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Change of Direction: Haolu "Lulu" Wang traded Finance for the Lens of Filmmaking

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Change of Direction

Haolu “Lulu” Wang traded finance for the lens of filmmaking

By Claire Sykes

It’s hard now to imagine Haolu “Lulu” Wang ’10 sitting all day at a desk in a corporate office. “Don’t worry. You won’t be doing finance for long,” her partner, Felix, now her husband, assured her back in 2011.

He was right. After only two years with an investment bank in Hong Kong, her first job straight out of Colby with a degree in government and economics, the Chinese-born-and-raised Wang left and took off for Florence, Italy, to become a filmmaker. Before the eight-week, hands-on introductory course there had ended, she realized “this was something I could do for the rest of my life,” she said in an interview via Skype.

Wang, who now lives in London, has written and directed three shorts: *Labyrinth of a Dream* (2013) captures a surreal confusion of illusion and reality through a photographer’s lens. In *Being James* (2014), a man’s attraction to a woman on the London subway takes him to a place he never expected, and it took Wang to five international festivals. And in *Flip Flops* (2015), running from someone doesn’t necessarily mean fleeing. “I’m interested in what’s beneath the surface that drives people. I like to think there’s no simple truth. It’s what draws me to film. I like films that are emotional, psychological, and complex,” said Wang, who draws inspiration from Ingmar Bergman, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Patricia Highsmith.

Growing up in Jiangsu Province in the 1990s, during major economic and cultural reform in China, Wang lived for Saturday evenings, when a dubbed foreign film, usually American, was broadcast on government-controlled television. It was the only way to see these movies,



outside of buying pirated DVDs, which she did by the fourth grade, learning English from them along the way. Later she took film and art classes at Fudan University in Shanghai and applied to universities in the United States. Coming from Communist China, “I realized I was brainwashed and I wanted to train myself to think critically,” by studying politics and philosophy. Meanwhile, economics, she thought, would get her a job. In 2006 she was on a plane to Maine, her first time outside China.

Wang quickly learned it was not strange to ask questions in class, as it was in China. “My Colby professors encouraged me to think freely,” she said. As a sophomore, she went to St. Petersburg, Russia, for Jan Plan and did a summer internship at an economics consulting firm in Cairo. And from 2008 to 2009 she studied at the London School of Economics. “While living abroad I enjoyed observing foreign cultures as

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After banking in Hong Kong and the workshop in Italy, a five-month program at the Prague Film School steered Wang toward making her first short. The following year she started the master’s program at the London Film School. Recently she worked on the script for

a \$5-million-plus Sony-backed commercial feature film starring Taiwanese actress Shu Qi. Wang is also a part-time creative consultant for a Chinese film-production company while she works on her own feature-length film based on her childhood.

“Filmmaking is very personal,” Wang said. “I feel lucky to have found this lifelong passion, and I hope to connect with audiences through the stories I tell.”

Haolu “Lulu” Wang ’10, left, during filming of Flip Flops. Above, Wang and cast and crew filming in Hong Kong. The film was selected for the 13th Festival International Signed de Nuit in Paris in November and December.