

'Buddha in Africa' addresses Chinese involvement in Africa

Buddha in Africa follows the personal story of a teenager growing up in a Chinese Buddhist orphanage in Malawi and the challenges he faces between his African roots and Chinese upbringing. Against the backdrop of China's global rise, the film provides a unique insight into Chinese soft power in Africa.



Buddah in Africa film

The much-anticipated feature documentary by South African filmmaker, Nicole Schafer, has been selected for its World Premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Festival (April 25 –May 5). The film will be presented in competition in the International Spectrum programme. The winner of the Hot Docs Best International Feature Documentary Award will qualify for consideration for the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

The project received the IDFA Most Promising Documentary Award when it was first pitched at the Durban FilmMart in 2011.

Awards

It and has since been awarded funding from several international funds, including the IDFA Bertha Europe Fund in the Netherlands, Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group Doc Fund and the Alter Cine Foundation in Canada, Chicken & Egg Pictures in New York, the South African National Film and Video Foundation and the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission.

In 2018, *Buddha in Africa* was selected to participate in the Cape Town International Film Festival and Market Works-in-Progress lab. It received the highest award, combining two weeks of Online by Monk and two weeks of Grading at Priest Post with the following motivation: "For its unique subject and its meticulous patient development, for the crossroad of important themes, and for the different worlds that have overlapped and met in tangible captivating characters, the jury chose to give the combined two prizes to the very promising Malawi set film project *Buddha in Africa* by Nicole Shafer."

Legacy of colonialism

The film is an international co-production between Thinking Strings Media in South Africa and Memento Film in Sweden. Renowned Paris-based company CAT & Docs will be representing the film internationally. AfriDocs is the African broadcast partner.

“When I first came across this story, I was struck by how this orphanage was strangely reminiscent of the Christian missions during the colonial era,” said writer and director, Schafer, “Only here African children have Chinese names and instead of learning about the West, they were learning about Chinese culture and history.

“I felt the orphanage would be the perfect metaphor to explore not only the impact of Chinese involvement in Africa, but also as a mirror for the legacy of Western colonialism that still exists on the African continent.”

David Herdies of Memento Film and co-producer, explained further: “*Buddha in Africa* offers a new and unexpected insight into China’s presence in Africa through the lens of the Buddhist temple, Amitofo Care Centre in Malawi,”. “It’s an interesting way to look at this new type of colonisation that is going on, but in a non-judgmental and human way.”

The film will screen at the following dates and times at Hot Docs:

Saturday, April 27, 6pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3

Monday, April 29, 1pm, SCOTIA 8

Sun, May 5, 10:15 AM, Scotiabank Theatre.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>