

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
October 1996

Contact: Graham Leggat
212/708-9752

POSTWAR MASTERWORKS RECEIVE NEW YORK PREMIERES IN THE FIRST MAJOR U.S. SERIES DEVOTED TO KOREAN CINEMA

**Featured Directors Will Introduce Their Films
in Person on November 21**

***Three Korean Master Filmmakers:*
Shin Sang-Ok, Yu Hyun-Mok, and Im Kwon-Taek
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1
November 21–December 6, 1996**

Although South Korean films have made occasional, well-received appearances at European and American film festivals over the past thirty years, they are generally unknown here. Beginning Thursday, November 21, The Museum of Modern Art presents ***Three Korean Master Filmmakers: Shin Sang-Ok, Yu Hyun-Mok, and Im Kwon-Taek***, a groundbreaking exploration of this energetic and sophisticated national cinema and the first major film series in the United States devoted to Korean film.

Shin, Yu, and Im will all be present on November 21, the first day of the series, to introduce *My Mother's Tenant* (1961), *Daughters of the Pharmacist Kim* (1964), and *Sopyonje* (1993), respectively. The series closes December 6.

Postwar Korean cinema has evolved amid turbulent social and political realities. The work of the three filmmakers in this series offers acute, subtle reflection and commentary on this period and on the difficult metamorphoses of Korean society over the course of the twentieth century. Directors Shin, Yu, and Im were chosen for their considerable influence

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on Korean film in the decades since 1960, through the military regimes of the sixties and seventies to the relatively more relaxed conditions of the late eighties and nineties.

"We are honored to introduce to American audiences not only three major Asian filmmakers but also three filmmakers who are among the finest in international cinema," says Laurence Kardish, Curator and Coordinator of Film Exhibitions, Department of Film and Video, who organized the series.

Shin Sang-Ok (born 1926) is South Korea's most controversial filmmaker. In 1978, after heading his own studio and making some eighty films since his 1952 debut, he disappeared and resurfaced in North Korea. Eight years later, Shin (now Simon Sheen) made his way to Hollywood, where he has produced *The Three Ninjas* and its two sequels.

Shin is best known for *My Mother's Tenant*, a subtle work of longing in which a young widow—the popular actress Choi Un-Hui, who is Shin's wife—is torn between her love for a visiting painter and the social codes that would deny this love. Other acclaimed works by Shin in the series are *Sam Ryong, the Deaf* (1964), a folktale from the feudal days of the early 1900s; *Dream* (1965), based on a thousand-year-old fable of a libidinous Buddhist monk; *The Cruel Destiny of the Women of the Yi Dynasty* (1969), about the dynasty that lasted from 1393 to 1910; and *Eunuch* (1968), an action film about a young man in love with the consort of the thirteenth Yi king.

Yu Hyun-Mok (born 1925) has made more than forty films since his debut in 1955, including what may be considered the earliest of Korea's "New Wave" films, the powerful *Obaltan (The Aimless Bullet)* (1961). A story of life in impoverished postwar Korea, it movingly captures the hopelessness and despair shared by many Koreans at the time.

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Other works by Yu in the series are *Daughters of the Pharmacist Kim*, a family saga spanning six centuries; *Martyr* (1965), based on Korean-American Richard E. Kim's eponymous novel, about an incident in North Korea involving Christian ministers and the military; *Rainy Days* (1979), in which a family contends with the approach of the Korean war in 1952; and *Son of Man* (1980), a contemporary murder mystery.

Im Kwon-Taek (born 1936) made his first feature in 1962 and has since directed more than ninety films, including *Sopyonje*, which drew record audiences domestically and was the first Korean feature film acquired by The Museum of Modern Art's film archive. *Sopyonje* is a haunting saga of three rootless people brought together by p'ansori (traditional Korean musical storytelling).

Im's other films in the series are *Daughter of the Flame* (1983), about a young man struggling to choose between Christianity and his shaman heritage; *Gilsodom* (1985), the tale of a family trying to reunite following the postwar partitioning of North and South Korea; *Adada* (1987), a study of an arranged marriage; and *Ticket* (1986), based on newspaper reports, which portrays life in a coastal tea shop where the waitresses also work as prostitutes.

Three Korean Master Filmmakers is presented in association with the Korean Cultural Service, New York, and with the help of Open Work, a New York organization that promotes Korean artists. The program is presented with the support of the Korean Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Korean Motion Picture Promotion Company, and the Korean Film Archives in Seoul.

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You are cordially invited to press screenings for

Three Korean Master Filmmakers
Shin Sang-Ok, Yu Hyun-Mok, and Im Kwon-Taek

Friday, November 8, 1996
 The Warner Communications Screening Room, 5th Floor
 The Museum of Modern Art

- 10:00 *My Mother's Tenant*. 1961. South Korea. Shin Sang-Ok. With Kim Chin-Yu, Choi Un-Hui, Han Yu-Jin. In Korean, English subtitles. 103 min. A subtle work of longing in which a young widow (Choi) is torn between her love for a visiting painter and the accepted social codes that would deny this love.
- 12:00 *Sopyonje*. 1993. South Korea. Im Kwon-Taek. With Kim Myung-Gon, Oh Jung-Hae, Kim Kyu-Chul. In Korean, English subtitles. 112 min. A haunting saga of three rootless people brought together by p'ansori, traditional Korean musical storytelling.
- 2:00 Break
- 3:00 *Obaltan (The Aimless Bullet)*. 1961. South Korea. Yu Hyun-Mok. With Kim Chin-Kyu, Choi Mu-Ryong, Suh Ae-Ja. In Korean, English subtitles. 105 min. This tale of life in impoverished postwar Korea movingly captures the hopelessness and despair shared by many Koreans at the time.

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