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BAMPFA and The Roxie Partner to Launch Major Wong Kar-Wai Retrospective

New 4K Restorations of Wong's Most Celebrated Works Available for Streaming Starting on December 11



(Berkeley, CA) November 16, 2020—Next month, the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive ([BAMPFA](#)) and San Francisco's [Roxie Theater](#) will launch a retrospective of films by Wong Kar-Wai, one of the most internationally acclaimed directors of the past thirty years. BAMPFA and The Roxie are co-presenting the Bay Area premiere of Janus Films' nationally touring retrospective of the Hong Kong auteur, which will become available for online streaming on both venues' websites beginning December 11. The series features 4K restorations of seven of Wong's most beloved films.

One of the most celebrated directors in contemporary world cinema, Wong first emerged as a major presence on the global film festival circuit with his 1994 feature *Chungking Express*, a film whose visually sumptuous cinematography and elliptical narrative structure would become hallmarks of his singular style. Steeped in cinematic influences that range from classic Hollywood to Hong Kong genre and European art films, Wong's work explores the existential complexities of change, desire, memory, love, friendship, and self-realization—often through impressionistic storytelling techniques that evoke the elusive quality of memory. In masterpieces like *In the Mood for Love* and *Days of Being Wild*, Wong's camera maps the physicality of his protagonists and the inanimate objects that become proxies for absent lovers, embedding the erotic power of delayed gratification in every frame.

BAMPFA and The Roxie's joint series includes many of Wong's greatest works, all of which have been newly restored by Janus Films in pristine 4K digital presentations. Films in the series include *In the Mood for Love*, *As Tears Go By*, *Days of Being Wild*, *Chungking Express*, *Fallen Angels*, *Happy Together*, and *The Hand*, the latter screening in a previously unseen extended cut.

Viewers can purchase streaming links to these films at either bampfa.org/watch-from-home/existence-longing-wong-kar-wai or <https://www.roxie.com/world-of-wong-kar-wai>. Each film is available for \$12, with discounts for BAMPFA and Roxie members at their respective venues. Purchases through these websites support BAMPFA and The Roxie during their ongoing closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Films are available online until further notice.

The series is curated at BAMPFA by Associate Film Curator Kate MacKay and at The Roxie by Director of Programming Isabel Fondevila. Thanks to Brian Belovarac, Ben Crossley-Marra, and Emily Woodburne at Janus Films. Descriptions of each film in the series follow below:

In the Mood for Love

Hong Kong, 2000
98 minutes

Perhaps the most universally acclaimed film of its decade, *In the Mood for Love* is a twenty-first-century classic; even when it debuted in 2000, however, it already seemed timeless. "This film is not verbal," said Wong about the way it effortlessly captures an essence of romance and melancholy, as showcased in the lives of two neighbors in the early 1960s (Maggie Cheung and Tony Leung Chiu-wai) "in the mood for love," yet too proper to act on it. "Everything is expressed through the body, through the people, how they walk, how they move." The film's physical grace is supplied by Cheung and Leung, both luminously attired in some of the most fabulous outfits ever assembled, while its mood rises from the camerawork of Christopher Doyle and Mark Lee Ping Bin, which lingers on hands, hips, and silhouettes, and all of the moments that could have led, but never do, to love.

As Tears Go By

Hong Kong, 1988
102 minutes

A low-level hoodlum on the bloody streets of Hong Kong's notorious Mong Kok district must choose between a woman's love and fealty to his hotheaded blood brother in Wong Kar-wai's feature debut, which provided enough fistfights and street battles to please audiences while debuting the mood-drenched atmospheric and unabashed romanticism that would define his career. Andy Lau, Maggie Cheung (in a role she credits as making audiences aware of her dramatic potential), and Jacky Cheung star in this triad opera, "a tragic study of little people in a big city" as Wong himself described it, filmed furtively amidst Mong Kok's "life in the raw."

Days of Being Wild

Hong Kong, 1990
94 minutes

"1960 was a good year, the beginning of a decade; of course, it could have easily been a dream," wrote Wong Kar-Wai of his haunting paean to memory, love, and longing, set during a long and sweltering Hong Kong summer. Disaffected pretty boy Leslie Cheung drifts through a series of doomed relationships with women including Maggie Cheung and Carina Lau; every action circles backwards like the fans and clocks that surround them. Steeped in a simmering mood as ephemeral and bluesy as the film's soundtrack, *Days* was Wong's first collaboration with cinematographer Christopher Doyle, and won five Hong Kong Film Awards.

Chungking Express

Hong Kong, 1994

102 minutes

Frustrated with the slow filming of his martial arts epic *Ashes of Time*, Wong promised funders a film about “two cops” and decamped with cast and crew to the city to pound out a contemporary quickie that would come to define 1990s Hong Kong cinema. Section one involves a blonde-bewigged smuggler (Brigitte Lin) and a smitten beat cop (Takeshi Kaneshiro); in section two, another police officer (Tony Leung Chiu-wai) falls under the sway of food vendor Faye Wong and her constant “California Dreamin’.” Funders got their cop movie; international viewers received a mesmerizing jolt of Hong Kong’s energy, romance, and style, framed by Christopher Doyle’s lyrically kinetic cinematography.

Fallen Angels

Hong Kong, 1995

99 minutes

A disillusioned Hong Kong contract killer falls for his professional partner in Wong’s loose follow-up to *Chungking Express*, a similar “love letter to Hong Kong nights” (*New York Newsday*) that somehow tops *Chungking*’s neon-illuminated romantic aesthetic. Killer (Leon Lai) does the work, while Agent (Michelle Reis) books the clients; Killer wants a way out, preferably with Agent in tow, but encounters with such nocturnal denizens as Takeshi Kaneshiro, Charlie Yeung, and Karen Mok may complicate matters. “A pyrotechnical wonder about mystery, solitude, and the irrational love of movies” (J. Hoberman), *Fallen Angels* “takes every risk known to filmmaking, and succeeds triumphantly” (*Sight & Sound*).

Happy Together

Hong Kong, 1997

96 minutes

Buenos Aires provides the unexpected setting for Wong’s lyrical examination of doomed love and gay male sexuality, with Hong Kong superstars Leslie Cheung and Tony Leung Chiu-wai continually locked together in either embrace or embattlement. Fleeing Hong Kong, the two find themselves separated and adrift in an atmospherically cobblestoned Buenos Aires of tango bars and sleazy flophouses, with only habit and spite—and a dream of Iguazu Falls—to unite them. Romantically shot by Christopher Doyle in both sumptuous black-and-white and grime-coated color, simultaneously bruising and yearning, *Happy Together* is “a take-no-prisoners movie that’s the very antithesis of sentimental gay love stories” (Kenneth Turan).

The Hand

Hong Kong, 2004

80 minutes

Originally part of the three-part omnibus *Eros*, *The Hand* is arguably Wong’s forgotten masterpiece, a key bridge between *In the Mood for Love* and *2046* that weaves those films’ emotional colors—desire, longing, the melancholy of unattainable beauty—into a concise pattern. “Never touched a woman before?” sighs courtesan Gong Li to youthful apprentice Chang Chen. “Then how can you be a tailor?” And with that, years of unfulfilled yearning begin. Set in a 1960s twilight milieu of dim hallways and darkened rooms, of well-groomed men caught motionless before marvelously *cheongsam*-attired women, *The Hand* is “visually exquisite and highly erotic” (Jonathan Rosenbaum).

Images

- 1) *In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar-Wai, 2000)
- 2) *Happy Together* (Wong Kar-Wai, 1997)

About BAMPFA

An internationally recognized arts institution with deep roots in the Bay Area, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a forum for cultural experiences that transform individuals and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. BAMPFA is UC Berkeley's premier visual arts venue, presenting more than 450 film screenings, scores of public programs, and more than twenty exhibitions annually. With its vibrant and eclectic programming, BAMPFA inspires the imagination and ignites critical dialogue through art, film, and other forms of creative expression.

The institution's collection of more than 28,000 works of art encompasses pieces dating from 3000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA's collection also includes more than 18,000 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, and seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.

About The Roxie

The Roxie Theater, a San Francisco landmark in the Mission District, brings people together to meet and connect through distinctive cinematic experiences. Guided by the passionate belief that engaging with a movie doesn't end with the credits, we invite filmmakers, curators, entertainers and educators to interact with our audiences. We provide inspiration and opportunity for the next generation, and serve as a forum for the independent film community reflecting the spirit of the diverse Bay Area population. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.