

P R E S S   K I T

INSPIRED  
BY TRUE STORIES

# THE DRAGON DREAM

望子成龍



### **SOPHIE CHEUNG**

Director, Writer, Producer, Director of Photography  
Production Designer, Film Editor

New York-based Sophie Cheung is a photographer, filmmaker, and designer whose work is inspired by cinema and global culture. Her photography has appeared in numerous print and online magazines, including *Vogue's PhotoVogue* "Best Of" feature. Cheung has photographed prominent models, musicians, politicians and Olympic athletes. Originally trained in architecture in her native Hong Kong, where she was also a producer of *TEDx* talks, the photographer recently earned her Master's in Digital Photography from New York's prestigious *School of Visual Arts*.

## **S Y N O P S I S**

*The Dragon Dream* tells the story of Asian American college student Sam. He lives in two parallel yet conflicting societies: American at school, and Chinese at home. He tries to live up to his parents' expectations while withholding his inner emotions.

## **D I R E C T O R ' S**

The common phrase 望子成龍 in the Chinese language translates as "to see one's son become a dragon." It means to wish for one's child, especially if male, to become very successful in life. (Phoenix for is substituted for dragon with female children). The *Dragon Dream* is a ten-minute narrative film that explores the way this cultural imperative places great academic pressure on young people in Asian communities. In particular, it addresses the serious mental health problems caused by the phenomenon.

Even as a third grader in primary school in my native Hong Kong, I remember often doing homework and studying for tests long past dinner time. As students, our common goal was to achieve the best grades possible, in order to enter the most prestigious universities. It didn't matter if the work reflected our true interests or passions. As a sophomore at a prestigious university in Hong Kong, I began to question the meaning, value, and consequences of this social aspiration when five of my fellow students had committed suicide just six months into the academic year. There were many other student suicides in other educational institutions. As I reached my senior year, three of my close personal friends had attempted suicide. All were male.

Before proceeding with the film, I interviewed friends and family who have experienced these type of problems, and with that formed the basis for its plot. The academic pressure that *The Dragon Dream* addresses is particularly intense for young men, and toxic notions of masculinity and familial relationships are vital elements in the film. This is why its protagonist, Sam, is male.

Asian societies and subcultures tend to disregard mental health issues. Many see depressed people as "crazy," and are unwilling or unable to recognize the symptoms of the disorder. Furthermore, Sam has difficulty revealing his true feelings to his parents, a reflection of many modern familial relationships. To generalize the pressure to perform that Asian society places on its children, the faces of the film's parents - representative of the larger Asian community - are always turned away from the camera, making them anonymous.

Overall, *The Dragon Dream* is my effort to bring attention to the destructive cultural expectation that leads to suicides such as Sam's. The film exposes the terrible pressure these expectations impose on young Asians, in the hope that it will change the hearts and minds of their parents.

## **S T A T E M E N T**

C A S T

**STEPHANIE HWANG**  
Executive Producer



Stephanie is an artist, a professional healer and a punk rock artist. She has worked at *Sundance*, *TruTV*, as well as with *Emmy* award winning producers. Her projects have included documentaries, reality TV shows, and music videos.

**RAYMOND KWAI**  
Sam



Born and raised in New York City, Raymond's commitment to his craft has been recognized with a nomination for Best Actor from the *Asian American Film Lab*.

**JUSTIN HOEY**  
Executive Producer



Though he makes his living as an engineer, Justin found his true passion lies in filmmaking and photography, which he often does on his world travels.



**BONNIE CHANG**  
Mother



**HUAIYI TSAI**  
Father



**CHESTER WAI**  
Concerned Friend

**J. M. QUINTANA CÁMARA**  
Composer



José is an award-winning film music composer and pianist, having created music for over 30 movies. He has received awards and nominations from the *Hollywood Music in Media Awards*, *Global Music Awards*, and others.

**MATTHEW BARR**  
Sound Designer



Matthew is a prolific sound designer and has worked on an extensive number of film, TV, and advertising projects for various clients, including *Ferrari* and the 2017 film *SkyHunter*.

C R E W



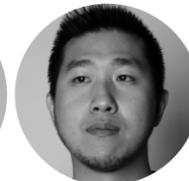
TORAZO YAMADA  
Sound & Boom Operator



KOH KAZAMA  
Location Manager  
(Queens)



KEN BAI  
Prop Assistant



KENNY DU  
Camera Assistant



STEPHANIE ZIMMER  
Camera Assistant



JIN KIM  
Colorist



SHIYUAN ZHANG  
Equipment Coordinator



YUANYANG TENG  
Production Assistant



GABI CHUN  
Production Assistant



DANIEL LEE  
Poster Illustration



CHRISTINE AUMILLER  
Poster Illustration



TIFFANY TRUONG  
Prop Assistant



QIKUN LI  
Prop Assistant



BETTY CHONG  
Cultural Consultant



ALLIE HUTCHINS  
Extra



AFSHEEN AYAZ  
Extra



CHONG ZHOU  
Extra



DAVID LAM  
Extra



LU CHEN  
Extra



GRACE KIM  
Extra



MICHAEL XU  
Extra



# S Y M B O L I S M

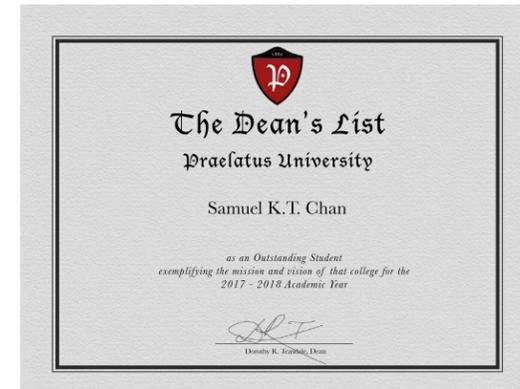
The *heart* and the *clock* are significant symbols in *The Dragon Dream*. Sam is often seen studying the structure and function of the heart. The heart represents the emotion and passion that are so lacking in his efforts to be studious. As the film approaches its climax, we can hear Sam's heart beating louder and louder, which represents his erupting emotions. The heartbeat can even be viewed as a representation of his anticipation of the freedom he associates with his final decision. The clock is a symbol of time, in particular a countdown of the time that Sam has left, and more generally the short time that suicidal students have on earth. Two main color palettes dominate the film, yellow and blue. Yellow represents the reality of Sam's situation and blue represents his mind. The film opens with yellow and begins to mix with blue as it progresses. As the mental health of protagonist deteriorates and starts to overpower reality, it ends with a blue/white scheme, white being the color associated with death in Asia.

# P R O D U C T I O N D E S I G N

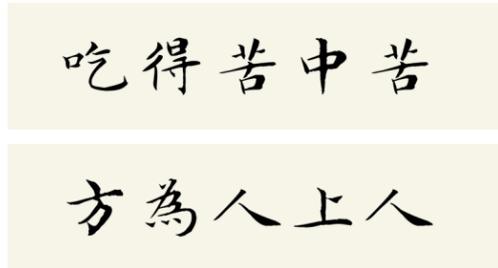


A fictional school called Praelatus University inspired by the Ivy Leagues. Praelatus means 'preferred' in Latin.

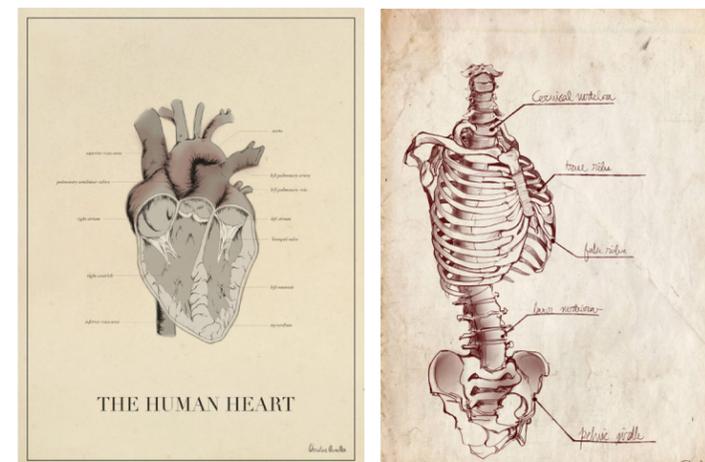
The school's motto, 'Fac fortia et patere' means "Do brave deeds and endure."



One of the protagonist's award certificates from Praelatus University, displayed on the dining room table in the film.



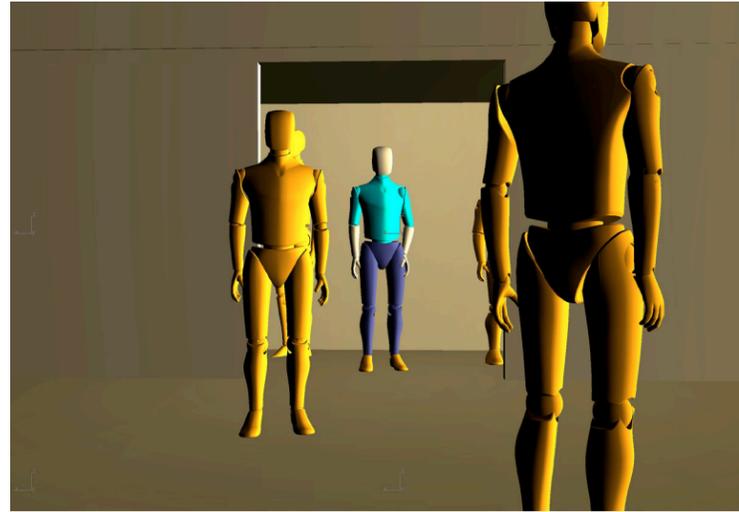
The Chinese calligraphy banner that hangs in the dining room translates as "If you can suffer the insufferable, you are a breed above all others."



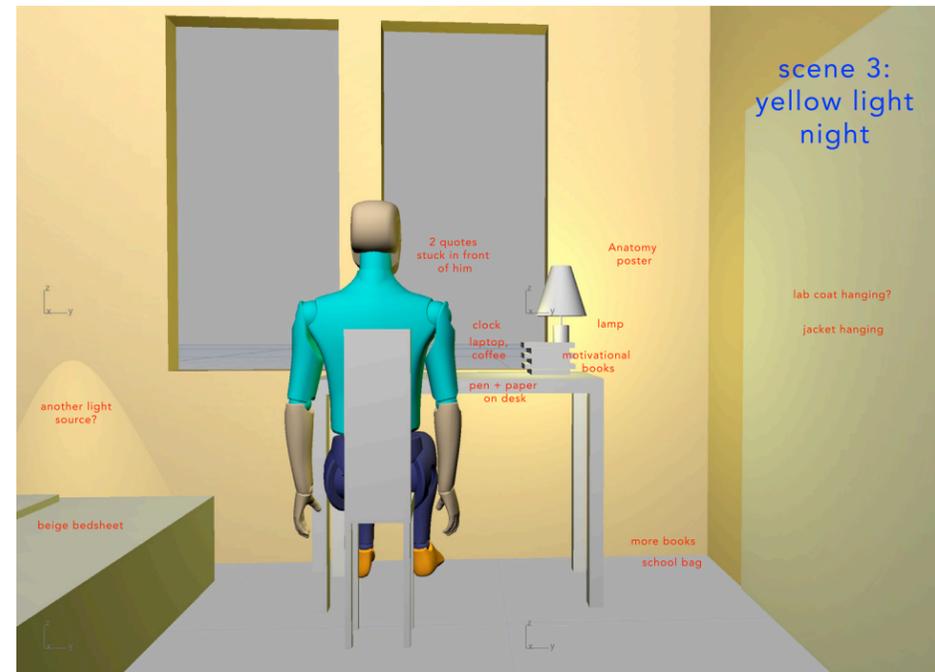
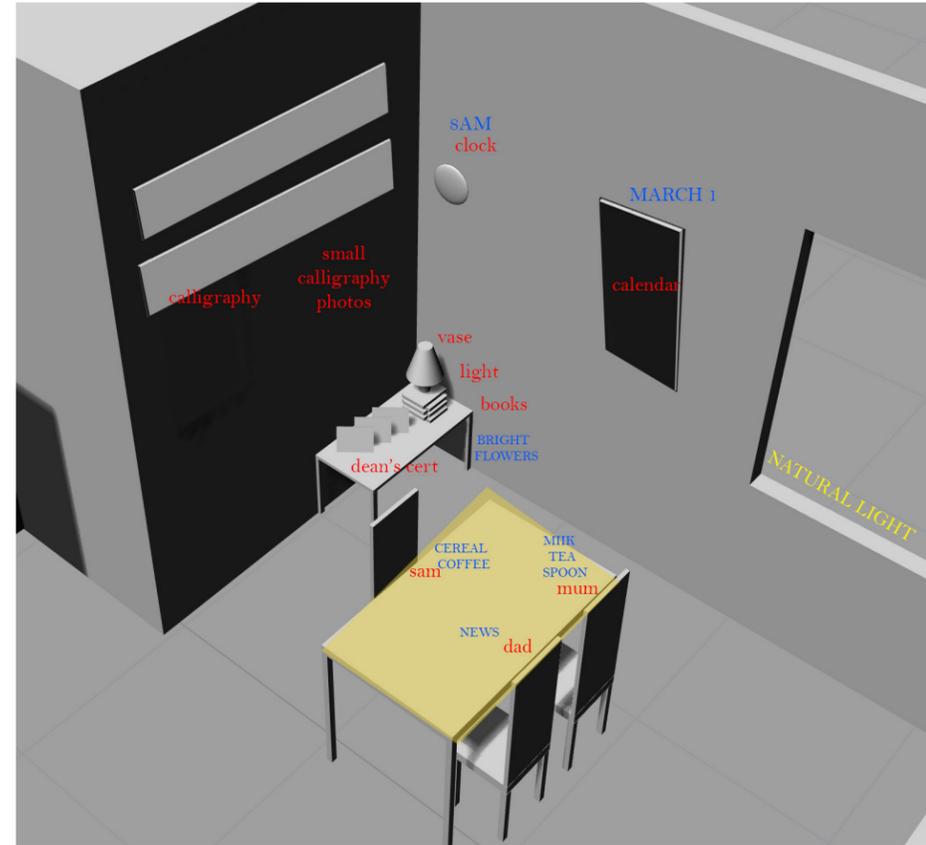
Anatomy posters hung in the protagonist's bedroom, representing his field of study.

(Drawn by Christine Aumiller and Daniel Lee (left to right))

# SET DESIGN

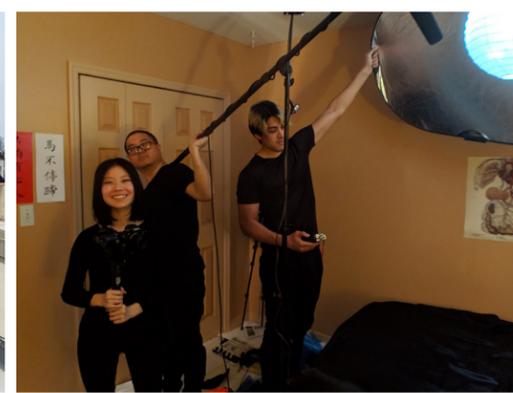


STORYBOARD EXAMPLES



P R O D U C T I O N

S T I L L S



T E C H N I C A L  
S P E C S

Completion Date July 2019  
Duration 10m  
Country Of Origin USA  
Aspect Ratio 21.6:9  
Language English, Cantonese

S P E C I A L  
T H A N K S

Katrin Eismann  
Michael Foley  
Marko Kovacevic  
Tom P. Ashe  
Sal Petrosino  
Elizabeth Avedon  
Russell Hart  
Debra Klomp Ching

S P O N S O R S

Yat Wah Cheung, Tak Hop Chong  
Justin Hoey, Stephanie Hwang, Ben Tong & Angie Wong & Megan Tan  
Bonnie Chang, Wayne Chang, Suzanne Kong, Wales Cheung  
Tiana Cheney, Anthony Brooks  
Diana Lui & Niran Shrestha  
Jack Bou  
Naomi Hope  
Annika Bharwani, Calvin Chan, Enid Chan, Ethan Chiu, Chun Wai Lau, Philip Yue  
John Zhu

W E B S I T E / S O C I A L

[www.thedragondreamfilm.com](http://www.thedragondreamfilm.com)  
[@thedragondreamfilm](https://www.instagram.com/thedragondreamfilm)

G O F U N D M E

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C O N T A C T

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Justin Hoey [hoey.justin@gmail.com](mailto:hoey.justin@gmail.com)

All my life, I've done everything to make you guys proud.

When I'm sleeping, I'm thinking about my grades...

When I can't sleep, I'm thinking about my grades...

And now all I see are numbers and a letter.



*What else do you want?*