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Taiwanese director wins big at film festival in France

Documentary about Chiayi's lotus root farmers wins three prizes at upstart film festival

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By Taiwan News

2021/06/07 17:58



"Eagle Hand" film poster (Facebook, @2020EagleHand image)

TAIPEI (Taiwan News) — The documentary "Eagle Hand," directed by Taiwanese director Lai Li-chun (賴麗君), took home three prizes at the 2021 Cannes World Film Festival, a new venture unrelated to the famous Cannes Film Festival.

The film tells the story of lotus root farmers in Lai's hometown, Taiwan's Chiayi County. It won Best Documentary Feature, Best Female Director, and Best Cinematography.

"Although it is not a mainstream festival, it focuses more on the connection between people and offers a special platform for female creators," Lai said.

"Eagle Hand" is Lai's second film about Chiayi in which she explores the golden age of lotus root farming in her hometown of Niu Tou Shan Village. In the 1980s, the lotus roots grown in the village were so popular that they were exported to Japan and Hong Kong, and fortunes were made among the farmers.

The eagle hands represent the hands of the farmers, which were distorted after decades of digging out lotus roots.

"We could use spades to dig out lotus roots, but we were afraid the roots would be damaged and no one would buy them. That is why we ended up using our hands," one farmer told Lai.

For Lai, these hands are the pride of Niu Tou Shan and what inspired her to make the film.

documentary Taiwan lotus Eagle Hand Lai Li-chun

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