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FUNAN

SYNOPSIS

Cambodia, April 1975. Chou is a young woman whose everyday world is suddenly upended by the arrival of the Khmer Rouge regime. During the chaos of the forced exile from their home, Chou and her husband are separated from their 4-year-old son, who has been sent to an unknown location. As she navigates her new reality, working in the fields day and night under the careful watch of soldiers, and surviving the small indignities and harrowing realities of the increasingly grim work camps, Chou remains steadfast in her determination to reunite her family – even if it means risking everything. Winner of the top prizes at the Annecy Animation Festival and the Animation is Film Festival, *Funan* is a searing and remarkable debut from filmmaker Denis Do, who uses his own family history as inspiration for a thrilling story of love, loss and enduring hope in the most trying of times. Featuring the voices of Bérénice Bejo (*The Artist*) and Louis Garrel (*The Dreamers*).





CAST & CREW

Director: Denis Do

Cast:

Bérénice Bejo
Louis Garrel

Script:

Denis Do
Magali Pouzol

Art Director: Michael Crouzat

Original Soundtrack: Thibault Kientz Agyeman

Producers

Sébastien Onomo
Annemie Degryse
Louise Génis Cosserat
Justin Stewart

Running Time: 84 minutes

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/ Pedri Animation - 2018





HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The story told in Funan unfolds in Cambodia immediately after the Khmer Rouge coup on April 17th 1975.

An authoritative state is brought forth under the leadership of “Angkar” (meaning “the organisation”). The revolution is brutal and justice is forsaken, transforming the country into the communist idea of a perfect society. City-dwellers are forced to work the land. Young minds are brainwashed with propaganda. The country shelters itself from foreign influences and exchanges, especially from the “imperialist” West. Intellectuals and well-educated people are murdered.

Paranoia grows, like in any autocratic state, leading to the killing of those considered to be traitors. This takeover and this revolution crushed the hopes carried by the recent rebirth of the Cambodian culture, its economy and industry. A golden era suddenly turned into the darkest nightmare.

The regime will cause between 1.7 and 2 million victims. An additional half a million will manage to go into exile.





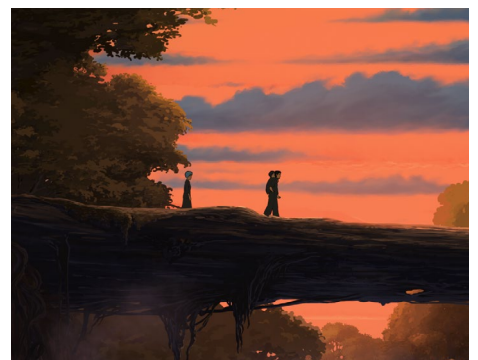
DENIS DO | DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Funan is the story of a family. Of a woman... My mother.

This movie recounts her sacrifices, her heartbreak, and her survival under the Khmer Rouge. Through this story, I wish to explore feelings, relationships, the whole complexity of human connection in a context of extreme oppression. Good and evil is not the point. The movie immerses us into the lives of normal people, exhausted by suffering.

It doesn't judge nor blame, it tries to understand. Because understanding is the first step on a long road to forgiveness. We did not intend to talk about the political context of the time, and turn this film into a history lesson. Certain elements are obviously integrated, quoted and expressed, and contribute to the reading of the film. But altogether the historical-political information remains succinct. The documentation on this period exists and the film urges to get involved in it. Isn't a film also a half-open door that invites you to push it wide open?

As for me, this film is completely anchored in my research on the past. It allows me to question a memory that I have fantasized or rejected. Knowing that you are, in a way, the product of this type of event inevitably brings its share of questions and challenges. I deliberately avoid the term "trauma" which I find difficult to bear. There is a form of guilt about not having experienced this with one's family. *Funan* allowed me to reconstruct characters and their lives from my mother's testimony. This creative process got me into the characters to experience a little with them all they went through.





I've chosen animation as it is a passion of mine. But I also prefer to see my mother drawn rather than played by a real actress, because that implies more universality. The heroine of *Funan* is Cambodian, but first and foremost a woman. A mother.

Animation is an ideal medium to captivate the audience by giving them perspective from reality. The film is realistic while preserving space for interpretation. In subtle ways, it will provoke, and evoke. I wanted the staging to be sober. With its calm atmospheres and the immensity of the Cambodian landscapes, *Funan* dives into interiority and conveys the paradoxes of the character's souls. Their tortured spirits contrast with the peaceful and various landscapes. *Funan* tells the story of a country and a culture that is rich yet starving and barbaric. Pure, magnificent, with large open spaces, torn apart by violence, and the uproar of revolution. In my opinion, Cambodia resembles a woman. Beautiful within its nature, its essence and its sensuality. *Funan* will pay tribute to it. To its people too, who lost everything but still exist, thanks to their determination and faith in life. I wish *Funan* to be not "only" an animated film, but a film, full stop.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Denis Do is a director born in Paris in 1985. He has a passion for images and drawing, and graduated in 2009 from the Gobelins school of images. The Ribbon, the graduation film he co-directed that is about a love story during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, reinforced his desire for cinema. *Funan*, a family story set during the Khmer Rouge period, and inspired by his own mother's journey, is his first feature film. His stories, set at a human scale, are inspired by his triple Franco-Sino-Cambodian culture and are intimate and strong. They anchor the small story in the big one through a sober and realistic staging.





ABOUT GKIDS

GKIDS is a distributor of award-winning feature animation for both adult and family audiences. The company has scored eleven Best Animated Feature Academy Award® nominations – the most for an independent distributor – with these acclaimed films:

- *The Secret of Kells* (2010)
- *A Cat in Paris* (2012)
- *Chico & Rita* (2012)
- *Ernest & Celestine* (2014)
- *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* (2015)
- *Song of the Sea* (2015)
- *Boy and the World* (2016)
- *When Marnie Was There* (2016)
- *My Life As A Zucchini* (2017)
- *The Breadwinner* (2018)
- *Mirai* (2019)

GKIDS also handles North American theatrical distribution for the Studio Ghibli library of films, one of the world's most coveted animation collections with titles *Spirited Away*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Howl's Moving Castle* and others.

www.gkids.com    [@gkidsfilms](https://www.instagram.com/gkidsfilms)

www.FunanMovie.com