

A Grasshopper Film Release



# WOMAN ON THE BEACH

A film by Hong Sangsoo

*A new 4K digital restoration completed by the Korean Film Archive from  
the original 35mm negative*

2006 / 127 Minutes / Digital / 1.85 / 5.1 / South Korea / In Korean with  
English Subtitles / Not Rated

## **Synopsis**

Filmmaker Joong-rae, suffering from writer's block, takes a trip to the coast with his production designer Chang-wook, who brings along the vivacious Moon-sook. Soon after their arrival, Moon-sook falls for Joong-rae's advances; however, the fickle hero can't commit and he awkwardly parts with her. What had been a sardonic *Jules and Jim* turns into a burlesque *Vertigo* when Joong-rae returns to the coastal resort and attempts to recreate the original romance with a woman who resembles Moon-sook, until his jilted lover shows up...

## **About the Director**

### **Biography**

Hong Sangsoo made his filmmaking debut with *The Day a Pig Fell Into the Well* in 1996. He has since produced 23 features and become one of the world's most beloved filmmakers, using a complex and highly ordered structure under a seemingly random surface created by spontaneous circumstances in depicting the characters in his films. Renowned for his unique cinematographic language and unprecedented aesthetics, Hong is considered one of the most established auteurs in contemporary Korean cinema.

### **Filmography**

2020	THE WOMAN WHO RAN
2018	HOTEL BY THE RIVER
2018	GRASS
2017	THE DAY AFTER
2017	CLAIRE'S CAMERA
2017	ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT ALONE
2016	YOURSELF AND YOURS
2015	RIGHT NOW, WRONG THEN
2013	VENICE 70: FUTURE RELOADED (Short)
2013	OUR SUNHI
2013	NOBODY'S DAUGHTER HAEWON
2012	IN ANOTHER COUNTRY
2011	LIST (Short)
2011	THE DAY HE ARRIVES
2010	OKI'S MOVIE
2010	HAHAHA
2009	LOST IN THE MOUNTAINS (Short)
2009	LIKE YOU KNOW IT ALL
2008	NIGHT AND DAY
2006	WOMAN ON THE BEACH
2005	TALE OF CINEMA
2004	WOMAN IS THE FUTURE OF MAN
2002	ON THE OCCASION OF REMEMBERING THE TURNING GATE
2000	VIRGIN STRIPPED BARE BY HER BACHELORS
1998	THE POWER OF KANGWON PROVINCE
1996	THE DAY A PIG FELL INTO THE WELL

## **Director's Statement**

It was maybe five or so years ago. I was in the suburbs and had run into a woman who very much resembled another woman I knew for business reasons and was based in Seoul. I think it was in a small restaurant along a highway. Though she was a stranger who only looked like one of my acquaintances, I had this sensation as if I knew something about her. That experience left a deep impression in my mind. I had, from time to time, thought about whether two people similar in appearance act in similar ways, too. But even after the encounter with that familiar stranger I was not able to reach a conclusion. Anyhow, the question has remained with me as something I would ponder again.

Two years ago, one of my acquaintances went on a trip, returned, and started on another trip only two days later. This seemed a bit unusual, and I kept it stored in a corner of my memory. I've modified it only slightly and created a situation where one of the characters travels to the same place two days after returning from there. And I chose Shinduri Beach, a small seaside resort town off the west coast, which I had visited a couple of times as the main setting for this plot.

The film was conceived from these memories and a situation I had created by modifying them. In this general framework I placed my characters and made up their story. Then from there sprang up images and the story of different ideas and values attached to sex. Then I met the actors who would give flesh and blood to the imaginary characters of my making. I relied on the actual environment provided by Shinduri Beach, where I spent each day writing and filming. I worked hard to discover all that "I wasn't convinced about but wanted to express," and then to render them tangible.

Repetition is a great framework and basis for filmmaking. On the other hand, if repetition is part of a person's behavior, we can take that as an indication of obsession. I wanted to see through repetition, but also to reduce repetition.

I hope the audience will find my film worthwhile...

## **Interview with Hong Sangsoo**

### **Can you tell me a bit about the characters in the film?**

It's never easy for me to talk about my characters, even in Korean. When I create them, I start with a known quantity, but then I'm constantly adding things to their characterization as I go along. I prefer that they not remain clear-cut. This way, I can keep discovering things about them. After the release of a film, many people discuss the work and the characters in it. I listen to everyone's remarks – some may perceive a certain character this way, some that way. It's only then that I look back on the characters... but soon after I forget about them. This is the way I work.

### **The main character of the film, played by KIM Seung-woo, is a film director. Why did you choose this profession?**

Like the setting or location, I choose professions that I know something about. I can say partly this is because I am lazy, I don't go out and research or interview with people in different professions. I often see people from a distance, just passing by. Seeing them may make me think of many things, but I don't really know that person. The only way I can get to know them is to do an interview, but I don't do that.

The other reason is, diversity of subject matter isn't really my primary concern. Other people may say that I'm repeating my topics, but I don't feel that I'm saying the same thing. Still, I know that if I change my subject matter, then people will become more curious about my film. I guess I need to consider that as well. I shouldn't be so proud of my laziness. So maybe next time I will choose something different.

### **What about the female characters? I've heard that this film is focused a bit more on their perspective; do you ever have a hard time seeing things from their eyes?**

For me, there isn't much difference. There may be some differences on the surface, but not in terms of the difficulty of getting inside their experience. Even between the men, there are differences on the surface - what stereotypes he accepts, what images of himself he accepts - so he behaves differently. His basic desires are the same, but he chooses these other paths, or he is conditioned to do this.

The women are the same, there are different stereotypes, but they think basically the same way. The difference between two men is the same as the difference between a man and a woman.

### **In making the film, are the actors themselves involved in creating the characters?**

When I create a character, I have about 50% of the details. Based on that I choose a certain actor or actress, perhaps intuitively. I can sense that somehow this actor will be able to work with me and create the character. After that, the completion of the character is a process of co-operation. Even if they don't come up with any specific suggestions, who he or she is brings something to the character.

Even during the shooting of the film, I discover little things about the character. On the morning of each day before shooting, I decide what each character will say. I'm a very

process-oriented person, I guess - it's very hard for me to start with a clear outline.

**Some people criticize your films, saying they're too personal or inward-oriented.**

Some people may think that way, but... In my school days I thought I wanted to make extremely independent films, so I prepared myself for that. Before making my debut, I was working in a TV production company, and there were two paths I could have taken. One was independent filmmaking, which would have been easy because I had prepared myself for it mentally.

One of the big reasons I decided to go into commercial filmmaking instead, meaning to work in the mainstream film industry, was because I wanted to have certain obstacles. Colliding against these obstacles, I am drawn out of myself a little more. If I worked independently, I could become very withdrawn into my own experience.

**Would you ever go back to independent filmmaking?**

I don't know. If I go back, it will be because no one finances my films, or perhaps when I get very old. But still, I like the work I am doing now.

**In *Woman on the Beach*, what motivates your characters? What pushes them to act in the way that they do?**

It's different in each case. The characters come up with different objectives, and they may not know what will happen when they reach their objective, but they come up with one anyway. It may be a very small thing, or a big thing, a conceptual thing, a concrete material thing. This is one way to approach life. The other way to live is to consider what I know, my assumptions. Why I am living, why this thing is so valuable to me. So we have these two approaches, but the combination is different from one person to the next. One person may be 99% of the former, 1% of the latter. One person may be 78% of the former, and 22% of the latter. This second case is an extremely thoughtful person.

What I see is people constantly jump from one objective to another, one image of themselves to another, because that's what they have learned—that this is the way to be successful. "Push push push..." Sometimes they think about their assumptions. There are also many parts of life that are joyful to experience in confusion. But I think maybe if we consider this combination enough, we can rid ourselves of all these useless, cruel, stupid assumptions, and we can be a little bit freer. We can never be completely free, but that's what I hope...

*Interview conducted by Darcy Paquet*

## **About the Production**

*Woman on the Beach* is about two men and two women, entangled in a fleeting romance that hardly lasts a night. The film delves into the psychology of the young lovers who may share the same bed but have different thoughts on their minds. “Should I dump her?” “Should I suggest we keep in touch?” “Could this turn into a relationship?” While these thoughts keep their heads busy, no one is able to foretell how their romance will end. Will it be a one-night stand and no more? Or could it possibly be the start of a new relationship?

### **Interaction between actors and film crew**

A unique feature of this film is that the leading characters are all in the filmmaking business. In this regard, the actors could easily relate to their roles, but at the same time trying to play them realistically in front of real-life directors and crew was not an easy job. While the filming was going on, the cast and the crew lodged in the same place, where they would take after-work hours to talk well into the night. They also tried switching roles, the cast observing the crew in action and then taking over the camera, slate and other equipment to experience what it is like to do what the filming crew does. Thanks to these efforts, the cast was able to present a very natural and realistic performance. The close bonding they had formed during the project made it harder for them to part when it came to completion, and many shed tears at the farewell party.

### **First interactive preview — the Raw Honesty series!**

One of the novelties in the promotion of *Woman on the Beach* is the use of interactive previews that captured the views of young Koreans on love, relationship and sex. The promotional previews are called the Raw Honesty series, and these consist of – “Qualifications of a Lover,” “When a Man Wants Sex,” “Her Past,” “One-night Stand,” and “The Next Day.” A survey titled “2030 Raw Honesty Research” was conducted on-line to gather data to incorporate into the previews, and more than 15,000 young men and women participated, marking an impressive turnout. The previews feature scenes representing how young people today feel about love and sex, followed by the relevant poll results. The Raw Honesty series has been hugely successful.

**Cast**

*Kim Joongrae*  
*Kim Moonsuk*  
*Choi Sunhee*  
*Won Changwook*

Kim Seungwoo  
Go Hyunjung  
Song Seonmi  
Kim Taewoo

**Crew**

*Directed by*  
*Written by*  
*Produced by*  
*Executive Producer*  
*Co-Executive Producer*

*Associated Producer*  
*Editing*  
*Cinematography*  
*Lighting*  
*Recording*  
*Music*

Hong Sangsoo  
Hong Sangsoo  
Oh Jungwan  
Jason Chae  
Paul Lee  
Han Sukho  
Cho Jinah  
Hahm Sungwon  
Kim Hyungkoo  
Jung Youngmin  
An Sangho  
Jeong Yongjin

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