

A FILM BY LU CHEN

THE FALLEN STONE



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

“When the stone rolls back down,
can you imagine Sisyphus happy?”

Synopsis

Lu, a Chinese woman raised with communist ideals, is captivated by photographs of Yugoslav monuments, stirring a mysterious “loud bang” within her. To uncover its source, she embarks on a journey to visit these monuments and meets Stanko, a Serbian guide who lived through the Yugoslav era. Along the way, she witnesses the decay of the monuments, the abandonment of ideology, and the collapse of faith among communists like Stanko's father. The collective memory of China intertwines with Yugoslav history, prompting Lu to reflect on her own beliefs and the future fate of China.



Directors' Statement

From my earliest days, like millions of Chinese, I was steeped in socialist ideals, nurtured with the belief that my life's mission was to contribute to my nation's progress and the eventual liberation of all humanity. This conviction shaped my path and purpose, but persistent questions have haunted me:

Why did the socialist bloc unravel in the 1980s and 1990s? If communism represents the pinnacle of human aspiration, why have so many forsaken it? And what might become of China if it too abandons these beliefs?

These questions became the driving force behind my film. I felt a profound, almost mystical compulsion to journey to the remnants of former socialist states, seeking answers.

As I embarked on this quest, I could not foresee the encounters, revelations, or emotions that awaited me. The intense, internal tumult I experienced was, to me, a distant, echoing call—a “loud bang” from the depths of time and space. The film is inspired around this search for the source of the “loud bang.”

In the film, Yugoslavia functions as a reflective mirror for China. What I observe there serves as a parallel narrative—a different outcome of Chinese history in an alternate universe. It represents not only a "history" that has already occurred but also a "future" that looms within my consciousness. The film's structure is an exploration of my inner world rather than a linear account of events. What unfolds is a journey through my own evolving consciousness—an ongoing process of deepening, questioning, struggling, and reflecting.





Directors' Statement

I aim to use sound design to distinguish between reality and history, the realm of consciousness and the tangible world within the film. During my inner monologues and recitations of essays and poetry, a deep rumble can be heard in the background, creating a space where only consciousness flows. In the segments recounting history, the background is infused with the ambient noise of film reels, the movement of trains, and the sound of wind. These elements do not completely recreate actual history but rather reconstruct my “imagined history.” In the final scenes, set against the backdrop of the Internationale and the drifting dandelions, I incorporate the sound of burning embers. This serves as a metaphor, one that can only be fully grasped through a communist upbringing—the idea that a single spark can ignite a revolutionary wildfire.

Additionally, I incorporate Camus’s philosophical reflections from “*The Myth of Sisyphus*,” seeking to answer the “loud bang.” I aspire to master my own faith like Sisyphus, even as I witness the collapse of communist ideals in Europe and recognize that power inevitably corrupts all beautiful dreams. Yet, I strive to be the kind of person Carl Marx envisioned—one who labors for the happiness of humanity, pushing my own stone, whistling, and singing on my personal journey.

On the final day of filming, an extraordinary coincidence unfolded: the Chinese President’s visit to Belgrade. This serendipitous moment offered a profound connection between consciousness and reality, bridging the worlds of Yugoslavia and China in the tangible realm. I’ve delicately woven in reflections and questions about China’s present-day realities, pondering whether monuments to communist ideals still stand firm in China.

Completing this work in the UK carries exceptional significance for me. Conversely, I hope this film transcends political boundaries. Even for those unfamiliar with communism, may it inspire them to question their own beliefs and search for their own “loud bang”—that resounding call from within.









Director's biography

Lu Chen, a Chinese documentary filmmaker with a background in journalism, has spent several years working at Shanghai Television's History Channel. She is known for her skill in deconstructing major historical events through the use of authentic archives and a humanistic perspective. In 2021, Lu directed "The Project Egg," China's first documentary focusing on women's reproductive choices, which was selected for the 18th Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival and nominated for Best Innovative Documentary at the 11th China Documentary Academy Awards. After earning a Master's degree in Film Directing from the University of Edinburgh, she remains committed to exploring cross-cultural historical representation and feminist narrative in cinema.