



THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS A SELECTED RETROSPECTIVE OF THE WORK OF MASTER KOREAN FILMMAKER SHIN SANG-OK

Shin Sang-Ok: Korean Filmmaker
March 4–16, 2002
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1

NEW YORK, February 13, 2002 – From rousing costume dramas and romantic melodramas to edgy contemporary thrillers and biting social critiques, Shin Sang-Ok has consistently been at the vanguard of Korean cinema. Over a 50-year career as both director and producer, he has tackled some of the most pressing social and political issues in his country, while consistently proving himself as a stylish and imaginative innovator. The Museum of Modern Art will present a selected retrospective of eleven of his works in the Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1, comprising two recent films as well as nine from his most prolific period, the 1960s. This retrospective will include such classics as *My Mother and Her Guest* (1961, now in the Museum’s archives), *King Yonsan* (1961), *Red Muffler* (1964), *Phantom Queen* (1967), and *Eunuch* (1968). “This retrospective, is a felicitous occasion in which the Museum’s educational mission dovetails neatly with the idea of good popular entertainment,” says Laurence Kardish, Senior Curator, Department of Film and Media, who organized this series. “Shin Sang-Ok is not only a master craftsman of cinema but a keen observer of social attitudes and personal relationships.”

Few filmmakers have had as great an impact on Korean filmmaking and the popularity of Korean film abroad as Shin Sang-Ok. He was born in 1926 in Chungjin, in what is now North Korea, and was most active in South Korea between 1952 and 1975 (when his license to make films in South Korea was revoked for political reasons), during which time the filmmaker completed more than fifty films in various genres. Until 1975 his films were exported to Taiwan and Hong Kong, where they served as models for the historical action films made by the Golden Harvest studio and the Shaw Brothers. Shin helped establish the Korean film industry and was largely responsible for the rise in popularity of Korean cinema abroad. His pioneering use of new technology during the

1960s—his most fruitful decade, when he was making at least two films a year—included the introduction of CinemaScope, telephoto and zoom lenses, and synchronized sound to the Korean film industry.

In separate incidents in 1978, both Shin and his wife Choi Eun-Hee, the luminous star of many of his films, were kidnapped by North Korean agents for the purpose of making films for the president, Kim Il-Sung. Although he completed only seven films while working in North Korea, his contribution to the North's film industry was immense: he was the first filmmaker to direct musicals based on traditional indigenous narratives, rather than the prior staple diet of propaganda. However, on a trip to Europe in 1986 as part of a North Korean film delegation, Shin and Choi sought asylum in the American Embassy in Vienna and moved to the U.S. where he has been successful as a producer of the popular *Three Ninjas* series through his Los Angeles/Seoul-based Shin Films. Shin returned to South Korea in recent years to make two films based on contemporary Korean events: *Mayumi* (1990) and *Vanished* (1994).

In October 2001 Shin was honored at the Pusan International Film Festival in South Korea with a selected retrospective of his work, which forms the basis of this exhibition. "I think [the] critical moments of Korean history should be made into movies to encourage proper awareness of history among audiences," he said in a Pusan program interview. "But when these matters are made into television dramas, the sole focus is on political battles and crimes of passion. My intention was to make people see our history straight. It definitely came from a sense of duty, but not from strong patriotism. It also came from my preference for social drama."

Shin Sang-Ok: Korean Filmmaker is presented in collaboration with Hahn Dong-Sin, Director, Open Work, Brooklyn, New York, an organization dedicated to the promotion of contemporary Korean culture in America. The exhibition would not have been possible without the kind assistance of the Korean Film Commission, from whom most of the 35mm English-subtitled prints in this exhibition are being borrowed. The Museum of Modern Art also thanks the Korean Cultural Service in New York for its support, Samsung Electronics America for its generous grant, and Korean Air for its help in bringing the artists to New York.

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Shin Sang-Ok: Korean Filmmaker Screening Schedule

Monday, March 4

- 2:30** ***Sarang bang sonnim omoni (My Mother and Her Guest)***. 1961. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Lim Hee-Jae, based on the novel *The Lodger and My Mother* by Chu Yo-Sup. With Kim Jin-Kyu, Choi Eun-Hee, Kim Hee-Gap, and Do Keum-Bong. An understated melodrama in which a widow, in order to support herself and her young daughter, rents a room to a painter from the city and soon finds herself torn between her growing affection for the man and the constraints of rural society. In Korean with English subtitles. 103 min.
- 6:00** ***Yeonsangun (King Yonsan)***. 1961. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Lim Hee-Jae, based on the novel by Park Jong-Hwa, *The Blood on the Silk Robe*. With Shin Young-Kyun, Do Keum-Bong, and Han Eun-Jin. Shin revived the period film with this ferocious, blockbuster epic in which a tyrant, furious about the untimely death of his mother, revenges himself on his entire court. In Korean with English subtitles. 146 min.

Tuesday, March 5

- 2:30** ***Eunuch***. 1968. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Kwak Il-Ro. With Shin Seong-Il, Yoon Jeong-Hee, and Park Noh-Shik. A young man undergoes castration in order to be with his beloved, one of the king's concubines. Shin's version of this doomed love narrative was noted for its eroticism. In Korean with English subtitles. 93 min.
- 6:00** ***A Flower in Hell***. 1958. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Lee Jung-Seon. With Choi Eun-Hee, Kim Hak, and Cho Hae-Won. "Yanggongju" were local women who prostituted themselves to American soldiers after the Korean War. Sonya, "an incarnation of lust and passion" (as described by film critic Hong Sung-Nam), is portrayed as a victimizer (and an irredeemably poisonous one at that), which was unusual for Shin, who became known for his portrayals of women as social victims. In Korean with English subtitles. 100 min.

Thursday, March 7

- 2:30** ***Women of the Chosun Dynasty***. 1969. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Lee Sang-Hyun, based on the novel by Ahn Dae-Sung. With Choi Eun-Hee, Shin Young-Kyun, Kim Ji-Mi, and Hwang Jeong-Soon. In four sad tales about social inequality, women are portrayed as pleasure givers and bearers of children. In Korean with English subtitles. 96 min.
- 6:00** ***Red Muffler***. 1964. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Han Woon-Sa and Kim Kang-Yoon. With Choi Eun-Hee, Shin Young-Kyun, and Choi Mu-Ryong. One of the most beloved of Korean films, *Red Muffler* is about the courage and camaraderie of pilots during the Korean War and their anxious families on the home front. In Korean with English subtitles. 100 min.

Friday, March 8

- 2:30** *Dream*. 1967. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Lim Hee-Jae, based on the novel by Lee Kwang-Su. With Shin Young-Kyun, Kim Hye-Jung, and Kim Dong-Won. The ephemerality of life is the subject of this wistful fantasy. A monk abducts the fiancée of a warrior, who searches the most remote areas of Korea to find the couple. In Korean with English subtitles. 91 min.
- 6:00** *Sangroksu (Evergreen Tree)*. 1961. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Kim Kang-Yoon, based on the novel by Shim Hoon. With Choi Eun-Hee, Shin Young-Kyun, and Shin Seong-Il. Set during the period of Japanese imperialism, *Evergreen Tree* describes the hardships a young teacher from the city experiences in the countryside when she attempts to educate the children of peasant farmers. In Korean with English subtitles. 120 min.

Saturday, March 9

- 12:30** *Yeonsangun (King Yonsan)*.
- 3:30** *Phantom Queen*. 1967. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Choi Keum-Dong, based on the novel *Buddha's Compassion* by Park Jong-Hwa. With Choi Eun-Hee and Kim Jin-Kyu. Mourning the loss of his wife, King Gongnim (the last monarch of the Koryô Dynasty, 918–1392), having spent his energy building temples to his late queen, turns over the affairs of state to his tyrannical chief abbot. In Korean with English subtitles. 120 min.
- 5:45** *Women of the Chosun Dynasty*.

Sunday, March 10

- 2:00** *Red Muffler*.
- 5:00** *Sangroksu (Evergreen Tree)*.

Monday, March 11

- 2:30** *Phantom Queen*.
- 6:00** *Eunuch*.

Tuesday, March 12

- 2:30** *Dream*.
- 6:00** *Sarang bang sonnim omoni (My Mother and Her Guest)*.

Thursday, March 14

2:30 ***Chongbal (Vanished)***. 1994. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Dasaka Arira and Kenny Kim. With Kim Hee-La, Shin Seong-II, George Takei, and Kang Lee-Na. This political melodrama imagines the emergence of the social conscience of a key conspirator 18 years after the engineering of a coup that replaced democracy with a dictatorship. Shin wanted a Latin American country to stand in for South Korea, but when President Park Chung Hee himself was assassinated by one of his own cabinet at a state banquet, the filmmaker returned to South Korea to make this timely feature. In Korean with English subtitles. 96 min.

Friday, March 15

2:30 ***Mayumi/Mayumi Virgin Terrorist***. 1990. Korea. Directed by Shin Sang-Ok. Written by Shin Bong-Seung. With Kim Seo-Ra, Choi Yoon-Seok, and Lee Hak-Jae. Shin's first film after his escape from North Korea is about the North Korean operative Kim Hyun-Hee, who in 1987 bombed a South Korean passenger plane. In Korean with English subtitles. 120 min.

Saturday, March 16

1:00 ***Mayumi/Mayumi Virgin Terrorist***.

3:15 ***Chongbal (Vanished)***.

5:30 ***A Flower in Hell***.