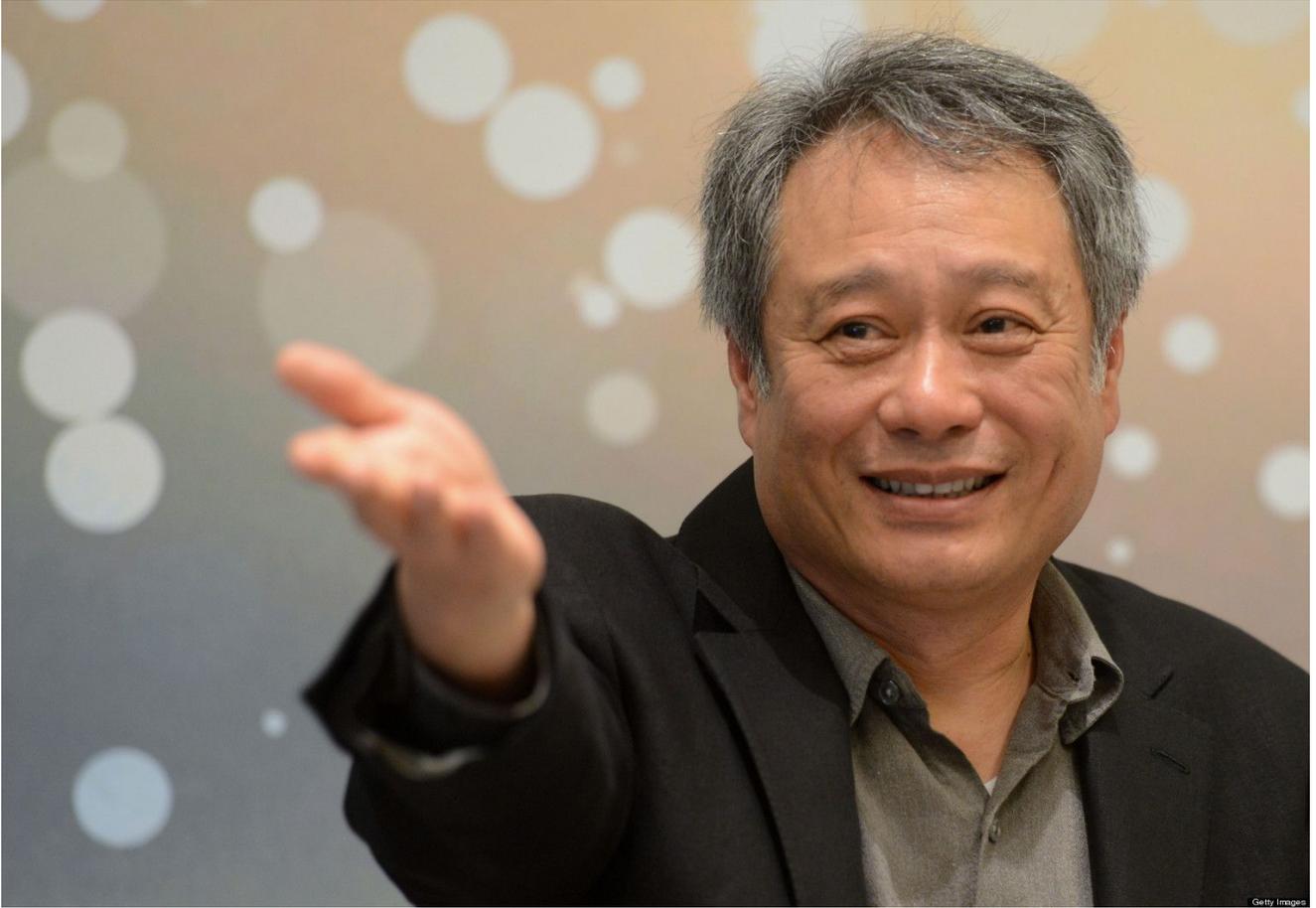


THROUGH HIS FATHER'S EYES: THE ANG LEE STORY

A Feature Film Pitch by Phillip Alan Epps



THROUGH HIS FATHER'S EYES, a feature-length biopic, portrays famed Taiwanese director Ang Lee's childhood influences and artistic rebellions, beginning with a based-on-a-true-story portrayal of his *father's* trauma and forced exile from China to Taiwan in 1949 after witnessing his parents' execution by troops loyal to Mao during the Chinese civil war; his father's passion for Chinese classics including Confucianism, calligraphy and literature, as well as being Ang's own overbearing teacher / principal in an elite southern Taiwan high school. The story of Ang Lee is the story of Taiwan and the story of Taiwan is the story of the birth of modern China. *Partial screenplay available.*

Chronology:

1959 -- Hualien City, Taiwan

A young boy, 5, looks up at his father's hands and face in admiration and awe. His father, SHENG LEE, 46, uses a wide wood-handled brush thickly saturated with oozing black ink. The classic Chinese calligraphic characters resemble flying figures blown upward and outward in a flurry of jet-black trailing wisps and swaths. The boy senses the emotional intensity of his father's work. He dares not speak or move. He looks from his father's face to his hands to the canvas and back again in wide-eyed wonder.

His father, all emotional intensity, brusquely puts down the brush and walks outside the simple Quonset-style shed to smoke a cigarette in the blistering sun, leaving ANG LEE, his young first-born son, alone in the cramped, converted studio. There is a strong sooty odor of ink called lampblack. Cicada chirp loudly, hypnotically. There is only the open door and a small high window in the back that unsuccessfully cools the room. It is stifling. ANG, staring distantly at his father's half-finished calligraphy, goes into daydream mode.

Young ANG happily walks on a long white sand beach with mother, YANGSI LEE, 33, a lovely, bright, adoring Chinese woman. Mountains rise in the background. Fishing boats dot the ocean's horizon. Mother's love and devotion is total for her son but she usually has to compensate for her husband's general iciness and impatience with his students and own son. Father is eternally stressed by work, which is less as a teacher than a Mandarin-language enforcer during the Kuomintang's oppressive first decade on the island, fining and shaming young Taiwanese students from speaking their native dialect and forcing them to wear a sign showcasing their error.

1965 -- Tainan, Taiwan

Escaping the summer heat and monotony, ANG, 11, sits alone but in full comfort in the huge, ornate, air-conditioned Chin Men Theatre in downtown Tainan, regularly skipping out on weekend sports and family activities, watching 'Dr Zhivago' in utter fascination. Father shows increasing frustration with ANG's study habits... public and private shame envelopes his life as he is ANG's teacher and later principal at elite Tainan First Senior High School. Campus has studious air of a university. ANG begins to exhibit non-traditional Chinese cultural behaviors, joins tight clique of quirky outcast friends brazenly shunning the mainstream, eliciting moments of alienation, marginalization, repression. Increasingly distant from family leading to FATHER's uncontrolled rage...

1971 -- Banciao, Taipei County, Taiwan

ANG, 17, Finally graduates from high school even with substandard math but twice fails routine university entrance exams; suffers depression, further alienation, fights with father, mother urges him to look to heart for answer of life's work, his solution is to leave home and enter the drama department at National Taiwan University of the Arts in Panciao, Taipei County, to study acting - against his FATHER'S wishes.

1979 -- Chicago, Illinois

ANG, 25, yearning for greater opportunity and of course freedom, leaves Taiwan, to attend the University of Illinois, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theater.

BIO:

Born in 1954 in Pingtung, Taiwan, Ang Lee has become one of today's greatest contemporary filmmakers. Ang graduated from the National Taiwan College of Arts in 1975 and then came to the U.S. to receive a B.F.A. Degree in Theatre/Theater Direction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a Masters Degree in Film Production at New York University. At NYU, he

served as Assistant Director on Spike Lee's student film, *Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads* (1983). After Lee wrote a couple of screenplays, he eventually appeared on the film scene with *Tui shou* (1992) (aka *Pushing Hands*), a dramatic-comedy reflecting on generational conflicts and cultural adaptation, centering on the metaphor of the grandfather's Tai-Chi technique of "Pushing Hands". *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) (aka *The Wedding Banquet*) was Lee's next film, an exploration of cultural and generational conflicts through a homosexual Taiwanese man who feigns a marriage in order to satisfy the traditional demands of his Taiwanese parents. It garnered Golden Globe and Oscar nominations, and won a Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. The third movie in his trilogy of Taiwanese-Culture/Generation films, all of them featuring his patriarch figure Sihung Lung, was *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994) (aka *Eat Drink Man Woman*), which received a Best Foreign Film Oscar nomination. Lee followed this with *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), his first Hollywood-mainstream movie. It acquired a Best Picture Oscar nomination, and won Best Adapted Screenplay, for the film's screenwriter and lead actress, Emma Thompson. Lee was also voted the year's Best Director by the National Board of Review and the New York Film Critics Circle. Lee and frequent collaborator James Schamus next filmed *The Ice Storm* (1997), an adaptation of Rick Moody's novel involving 1970s New England suburbia. The movie acquired the 1997 Best Screenplay at Cannes for screenwriter James Schamus, among other accolades. The Civil War drama *Ride with the Devil* (1999) soon followed and received critical praise, but it was Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) (aka *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) that is considered one of his greatest works, a sprawling period film and martial-arts epic that dealt with love, loyalty and loss. It swept the Oscar nominations, eventually winning Best Foreign Language Film, as well as Best Director at the Golden Globes, and became the highest grossing foreign-language film ever released in America. Lee then filmed the comic-book adaptation, *Hulk* (2003) - an elegantly and skillfully made film with nice action scenes. Lee has also shot a short film - *Chosen* (2001) (aka *Hire, The Chosen*) - and most recently won the 2005 Best Director Academy Award for *Brokeback Mountain*(2005), a film based on a short story by Annie Proulx. In 2012 Lee directed *Life of Pi* which earned 11 Academy Award nominations and went on to win the Academy Award for Best Director. In 2013 Ang Lee was selected as a member of the main competition jury at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival. -- IMDB