

VIETNAMESE SHORT OF *MEKONG 2030* ANTHOLOGY TO SCREEN AT LOCARNO FILM FESTIVAL

“The Unseen River” by Pham Ngoc Lan will participate in the prestigious Pardi di domani.

Luang Prabang, 14 July 2020 — Yesterday, Locarno 2020 – For the Future of Films announced that “The Unseen River” (“Giông Sông Không Nhìn Thấy”) has been selected to internationally premiere at Locarno’s Pardi di domani shorts competition.

Produced by the Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF), “The Unseen River” is one of five short films from the *MEKONG 2030* anthology, a collection of narratives that envision the future of the Mekong River from different national and cultural perspectives within the region.

Directed by Pham Ngoc Lan, this is the Vietnamese filmmaker’s fourth short film, preceded by “Blessed Land” (Drama 19’, 2019), “Another City” (Drama, 25’, 2016), and “The Story of Ones” (Documentary, 10’, 2011).

“The Unseen River” follows Mrs. Nguyen (Minh Chau), a woman traveling upstream to a hydroelectric power plant to meet her lover from 30 years prior, and Thuc (Wean), a sleepless boy, traveling downstream to meet a monk who cures insomnia. Through carefully crafted cinematography and dialogue, the film examines the metaphorical connection between the Mekong River, time, and sleep.

The film, along with the other four shorts in the *MEKONG 2030* anthology, was born out of an urgent need to shine light on the challenges faced by the Mekong River. Set in the year 2030, the narratives aim both to entertain and inspire audiences to actively protect this critical life source.

“The message of my film is the relationship of people to the river,” says Pham. “It affects the way that people think — not only from the present, but also from the past. The attachment to the river is not something we can separate.”

“The Unseen River” will be available online, free of charge, on August 5-15, 2020 on a platform with unrestricted worldwide access in order to reach the widest possible audience. However, the viewing will only be accessible for a total of 1590 viewers, matching the amount of people who can attend the physical screenings of the shorts in Locarno each year.

The short will also be screening with *MEKONG 2030* online at the Krakow Green Film Festival (16–23 August), Kota Kinabalu International Film Festival (5–12 September) and in theatres at Five Flavours (25 November – 2 December) in Warsaw.

The other four short films in *MEKONG 2030* are: “Soul River” (dir. Kulikar Sotho, Cambodia), “The Che Brother” (dir. Anysay Keola, Laos), “The Forgotten Voices of the Mekong” (dir. Sai

Naw Kham, Myanmar) and “The Line” (dir. Anocha Suwichakornpong, Thailand).

MEKONG 2030 Shorts

“Soul River,” Kulikar Sotho (Cambodia)

Soul River is a cautionary tale framed as a lighthearted road (or, rather, river) movie. Set in 2030 in a remote northeast region of Cambodia, it urges contemporary audiences to reconsider their attitudes toward environmental degradation and the impact of climate change on the Mekong basin.

“The Che Brother,” Anysay Keola (Laos)

Xe returns to the nearly deserted Mekong fishing village in which he was raised. There, he intervenes in a dispute between his siblings over the ethics of exploiting their elderly mother’s blood. The blood has become a valuable commodity to a Western corporation that has been developing a cure for a deadly plague outbreak.

“The Forgotten Voices of the Mekong,” Sai Naw Kham (Myanmar)

This film tells a story of two women fighting to claim their lost spirits’ attachment to the Mekong River, while channeling community resilience toward its protection.

“The Line,” Anocha Suwichakornpong (Thailand)

As an artist prepares to open a new exhibition focusing on animism and river ecology, the boundaries between the artwork and the world it represents begin to merge into a site where different forms of knowledge converge.

“The Unseen River,” Pham Ngoc Lan (Vietnam)

This film tells a story about a woman traveling upstream to find a lover she hasn’t seen in 30 years, told alongside a story of a young couple traveling downstream to a strange temple in search of a cure for chronic insomnia.

MEKONG 2030 is funded by The Asia Foundation, Heinrich Böll Stiftung Foundation, Oxfam, and Mekong River Commission.

For more information on the anthology, please visit MEKONG2030.org.

All *MEKONG 2030* press enquiries:

Alex Curran-Cardarelli: alex.curran-cardarelli@lpfilmfest.org / Mobile:+856.20.9923.9657

LPFF Background:

Founded in 2009, the Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) is an annual celebration of Southeast Asian cinema held every December in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. LPFF is a not-for-profit project that fosters cross-cultural dialogue within the region and supports the emerging film industry in Laos. Throughout the year, LPFF organizes a range of cultural events and educational activities, from film screenings to workshops for Lao filmmakers. LPFF also manages the Lao Filmmakers Fund, providing grants directly to Lao filmmakers so that they can bring their scripts to life.