kar-leung (1937–2013), July 5–17 in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters. *The Grandmaster: Lau Kar-leung* includes 10 films Lau made between 1976 and 1986 for the Shaw Brothers film studio, where he was initially hired as a martial arts instructor in the 1960s. The director himself appears in six of the films, in a variety of leading and supporting roles, alongside many of his favorite kung fu stars, including Gordon Liu Chia-hui, Kara Wai, and Hsiao Hao. While many directors and actors have been associated with the kung fu genre—Hong Kong cinema’s most unique creation—Lau’s contribution to the genre is singular in his unadulterated devotion to authentic kung fu. *The Grandmaster: Lau Kar-leung* is organized by La Frances Hui, Associate Curator, Department of Film.

During his time at the Shaw Brothers studio, Lau was the first martial arts instructor ever to become a director. His insistence on perfection of form resulted from his intensive training under his father, whose teacher was a direct disciple of Wong Fei-hung (1847–1924), the legendary martial artist and folk hero whose life has been fictionalized in over 100 films. This direct lineage formed the foundation of Lau’s work as both a director and kung fu practitioner, and later shaped his unique vision and reverence for the genre illustrated on film. Earlier in his career, Lau’s partnership with director Chang Cheh created such stunning swordplay films as *One-Armed Swordsman* (1967) and *Golden Swallow* (1968), but when he became a director, he diverged from Chang’s world of gut-spilling bloodbaths and machismo. Instead, he used his films to honor the holistic practice of kung fu—a discipline of both body and mind. And, unlike director King Hu (*Come Drink with Me, A Touch of Zen*), who constructed fantastical, impressionistic movements inspired by Peking opera–style acrobatics and theatrics, Lau favored realistic combat, informed by the southern kung fu form that he had practiced all his life.

While many films feature invincible fighters at their pinnacle, Lau had a penchant for a martial artist’s training stage, dedicating ample screen time to the depiction of rigorous practice and the development of humility, kindness, and moral standing—the qualities that make a true master. Some of the training scenes have an almost documentary quality; the actors

sometimes underwent grueling physical ordeals on set. Lau often embedded kung fu demonstrations in opening-credit sequences as well, offering moments for the art form to shine in its purest state. Intricately choreographed and performed fight scenes further underline the director's intimate relationship with his art.

SPONSORSHIP:

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Press Contact: Stephanie Katsias: (212) 708-9401 or stephanie.katsias@moma.org

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Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, moma.org.
Hours: Saturday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00–8:00 p.m. moma.org: No service charge for tickets ordered on moma.org. Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Film and After Hours Program Admission: \$12