

# LONELY BUILDINGS

## 孤獨的大廈

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*03-Flats*, production and conception by Lilian Chee. Direction by Lei Yuan Bin. Singapore Chinese Film Festival April 17th to 30th 2015.



P96-97 Still from *03 Flats*. Scene of Ling Nah, 2014.  
P98 Still from *03 Flats*. Scene of Madam Sim, 2014.  
P99 Still from *03 Flats*. Scene of Amy Tashiana Ali, 2014.  
Courtesy Lei Yuan Bin.



Trained as an architect and an academic, Lilian Chee puts together anecdotes about the drudgery of domesticity from three single Singaporean women, thoughtfully chosen subjects who strive for independence at different stages of their lives. Taking cues from the filmmaker Chantal Akerman's seminal experimental feminist film *Jeanne Dielman, 03-FLATS* exposes the women in their own milieu, at their most intimate and vulnerable. Shot over close to a year, traversing time and space, the documentary is lavished with colourful knick-knacks of the middle class and neighbourly festive cacophonies.

The first subject is Singaporean artist Tang Ling Nah, who had previously considered a potential career as a pharmacist. For a single person, flat ownership is challenging: as well as the cost, there are unfavourable housing policies that give priority to traditional nuclear families. Tang's resistance to structures is also seen in how she alters her home to suit her artistic practice,

shifting doors to reveal a spacious living room where she lays out her enormous charcoal drawings. The next subject, Amy Tashiana Ali, a transgender woman in her late 40s, lives alone with her cat. Tashiana's apartment, which brings to mind of an ostentatious nightclub, is an extension of her dramatic personality. Finally there's the story of Madame Sim, a frail, petite first-generation owner of a public flat built in 1973 who has been living there for more than three decades.

The camera work is ingeniously invisible, a fly on the wall. With as little intrusion into the lives of the subjects as possible, without any voiceover or narration, and with natural lighting, audiences are pulled into the inner lives of the women. With non-diegetic sound editing, the fiery political speeches we hear, sprinkled with utopian promises, are in stark contrast to the subjects' reality. We see Tang sitting on the floor alone, supposedly watching a National Day rally on television. Poignant portraits like this remind the

audience that despite the veneer of successful national policies, there are pocket of citizens left outside the state's aspirations.

*03-FLATS* is the culmination of Chee's long-term interest in the cinematic representation of urban spaces and gender issues in architecture. Chee's eventual venture into film expands the limit of traditional architectural tools. Singapore-based director Lei Yuan Bin captures specifics of the feminine sphere, its nuances and subtleties, that traditional drawing tools of architecture have fail to capture. It is reminiscent of Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-liang's distinguished style of depicting despair and isolation, with deliberate long takes in which the smallest gestures of the subjects give off reverberations.

There is no dramatic situation that escalates; rather this is a film that highlights the roles of occupancy, everyday use, personal histories and habits in shaping architecture.



建築師及學者 Lilian Chee 在《03-Flats》中集合了三位新加坡單身女子處理家常雜務的軼事，三位主題人物皆由她精心挑選，她們都曾在人生的不同階段中為獨立奮鬥。這齣紀錄片靈感來自電影製作人香特爾·阿克曼（Chantal Akerman）開創性的女權主義實驗電影《珍妮·德爾曼》（*Jeanne Dielman*），旨在揭露女性在她們所處的環境中最私密、脆弱的一面。整齣影片用了將近一年時間拍攝，跨越時間及空間，中產階級的色彩繽紛小擺設琳瑯滿目，友善歡樂的聲音迴盪耳際。

第一位主題人物是新加坡藝術家陳玲娜，她曾想過當一名藥劑師。對單身人士來說，要擁有物業並不容易，除成本問題外，房屋政策對傳統核心家庭給予優先權，對單身人士造成不利。從陳氏如何為滿足藝術創作需要而改變自己的家，亦可看到她對結構的反抗：她透過移動多道門來騰出一個寬闊的客廳，並在客廳擺放了她的多幅巨型炭筆素描畫作。

第二位主題人物 Amy Tashiana Ali 是一位年近五十的跨性別女性，獨居，家中養了一隻貓。她的公寓讓人想起豪華夜店，是她戲劇性個性的延伸。最後一個故事的主角是沈女士，她身體瘦弱，個子矮小，是第一代政府組屋擁有者。她是建於1973年

的第一代政府組屋的業主，她至今已在同一間組屋住了超過三十年。

《03-Flats》運鏡巧妙，不著痕跡，看起來就像在靜悄悄地觀察一切似的。在主題人物生活盡可能不受干擾、沒有任何旁述、燈光自然的情況下，觀眾仿如置身於一眾女子的生活之中。而激昂的政治演說以及當中所許下的烏托邦承諾，在畫外音下，與主題人物的真實生活形成了鮮明的對照。其中有一幕，陳氏獨自坐在地上，看來是看著電視上的國慶集會，場面讓人心酸；這提醒觀眾：儘管國家政策貌似成功，社會上仍有一小撮人是活在國家願景之外的。

這影片的誕生是源於 Chee 氏一直熱衷於以電影再現建築學的城市空間及性別議題。她在電影中所作出的大膽嘗試擴闊了傳統建築學工具的界限。而以新加坡為基地的導演雷遠彬則捕捉到女性領域中的微妙之處，這是傳統建築學繪圖工具無法做到的。說到這裡，不禁讓人想起台灣導演蔡明亮那描繪絕望與孤獨的精湛手法：以從容不迫的長鏡頭讓主題人物最細微的姿勢散發餘韻。

《03-Flats》並沒有任何戲劇性的轉折，而是著墨於探討物業佔有、日常用途、個人歷史及習慣在建築中的角色。