

As the inaugural event of the Liu Shiming Art Foundation Screening Program, our first screening focuses on the theme of women, as an extension and response to the Liu Shiming Art Gallery's exhibition "Half the Sky: Work of Liu Shiming." We will be showcasing short films by three young filmmakers: Sam Kumiko Sheridan's *Ume or (The Will to Fly Blind)* (15 minutes), Michelle Ma's *Blue Desert* (16 minutes), and Chris Zou's *Muted* (6 minutes). This event will include a post-screening discussion and Q&A session (30 minutes) moderated by Hindley Wang. The program aims to create a platform for artists and filmmakers to present their work through screenings, lectures, and symposia, showcasing video works, media art, and experimental films within both historical and contemporary contexts.

Feminist cinema, which emerged as a significant field in the late 1960s and early 1970s in tandem with the development of feminist theory, has become integral to the discourse on film production, critique, and popular culture. From early theoretical pioneers like Claire Johnston and Laura Mulvey to the renowned *The Mother of French Cinema*, Agnès Varda, feminist cinema has played a significant role in filmmaking, critical theory, and now, social movement. This screening seeks to foreground narratives where women are not merely subjects of observation, but active protagonists—stories engaged with and respond to the authentic struggles and emotions encountered during their personal growth. In doing so, it aligns with the exhibition's overarching theme, underscoring the rights women have historically fought for and their dynamic roles within societal processes—portrayed with authenticity, vitality, and devoid of reductive, politically motivated stereotypes. Our selection of films reflects Liu Shiming's artistic philosophy, focusing on the art itself and the complexity and genuine of personal histories.

*Ume* centers on the story of a 17-year-old Japanese American girl living in New York City, who faces an inner struggle with the decision of abortion, grappling with the associated stigma, guilt, and fear of disappointment. Employing surrealistic elements, the film transforms Ume's arms into wings, symbolizing her transcendence of societal and existential constraints. *Muted* presents the story of Jessica, a Chinese American high school girl who, under immense academic pressure, turns to pills to enhance her study performance. Her actions not only threaten her friendships but also explore her tumultuous relationship with her mother. *Blue Desert* is a long letter to the filmmaker's mother. The filmmaker offers a poignant memory on her relationship with her mother, conveyed through a calm, introspective narration that weaves together reflections, guiding the audience on a meditative journey between past and present, dreams and reality.

These three short films reveal the multifaceted challenges women face within the intersecting realms of society, school, and family. They critically examine the social norms, emotional expectations, and prescribed behaviors that arise from these interactions. Whether depicting a young woman's struggle against societal expectations, a girl's disorientation in the pursuit of perfection amidst academic and familial pressures, or the intricate interplay of familial and personal histories between a girl and her mother, these films transcend simplistic identity categorizations. Through their nuanced storytelling, they invite the audience into the complex feelings women navigate—fear, stigma, anxiety, heartbreak, resilience, introspection, and tenderness. We hope that viewers will recognize the strength embodied by these female protagonists—a strength that flows like an

undercurrent beneath the rigid structures of social discourse, carrying with it the surging emotions and varied social roles that women inhabit across different spheres of life.