



LAST NIGHT I SAW YOU SMILING

ឃុំសិល្បៈរៀនដីល្ងាចនក្លែង

DIRECTED BY KAVICH NEANG



Anti-Archive
#83A, St. 93
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Phnom Penh, Cambodia
www.antiarchive.com

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

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LAST NIGHT I SAW YOU SMILING

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

77 minutes, Color, DCP, 1.85 : 1, Dolby 5.1

WITH OFFICIAL SUPPORT FROM

Asian Network of Documentary Fund

Asian Cinema Fund

Busan International Film Festival

Cambodia Film Commission

Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Arts

Koneen Säätiö

Purin Pictures Post-Production Fund

Talents Tokyo Next Masters Support International Promotion Fund

White Light Studios

PRINCIPAL CAST

Chhunat Pok

Kimleang So

Thida Nop

Rany Bo

Sophanara Dy

Sandap Suos

Sithul leng

Brosleap Chet (C-Leap)

Sokha Hun

Dyda Pok

Sody Neang

Visal Neang

PRODUCERS

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NETPAC AWARD WINNER
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM
2019





CREW

DIRECTOR & CINEMATOGRAPHER
Kavich Neang

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
Ulla Simonen
Niels Pagh Andersen

EDITOR
Félix Rehm

SOUND DESIGNER &
MUSIC COMPOSER
Vincent Villa

POST-PRODUCTION
White Light Post Co., Ltd.

COLORIST
Nuttacha Khajornkaitsakul

PRODUCERS
Davy Chou, Daniel Mattes
(Anti-Archive, Cambodia)
Marine Arrighi de Casanova
(Apsara Films, France)

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS
Steve Chen
Park Sungho

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Danech San

SOUND RECORDISTS
Sokha Hun
Sarith En

POST-PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR
Lee Chatametikool

FOLEY & FINAL MIX STUDIO
Kantana Sound Studio Co., Ltd.







The White Building, an iconic structure home to 493 families in Phnom Penh, faces demolition. In the building's final days, director Kavich Neang follows his own family and neighbors as they pack belongings, share memories and anxieties, and eventually move out before the building's total destruction.

SYNOPSIS

One decade after Cambodia's independence and amid a movement of New Khmer Architecture, Cambodian architect Lu Bun Hap and Soviet architect Vladimir Bodiansky constructed the Municipal Apartments, also known as the White Building. The housing block bore witness to a tremendous series of events: the young nation's Golden Age; a traumatic breakdown under a radical regime; decades of cultural revival centered within its walls; and, the rapid pace of capitalist development that would ultimately lead to its demise.

When director Kavich Neang learns the 493 families of the White Building, an architectural landmark in Phnom Penh where he lived since birth, have agreed to vacate for a condo development, he decides to document the last days, starting by following his parents and family.

His father, a sculptor with the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, and his mother arrived to the White Building when the government gathered surviving artists to live there after 1979. They express satisfaction with the compensation, but they argue amid the pressure of the move-out process. By the time that they leave, they cannot contain their emotions anymore.

Sophanara Dy, 68, moved into the White Building after the Khmer Rouge fell in 1979. She first refused to leave but accepted after pressure from her neighbors. She shares the stories of love and tragedy she has witnessed inside the building and in the movies from the past which she still treasures dearly.

Sandap Suos, 60, arrived in 1981 but sold her flat in the 1990s, but after her husband died, she came back to rent it alone. Although she will not receive compensation for the flat, she feels no regret: it's her destiny, she claims. Her dream was to become a singer, so she sings a pop song alone in her home for the last time.

After 54 years, the building returns to brick, metal, and concrete once more. Only memory remains.



DIRECTOR'S PERSONAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Sometimes I don't know whether I live in my dreams or in reality. I have a recurring dream about the White Building, the place where I grew up. But my documentary film is not bound to the separation between my dreams and the hardness of reality. With my film, I am able to return to the past, to the cherished details of my childhood home, before moving back again into the reality of a present where the White Building no longer exists.

The White Building was one of Phnom Penh's last remaining structures of modernist architecture from before the Khmer Rouge era. I see parallels between the evacuation that took place on 17 April 1975, when the Khmer Rouge sent the city dwellers out into rural cooperatives to work for the nearly four years of the regime, and the displacement by means of development that has been taking place in the city for the past ten or fifteen years. Years of conflict and dilapidation left the White Building to squatters and crime, but the building also housed one of the city's most vibrant communities of local artists, including my father. Just like the historic features of its architecture and crumbling façade, its village-like community was rare in contemporary Phnom Penh's center.

For me, the White Building had its own spirit. It almost breathed as one, with the shared walls of apartments or the constant buzz of activity in the long, single corridor always forcing neighbors into each other's lives.

Reality is too complex so we invent stories; fiction helps untangle the mess. I was in the midst of writing a fictional feature trying to make sense of my life at the White Building when the news came: the White Building was going to be emptied and demolished after residents, including my family, finally accepted the offer of a new luxury condo developer. The same reality that pushed out 6,000 residents was the same force that would not allow me to film my narrative there. Reality wouldn't allow me to finish my fantasy so instead of writing my own fiction, I followed the residents with my camera and helped them write their own.

ARTISTIC APPROACH

The White Building itself offered very strong and unique visuals. Its long, dark corridors embody my own memories. I patiently observed the residents' behaviors during those last days, to capture how their slow gestures and stories shared while packing the things they lived with for so many years express a deeper heritage. I searched obsessively for little signs of life and resistance: a 60s' pop song sung for the last time, an old memory told in the place it happened, the abandoned objects on the floor of a building that, progressively in the film, grows emptier and emptier. The film's shots and sounds present the spirit of the building even for a first-time visitor. The color brings out the analog fuzziness of my dreams and memories.

In the White Building's final days, I returned to stand amid the empty space before its demolition and have those long, engaged conversations with my parents and older neighbors which I had never pushed myself to begin. My imagination raced as I listened to their stories or opinions. Much of what they said brought about my own memories: I recalled kids playing, neighbors singing, ladies chit-chatting, monks chanting, babies crying. But those images and sounds are gone now. This is my chance to use cinematic expression to bring the building back to life.

Essential to the film is the non-visual: sound. With a library my sound designer recorded before, during, and after the real building's demolition, the soundscape of the film gives the distinct feeling of a living, vibrant building. Music plays throughout, with pop songs from the past and present that recall the building's vivaciousness and composed minimalist tracks which evoke my own sense of foreboding and loss.

As I conceive this film, I find myself inside the building again. These images and sounds return to me and dare to overcome the reality that has snuffed them out.



PRODUCERS' STATEMENT

Among Khmer directors emerging today, Kavich Neang is one of the most talented, and certainly one of the most singular voices for Cambodian cinema yet to come.

The White Building was a historic and symbolic building in the heart of Phnom Penh, built in the 1960s and recently destroyed. For nearly thirty years, from his birth in 1987 to his departure in 2017, Kavich Neang lived at apartment number 37, on the third floor of the White Building's building B. Kavich Neang often shot in this incredible place (*A Scale Boy, Three Wheels*). When the government abruptly announced a demolition plan for the White Building in May 2017, it became urgent for Kavich Neang to capture the remaining moments of the building's iconic heritage before they became only memories.

This film responds to his desire to capture and reconstruct the memory of this place and the meaning it has held for so many families through the decades. But this project is more than just a memorial. Through the liberating power of cinema, Kavich Neang plays with the very notions of memory or nostalgia even as he maintains the honesty of lucid observation on the realities of modern Cambodia.

Kavich Neang is simultaneously preparing a narrative feature, *White Building*, which has been in script development since early 2016. The narrative is inextricably linked to the documentary. It is due to begin shooting in May 2019.

In recent years, the Cambodian film industry has seen real changes, with the emergence of new directors and with the re-opening of movie theaters. Cinema has become *fashionable* again. But as in all countries around the world, the mainstream film industry is defining the rules, and the struggle has moved to the challenge of building and defending independent voices on the sidelines of the main industry. Our company Anti-Archive was created to accompany the development of those independent filmmakers in Cambodia, and *Last Night I Saw You Smiling* by Kavich Neang is a fundamental step towards fulfilling this ambition.

BIOGRAPHIES OF DIRECTOR & PRODUCERS

Kavich Neang (director and cinematographer) was raised in Phnom Penh's landmark White Building. His first two shorts were documentaries produced by Rithy Panh: *A Scale Boy* (2010), and *Where I Go* (2013). In 2013, he joined Busan's Asian Film Academy, and in 2014, he co-founded Anti-Archive. In 2015, he directed two short fictions, *Three Wheels* (premiere: Busan), and *Goodbye Phnom Penh*.

In 2018, his short fiction, *New Land Broken Road*, premiered in Singapore. Kavich has joined Talents Tokyo, Visions du Reel's Docs-in-Progress, and Cannes Cinéfondation's Residency. His feature-length documentary *Last Night I Saw You Smiling* holds its premiere in January 2019 in IFFR's Bright Future competition. He is simultaneously preparing to shoot his first narrative feature, *White Building*.



Davy Chou (producer) is a French-Khmer filmmaker and producer. In 2009, he created French production company Vycky Films and established a film workshop in Cambodia. In 2014, he co-founded Cambodian production company Anti-Archive. As a filmmaker, he has gained attention with *Golden Slumbers* (2011, Berlinale Forum, Busan) and *Diamond Island*, which won the SACD Award at 2016 Cannes Critics' Week. With Anti-Archive, he has produced Kavich Neang's *Three Wheels* and *Goodbye Phnom Penh*, and Adrien Génoudet's 2016 documentary, *Waxing Moon*. With Vycky Films, he has produced three documentaries: Irene Dionisio's *Shores*; Jacky Goldberg's *This is Comedy*; and, Nontawat Numchaphol's *Boundary*.

Daniel Mattes (producer) is an American researcher, writer, and producer originally from San Francisco. Since 2012, he has worked in Cambodia with a Stanford University-based research center monitoring and researching the ongoing trial proceedings currently before the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. In 2016, Daniel Mattes joined as a co-writer for *White Building*, director Kavich Neang's first narrative feature film currently in development. He recently made his first steps in production, as producer for Kavich Neang's feature-length documentary *Last Night I Saw You Smiling* and Kavich Neang's short film *New Land, Broken Road*, both produced by Anti-Archive, and as project coordinator for the three short films under the *Echoes from Tomorrow* portfolio.

Marine Arrighi de Casanova (co-producer) graduated from La Fémis in 2010. She created in 2013 the French production company Apsara Films alongside Isabelle Tillou and Lucie Borleteau. Marine received a Cinema Producer's grant from Fondation Jean-Luc Lagardère in 2014. She has produced 2 features: *Fidelio*, *Alice's odyssee*, by Lucie Borleteau (Locarno, 2014) and *Whatever happened to my revolution* (Jury's Prize in Angoulême, 2018) by Judith Davis. She also produced several short films, including Kavich Neang's *Three Wheels* and *Goodbye Phnom Penh* with Anti Archive. She is currently producing several features: *White Building* by Kavich Neang, in co-production with Anti-Archive, *Une autre que moi* by Marion Laine, *My Only Desire* by Lucie Borleteau and *I Love Greece* by Nafsika Guerre-Karamaounas.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Anti-Archive is a Cambodian film production company created in 2014 by filmmakers Davy Chou, Steve Chen, and Kavich Neang, with Park Sungho joining in 2016. Anti-Archive produces and co-produces fiction and documentary films by the emerging, new generation of Cambodian filmmakers, as well as films by international, independent directors shooting in Cambodia and Southeast Asia. Deliberately provocative, the name Anti-Archive invites one to rethink the relationship of films and filmmakers with the past and history. The four recognized the need for film production infrastructure in this part of Southeast Asia to support young independent filmmakers, some of whom have since shown their first works internationally, and decided to create Anti-Archive in 2014.

The films produced under Anti-Archive have subsequently premiered around the world, including Cannes, Locarno, Busan, Torino, and IFFR. Anti-Archive's completed films include: *Dream Land* (2015, Steve Chen, feature, premiere: Locarno); *Three Wheels* (2015, Kavich Neang, short, premiere: Busan); *Goodbye Phnom Penh* (2015, Kavich Neang, short, premiere: AFA, Singapore); *Diamond Island* (2016, Davy Chou, feature, premiere: Cannes Critics' Week); *Turn Left Turn Right* (2016, Douglas Seok, feature, premiere: Torino); *Waxing Moon* (2016, Adrien Genoudet, documentary feature, premiere: Entrevues Belfort); *A Million Years* (2018, Danech San, short, premiere: Busan); *New Land Broken Road* (2018, Kavich Neang, short, premiere: Singapore); and, *Last Night I Saw You Smiling* (2019, Kavich Neang, documentary feature, premiere: IFFR Bright Future). With two short films already in post-production, two narrative feature films are due to enter production in 2019: *Doi Boy* by Nontawat Numbenchapol and *White Building* by Kavich Neang.





GRAPHIC DESIGN
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