

Old films get new life

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A trove of orphaned 35mm Hong Kong films salvaged from the basement of what is now Toronto's Royal Cinema has gotten a new lease on life.

Contemporary Asian-Canadian artists Cindy Mochizuki, Daichi Saïto, soJin Chun and Louise Noguchi created four new installations using snippets of the incomplete and decaying films. The result is the exhibition, *Lost Secrets of the Royal*, which opens on Wednesday and runs until Dec. 11 at Blackwood Gallery, located at University of Toronto Mississauga.

"The artists were invited to produce new works that could challenge the source material and break with overtly didactic collage-based composition," said Ben Donoghue, who co-curated the exhibition with Heather Keung. The project was commissioned by the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto and the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival. The collection of films, which includes period dramas, comedies, martial arts and pink films (a style of Japanese softcore pornographic film), was donated by Colin Geddes, whose only stipulation was that they become the source for transformation into new works.

Saïto, for instance, appropriated a fragment of a 1970s' kung fu film, *Never a Foot Too Far, Even*, to create a movie without action. Presented as a double projection with two 16mm film projectors and loopers, the chemically and optically manipulated images are overlaid to form a single composition.

Paranormal phenomena are common in Asian films, literature and popular culture. Mochizuki's interactive, animated and sound-based installation, *Yokai & Other Spirits*, repeats a key moment in the 35mm film, *Happy Ghost 3*, when the lead ghost calls "home" through various phone booths throughout the city.

"The work uses the presence of audience members to trigger the projections and sounds; without their actions, the film lies unseen and unheard, leaving only the stark presence of the scenic and museological props," explains the curatorial statement.

Snake's Shadow, by Noguchi, is a video installation that fills three walls with an intricately executed sequence of dance and motion composed from high-definition scans of 35mm CinemaScope action films.

The fragments of fight scenes are recomposed with a newly commissioned soundtrack into a dizzying mix of movement and light.

In *Officer Tuba Meets the Happy Ghost*, Chun digitally combines characters taken from two Hong Kong films with Super 8mm film footage shot in São Paulo and Toronto.

"Pulled from their Hong Kong settings, these characters are recast as Koreans, playing with western perceptions of Asian identity. The ruptures and continuity of culture within diasporic communities frame these figures displaced in time, space, language and culture," notes the curatorial statement.

The artists will give a talk about their installations on Saturday, at 3 p.m., at A Space Gallery, 401 Richmond St.



On display. Cindy Mochizuki's *Yokai & Other Spirits* is among four installations in *Lost Secrets of the Royal*, an exhibition opening Wednesday at Blackwood Gallery at University of Toronto Mississauga. *Supplied photo*

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