

Queer Asian Narratives

Karen Remoto, Hazim Ismail



The intersections of Asian and queer storytelling, trans experiences are often neglected as niche or exoticized into objectification, but there are and there have been powerful and influential entries we can draw from for guidance and inspiration.

This resource provides a glimpse into the complexities and expansiveness of queer, trans Asian narratives in film formats.

1930s-1980s

Japanese Girls at the Bar 1933 Hiroshi Shimizu JAPAN, LESBIAN
Farewell to Spring 1959 Keisuke Kinoshita JAPAN, GAY
An Actor's Revenge 1963 Kon Ichikawa JAPAN
The Love Eterne 1963 Li Han-Hsiang HONG KONG,
Black Lizard 1968 Kinji Fukasaku JAPAN,
Funeral Parade of Roses 1969 Toshio Matsumoto JAPAN, TRANS/GAY
Badman Basti 1971 Prem Kapoor INDIA, GAY/BISEXUAL
Intimate Confessions of a Chinese Courtesan (1972) Chor Yuan HONG KONG,
LESBIAN
The Pollen of Flowers (1972) Ha Gil-jong KOREAN, BISEXUAL/GAY
Ascetic (1976) Kim Su-hyeong KOREAN, LESBIAN
My Father, My Mother 1978 Lino Brocka Badnam PHILIPPINES, GAY
Manila by Night 1980 Ishmael Bernal PHILIPPINES, GAY/LESBIAN
Orientations: Lesbian & Gay Asians 1984 Richard Fung DOCUMENTARY
Last Romance 1988 Yonfan HONG KONG/CHINA, LESBIAN
Sa Bang-ji 1988 Song Gyeong-sik INTERSEX (first interpretation, softcore
problematic?)
Summer Vacation 1999 1988 Shusuke Kaneko JAPAN, GAY
Tetsuo: The Iron Man 1989 Shinya Tsukamoto JAPAN

Key Films



China releases *Song of Midnight*, its first horror film, a film featuring male-male intimacy



Japan Releases *Funeral Parade of Roses*, with its portrayal of drag queens and Japanese gay men influencing contemporary queer culture



Despite Marcos-era censorship, The Philippines releases *The Masseur/Mababangong Bangungot* featuring a gay sex worker



1990s

The 1990s saw an increase in the incorporation of camp into film, as a way to subvert colonial era restrictions on gender and sexual identity. Hong Kong film industries utilized camp to expand its reach beyond Asian filmgoers.



1990s

Green Snake 1993 Tsui Hark

The Wedding Banquet 1993 Ang Lee CHINA, GAY

Farewell My Concubine 1993 Chen Kaige CHINA

Shinjuku Boys 1995 Kim Longinotto, Jano Williams JAPAN, DOCUMENTARY

Like Grains of Sand 1995 Ryosuke Hashiguchi JAPAN, GAY

Bugis Street 1995 Yonfan HONG KONG, GAY

Broken Branches 1996 Park Jae-ho KOREA, GAY

Fire 1996 Deepa Mehta INDIAN-CANADIAN, LESBIAN

East Palace, West Palace 1996 Zhang Yuan CHINA, GAY

The River 1997 Tsai Ming-liang TAIWAN, GAY

Happy Together 1997 Wong Kar-Wai CHINA, GAY

Murmur of Youth 1997 Lin Cheng-sheng TAIWAN, LESBIAN

Revolutionary Girl Utena 1997 Toru Takahashi, Shingo Kaneko JAPAN, LESBIAN

Bishonen 1998 Yonfan, Hong Kong, GAY

Memento Mori 1999 Min Kyu-dong, Kim Tae-yong KOREAN, LESBIAN

Chutney Popcorn (1999) Nisha Ganatra INDIA, LESBIAN

Revolutionary Girl Utena The Movie (1999) Kunihiro Ikumura JAPAN, LESBIAN

Taboo 1999 Nagisa Ōshima, JAPAN



2000s

Bukak Api 2000 Osman Ali MALAYSIA, TRANS
Markova Comfort Gay 2000 Gil Portes PHILIPPINES
Hush! 2001 Ryosuke Hashiguchi JAPAN, GAY
Lan Yu 2001 Stanley Kwan Kam-Pang CHINA, GAY
Fish And Elephant (2001) Li Yu DOCUMENTARY (CHINA)
Waterboys 2001 Shinobu Yaguchi JAPAN, GAY
Blue 2002 Hiroshi Ando JAPAN, LESBIAN
Blue Gate Crossing 2002 Yee Chih-yen, TAIWAN
So Close 2002 Corey Yuen Kwai CHINA, LESBIAN
Road Movie 2002 Kim In-shik KOREAN,
Goodbye, Dragon Inn 2003 Tsai Ming-liang
Beautiful Boxer 2003 Ekachai Uekrongtham THAILAND, TRANS
Tokyo Godfathers 2003 Satoshi Kon JAPAN, TRANS
Saving Face 2004 Alice Wu CHINESE-AMERICAN, LESBIAN
Tropical Malady 2004 Apichatpong Weerasethakul THAILAND, GAY
Cutie Honey 2004 Hideaki Anno JAPAN, GAY
Kamikaze Girls 2004 Tetsuya Nakashima JAPAN, LESBIAN
House of Himiko 2005 Isshin Inudo JAPAN, GAY
The King and the Clown 2005 Lee Joon-ik KOREAN, GAY
The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros 2005 Auraeus Solito PHILIPPINES, GAY



2000s

I Don't Want to Sleep Alone 2006 Tsai Ming-liang, TAIWAN

Love of Siam 2007 Chookiat Sakveerakul THAILAND, GAY

Queer China, Comrade China 2008 Cui Zi'en DOCUMENTARY (CHINA)

Madame 2010 Qiu Jiongjiong CHINA, TRANS

Memories in March 2010 Sanjoy Nag INDIA, GAY

Yes or No (2010), Sarasawadee Wongsompetc, THAILAND, LESBIAN

Common Gender 2012 Norman Robin BANGLADESH

Golden Gate Girls 2013 S. Louisa Wei DOCUMENTARY

Lilting 2014 Hong Khaou CHINESE-CAMBODIAN, GAY

In the Absence of the Sun 2014 Lucky Kuswandi INDONESIA, LESBIAN

Margarita with a Straw 2015 Shonali Bose INDIA, BISEXUAL

Our Love Story 2016 Lee Hyun-ju KOREAN, LESBIAN

The Handmaiden 2016 Park Chan-wok KOREAN, LESBIAN

Weekends 2016 Lee Dong-ha, KOREAN, DOCUMENTARY

Kapoor & Sons 2016 Shakun Batra, INDIA, GAY

Re:Orientations 2016 Richard Fung

Alifu, The Princess 2017 Wang Yu-lin

Troublers 2017 Lee Young KOREAN, DOCUMENTARY

Malila: The Farewell Flower (2017) Anucha Boonyawatana, THAILAND, GAY

Of Love and Law 2017 Hikaru Toda, JAPAN, DOCUMENTARY

Close-Knit 2017 Naoko Ogigami, JAPAN, TRANS

Dear Ex 2018 Mag Hsu Chih-yen Hsu, CHINA, GAY

Our Body 2018 Han Ka-ram, KOREAN, LESBIAN

Call Her Ganda 2018 PJ Raval DOCUMENTARY

Billie & Emma 2018 Samantha Lee, PHILIPPINES, LESBIAN

Song Lang 2018 Leon Le VIETNAM,

A Bride for Rip Van Winkle 2019 Shunji Iwami, JAPAN, LESBIAN

Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga 2019 Shelly Chopra Dhar, INDIA, LESBIAN

How Queer, Trans Asian Narratives Shape Larger Perceptions of Asian-ness



- Historically, Asians in Western media were often portrayed as either desexualized, obedient, or hyper-fetishized.
- Queer and trans Asian films (e.g., *The Wedding Banquet*, *Happy Together*, *Funeral Parade of Roses*) disrupted that by presenting Asians as complex, desiring subjects — not just stereotypes.
- This allowed Asians to be seen as multidimensional, grappling with love, intimacy, identity, and family in ways that resist simplistic portrayals.



- Within Asia, queer/trans films often acted as mirrors for local societies, sparking debates about gender, sexuality, and family.
- For example, in Taiwan, *The Wedding Banquet* sparked conversations about filial piety and same-sex relationships
- Representation encouraged some Asian societies to re-examine their own traditions of gender fluidity (e.g., hijra in South Asia, bakla in the Philippines, kathoey in Thailand), which had been suppressed by colonial and heteronormative frameworks.