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MEDIA ALERT
4 November 2024



Image: *The House of Janus* title in the official trailer

T:>Works Presents: The House of Janus at the 35th Singapore International Film Festival

04 November 2024 — T:>Works is honoured to announce **The House of Janus**, a creative documentary by **T:>Works Artistic Director Ong Keng Sen**, as an official selection and world premiere at the **35th Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF)**. Categorized under SGIFF's *Undercurrent* section, which showcases bold, experimental works that trace uncharted territories in cinema, *The House of Janus* invites audiences to explore the limitless possibilities of cinematic storytelling.

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The House of Janus captures the essence of life, love, and mortality against Bettona’s rolling hills. Inspired by Henry Purcell’s 1689 opera Dido and Aeneas, the film follows the protagonist Adriaan as he faces the unyielding passage of time in his beloved Casa Giano, or “House of Janus,” a house he conceived, designed, and built.

Ong Keng Sen describes The House of Janus as a “creative documentary”, a love story between a human and a house that parallels the love of Aeneas for Queen Dido. Little is developed about Aeneas in the opera Dido & Aeneas. The original opera takes the perspective of Dido who is abandoned. Going back further in time, many historians say that the relationship is a fiction first created by Virgil in his Latin epic Aeneid (29 – 19 B.C.), although it is likely that Dido did exist and founded Carthago (modern day Tunisia).

The film reflects on Adriaan’s experiences, projecting beyond ephemeral human life into non-human existences and the “eternal” sun, which may one day burn out. *“It is a full circle to return to the fleeting time in the film to discuss the transience of life, the remains of personal actions, and what permanence is,”* Ong says, noting this is his second film after a 28-year hiatus from the commercial film industry with Army Daze (1996).

The world premiere of The House of Janus (rated PG13 for some mature content) will take place on Sunday 1 December, at 7:30 PM at Golden Village Cineleisure, Hall 2. It will include a Q&A session with the filmmakers, allowing audiences to explore the film’s creative process and thematic nuances. A second screening will be at **Filmgarde Kallang, Hall 3 on 6 December, Friday at 5:00 PM.**

Watch the trailer [here](#). For more film stills, please [click here](#).

Link to SGIFF ticketing for The House of Janus [here](#).

The House of Janus will be screened as part of a Double Bill with a short film, File:\New_Order\Normal_Life\Fire_Island.

For media enquiries and interviews, please contact:

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Annex A: The House of Janus Synopsis

A summer vacation listening to the opera of love, *Dido and Aeneas*, drifting into daydream and nightmare. Adriaan is ninety years old and in his golden hour. The inevitable will come to pass, he will have to leave his beloved House of Janus behind.

This meditation on past and future evokes the threshold of two-faced Etruscan god Janus. The face of life and the face of death. The film opens towards different existences, non-human and human, living frailties and non-living eternities.

Annex B: The House of Janus Credits

Keng Sen Ong Director

Adriaan van der Staay, Keng Sen Ong Writers

Camille Lacadee Director of Photography and Editing

Gabor Csongradi Composer, Sound Editor & Sound Recordist

Shahzad Rahmani Set designer

Joseph Wegmann Lighting designer

Michael(a) Daoud Costume, Hair and Make-up Designer

Alice Faucher Associate Set Designer

Alicia Agustin Production Manager

Desiree Pfenninger Film Colorist

Cast

Thomas Michael Allen Cast - "The Unloved One"

Michael(a) Daoud Cast - "Death"

Keng Sen Ong Cast - "Kengie"

Adriaan van der Staay Cast - "Adriaan"

Traslin Ong Producer

T>Works Singapore Executive Producer

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Annex C: Director's Statement

This creative documentary is about the life of 91-year-old Adriaan van der Staay, the Rotterdam Art Foundation Director who initiated Rotterdam Film International, the precursor of International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR). It's a specific part of his life about a house he conceived, designed, and built. Filmed entirely on location in Casa Giano (The House of Janus), the film's approach has been to parallel Adriaan's love for the house with the 1689 opera DIDO AND AENEAS composed by Henry Purcell.

Like Aeneas, Adriaan will be unable to bring his love into the future and will have to leave his beloved house behind. In this creative documentary, I harness the potentiality of Aeneas, undeveloped in the mythical opera, to project beyond ephemeral human life into non-human existences and the "eternal" sun which may burn out. The film also has echoes of the Aids epidemic, which affected Adriaan profoundly in the 1990s.

This is only the second film I have made after 28 years. In 1996, I felt disempowered by the commercial film studio and cinema distribution system. My first film, Army Daze, was a commercial hit grossing S\$1.6mil (approximately 1 million euros today), but it was not my life. I decided to move away from film-making as a young director. Performance allowed me to experiment intensely with opera, dance, time-based live art, installation, film, literature, and discourse. I was attracted to the disappearance of performance, for it was a challenge to preserve.

Today, the world is transformed with different uncertainties. I return to film with The House of Janus, a passion project, with all the confidence of my hybrid oeuvre to make the film that I want. It is a full circle to return to the fleeting time in film to discuss the transience of life, the remains of personal actions, and what permanence is.

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Annex D: About Dr. Ong Keng Sen and T:>Works

About Dr. Ong Keng Sen

Keng Sen Ong is primarily a live performance maker, working in transdisciplinary hybrid forms including live expanded cinema. He is a curator of international artistic processes, and artistic director of T:>Works and artspace 72-13 in Singapore. He has been developing internationally acclaimed live performance productions for many years. His productions have been seen in major performance venues around the world, the latest being Trojan Women which played BAM Next Wave Festival in New York (2022) and Edinburgh International Festival (2023).

He was the artistic director of the Amsterdam-based Prince Claus Funds’ digital 25-hour festival to commemorate 25 years of work with Global South cultural innovators, as well as its inaugural biennial symposium in Colombo, Sri Lanka (December 2023) which he entitled “Legacies of Care, Failures, and Emerging Solidarities”. He holds a Ph.D. in Performance Studies from Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.

About T:>Works

Established in 1985, T:>Works is an independent and international arts company based in Singapore at its space, 72-13. It is currently led by Artistic Director, Dr. Ong Keng Sen. T:>Works’ mission and vision are the pioneering of thought leadership in the arts focused on transdisciplinary, transcultural, and inclusive processes. To this end, there is a strong educational perspective with research and discourse contextualising histories, contemporary experiences, and situated art practices of the global south. T:>Works also serves to investigate the current urgencies of being located in Singapore, and larger Asia, through different creative expressions in the public sphere. It is a recipient of the National Arts Council Major Company Grant from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2025. T:>Works is an Institute of Public Character with charity status.
