



## LOGLINE

When a Taiwanese American woman prepares lunches from her childhood, she struggles to forgive herself for pushing away her immigrant mother.



## SYNOPSIS

*Lunchbox* is a dramatic, three-part, coming-of-age short about regret, healing, and honoring the people we love. Using her deceased immigrant mother's recipe book, Taiwanese American Shirley makes zongzi, turnip cake, and hand-cut noodles. As she cooks, each dish evokes a childhood memory in which she grows progressively older and more distant from her Taiwanese culture and mother. When Shirley's assimilation efforts culminate in her election to the Homecoming Court, a mistake by Shirley's mother humiliates her, eliciting cruel words Shirley can never take back. Based on a true story, this retelling examines the personal cost of fitting in as well as the recovery from cultural and familial loss.





## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was scrolling through my Facebook feed when suddenly a video called *The Lunchbox Moment* popped up on my screen. Curious, I clicked, and what quickly ensued was my deluge of tears. Stories of Asian Americans who were bullied for their homemade lunches sent me down memory lane, recalling my own painful memories of being teased for bringing my favorite home-cooked meal, zongzi, to school. As I watched the Asian Americans in the video express their love and gratitude for their parents, I desperately wished I could tell my mother how much I love her and how thankful I am for her. But I'll never be able to do that. My mother passed away when I was 20. Overwhelmed with emotion, all I could do was sit down and write *Lunchbox*.

At 20, I never had the chance to express to my mom how I feel today, because I didn't feel that way back then. For all my life up until my 20's, I hated being Taiwanese American. I hated being teased at school for bringing stinky lunches, and I hated spending Saturday mornings in Chinese school. I hated being different. I wanted to be "normal." I wished I had blonde hair and blue eyes like the popular girls so that boys would like me. All I wanted was to fit in, but no matter how much I tried, my eyes, skin, and weird ways set me apart from everyone else.

So I rejected that part of myself. I couldn't see what was good about being Asian. And because the most Asian part of my life was my mother, I pushed her away. I took her for granted.

She wasn't the "American" outwardly loving mom on the Disney shows. Her ways were foreign. Coming from a poor upbringing in Taiwan, she didn't understand the importance of "being there for your child." To her, having a roof over your head and meals to eat were all you needed, and a greater expression of love than any American expression of love. She was physically and emotionally absent, and she could barely speak English. She didn't understand me, and I didn't understand her, culturally and sometimes literally.

At the time, I could only see my mother's shortcomings. Now I see she loved me the best she could given where she came from and what she went through in her own life. She passed on her love to me in different ways, non-"American" ways...her ways. And one of those ways was through the lunches she cooked for me.

*Lunchbox* is a love letter to my mother, and a catharsis for anyone who has experienced loss, regret, and being the "other."

Mom, for all your strengths and imperfections, I love you. Thank you.

# TECHNICAL INFORMATION



*Camera*

Arri Alexa Mini LF

*Exhibition Format*

DCP 2K or H.264 / H.265 Export File

*Frame Rate*

24 fps

*Aspect Ratio*

2.40:1

*Audio Format*

5.1 (DCP) or Stereo (Export File)

*Runtime*

16 minutes, 15 seconds

*Completion*

October 2022

*Genre*

Drama

*Film Color*

Color

*Language*

English, Mandarin

*Country of Origin*

USA

## KEY TEAM

### ANNE HU

*Director, Writer, Producer, Editor, Lead Actor (Shirley)*  
IG/Twitter: @annehufilms

Anne Hu is an NYC-based, Taiwanese American, award-winning director, writer, actress, and editor in narrative film and TV. She completed Netflix's first Original Series Directors Development Program in 2022. Hu made the 2020 Alice List for Emerging Female Filmmakers who Have Not Yet Directed a Feature. She shadowed director Marc Webb on Netflix's *The Society*. Hu is a fellow of the 2019 Space on Ryder Farm Film Lab.

She has directed, written, and starred in award-winning short films. Her previous short *CAKE* was accepted into 38 festivals, earned 9 awards, and was featured in *The Washington Post*.

Hu hopes by creating personal and honest stories that reflect her struggles and intersectional identities, she can provide catharsis for audiences as well as inspire them to regard marginalized voices with their whole humanity.



### GILANA LOBEL

*Producer*  
IG: @gobeonepictures

Gilana Lobel is a Producer and DGA Production Manager based in New York City. A graduate of the UNC School of the Arts, School of Film, Gilana has worked steadily in production on feature films and television series for almost two decades. Most recently Gilana served as UPM on season two of *Russian Doll* (Netflix, April 2022) and previously worked on projects such as *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Netflix), *Lucky Grandma* (Independent), and *Alex Strangelove* (Netflix), among others.

During the pandemic, she collaborated with fellow UPM and co-author Jennifer A. Haire on the Office Production Assistant handbook *Keys to the Production Office* (Routledge/Focal Press), available as of March 2022.

Along with business partner Oliver Brooks, and their company Go Be One Motion Pictures, Gilana has produced numerous short films that have screened at film festivals internationally and has several upcoming feature projects.

## **OLIVER BROOKS**

*Producer*

*IG: @gobeonepictures, @endorphin84*

Oliver Brooks is creative producer based in Brooklyn, NY. Growing up in a theatrical family, Oliver learned early on that his unique talent was behind the scenes. A voracious cinephile from an early age, after earning a B.A in Theater (and making his first feature film) at Butler University, he began working his way through the ranks of NYC film and TV crews, eventually focusing on location management. He's produced a Peabody-winning documentary series (Time: The Kalief Browder Story), six years of the TCS NYC Marathon broadcast (the 2017 broadcast won a NY Emmy), and worked for HBO, Showtime, Lionsgate, Warner Brother, Netflix and more.



## **RACHEL LIU**

*Producer*

*IG: @umbrinom*

Rachel is a Chinese-Canadian-American filmmaker. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in Bioengineering and Entrepreneurship, she produced her first feature film, "Sleepwalkers", which won Indiewire's Project of the Year.

Rachel's past producing work includes official music videos for platinum recording artists such as Andy Grammer and AJR, short films that have screened at top tier festivals, and award-winning feature films including "In a New York Minute", "Lumpia With a Vengeance", and "Bite Me". Most recently she produced the animated pilot "Action Dinosaur" and horror feature "Student Body".

Rachel currently has projects in development with Cartoon Network and Adam F Goldberg Productions. She is a Sundance Collab Advisor and a two time Tribeca Film Institute alum. With her background in STEM and business, she is committed to exploring and innovating in the intersection of film, technology, and finance, as well as promoting new and important stories.

## **CHENNEY CHEN**

*Producer*

*IG: @chenney.chen*

Chenney Chen, a Taiwanese American producer, is a 10+ year veteran in independent filmmaking. Her foray into film began in casting when she worked on award-winning features such as *Carol*, *Miles Ahead*, *Days of Mercy*, and *Surviving Compton*. Since then, she has gone to produce films such as *Evil Takes Root*, *Heartland*, and *Monica*.

She is a co-founding member of SheStrikes, an entertainment and media company that produces original content in features, documentaries, and limited series. Through her work, she has produced televised content for Lifetime called *Her America*, ESPN's *Scripps National Spelling Bee*, BBC Network's *Silicon Valley*, and National Geographic's *BEEtv*. With her creative direction on branded short films, she has received three Telly Awards and an Aurora Award.

Her long-term career goal is to uplift the voices and work of minorities in the industry.



## **GABRIELLA MURILLO**

*Producer*

*IG: @aliendawgz*

Gabriella Murillo is an NYC-based documentary Director and Producer. Her films focus on the Asian American experience, intergenerational trauma and relationships. Her past work in documentary film/tv includes PBS series *Iconic America* (premiering April 2023), and Firelight Films *Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom* and *Becoming Frederick Douglass*. Additionally, she has worked as a producer and production coordinator for independent narrative shorts such as *Silver Fox* (2023 pending), *BOBBY* (2022) and *Hero Hotel* (2019). She currently has several short films in development.



## ZACH KUPERSTEIN

*Cinematographer*

*IG: @zachkuperstein*

Zach Kuperstein, a New York-based cinematographer listed among Variety's Artisan Elites, has a passion for problem solving. With his never-say-never attitude and an eye for stunning imagery, he has lifted many narratives off the page and onto the screen.

He burst onto the field with the southern gothic film, "The Eyes of My Mother", premiering at the Sundance Film Festival in 2016. His work earned him nominations at the Independent Spirit Awards and the Camerimage International Film Festival. Kuperstein followed up with "Jonathan", a dark sci-fi tale, which premiered at the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival.

Since then he's lensed six more features including "The Climb", winning the jury's heart award at 2019's Cannes Film Festival followed by screenings at Telluride and Sundance, then together with his most recent work, "The Vigil", at the Toronto International Film Festival and the would-be 2020 SXSW Festival.



## NICHOLAS TONG

*Production Designer*

*IG: @vox\_pop*

Born in Hong Kong, and raised in Los Angeles, Nicholas Tong bid farewell to sunny California at the age of 18, and set his sights on chasing a calling in Film and TV in the city that never sleeps. He's no stranger to going against the grain.

Coming up in the gauntlet of New York independent feature productions, Nicholas has since transitioned into the world of commercials and short-form content. Armed with skills in both design and art direction, honed from over a decade of industry experience, he continues to seek out new and exciting challenges.

He has an intimate understanding of narrative structure and character development; maintaining relentless loyalty to directorial vision. A problem solver by nature with a keen aesthetic, Nicholas lives, breathes, and dreams of building worlds, and crafting all the beautiful intricacies within them.



Little Shirley (played by Audrey Liao) and her mother Chinluan Diana Huang (played by Dawn Ying Yuen) in the childhood kitchen.  
Photo Credit: KC Liao



The “Lunchbox” crew preps the football stadium scene.  
Photo Credit: Quinton L. Jackson

## THE CAST



### ANNE HU

*Lead Actor (Adult & Teen Shirley)*  
IG/Twitter: @annehufilms

Anne Hu is a Taiwanese American, award-winning director, writer, editor, and actress. As an actor, she has trained at The Freeman Studio, The Barrow Group, and T. Schreiber Studio.

Anne is known for her role as Jade Oh in *CAKE*, for which she and the cast were nominated for Best Ensemble. Her most recent role was Adult and Teen Shirley in *Lunchbox*.

Hu hopes to provide catharsis for audiences and inspire them to regard marginalized voices with their whole humanity.

### DAWN YING YUEN

*Lead Actor (Chinluan Diana Huang)*  
IG: @dawnyingyuen

Dawn Ying Yuen is a Singaporean-American actress based in Los Angeles since 2001. At 19, Dawn was one of 30 from a pool of 2000 participants selected to train to act at Television Corporation of Singapore. A few years after, she acted in local drama, and did TVC and print advertising. In 2001, she moved to Los Angeles, and started a series of acting classes, and trained in Meisner technique for a few years. Her last training ground was at The Beverly Hills Playhouse which lasted three years.

Dawn Ying Yuen is known for her role in *My Mother's Jade* directed by Irene Young, and is currently playing on YouTube. In 2019, she played an immigrant mom in *Zoetic* (a HBO APA Visionaries Top Three for 2019) directed by Wesley Chan of WongFu Productions, which was on HBO Go for the whole year of 2019. Most recently after the pandemic, Dawn completed a feature film and a short film. The feature film, *The Harvest*, is a family biopic written by Doua Moua and directed by Caylee So. And in the short film, *Lunchbox*, directed by award winning director, Anne Hu, Dawn played the role of a Taiwanese mom struggling to connect with her Taiwanese American daughter.

Dawn Ying Yuen speaks English, Mandarin, Cantonese and some Taiwanese. She speaks asian accented English, which makes her a good choice for roles of overseas asians and immigrants. Dawn danced Chinese and Modern dance for 10 years until she had to stop due to breast cancer. Currently, Dawn is in remission, and is still flexing her acting chops in as many projects as she can handle.



## **ELIZABETH GAO**

*Supporting Actor (Middle School Shirley)*

Elizabeth Gao was born in Cleveland, Ohio and currently lives in Solon, Ohio with her parents and younger sister, Isabella. An eleven-year-old sixth grader, Elizabeth just started to explore her interests in acting. Lunchbox is Elizabeth's first acting performance and she is looking forward to acting more in the future. Elizabeth started learning piano at age five and has been playing harp and recently cello. Besides playing musical instruments, Elizabeth's hobbies include reading, baking, and making different kinds of slimes. She likes playing with slimes so much that she set up a small slime lab in their house. Elizabeth loves animals and she is taking care of four parakeets (Sunrise, Bluebelt, Winter, and KiWi) and a golden retriever (Luna). She also enjoys traveling to China and Taiwan to visit family members.



## **AUDREY LIAO**

*Supporting Actor (Little Shirley)*

Audrey Liao was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts and is a Taiwanese American and a second grader in Akron, Ohio. She enjoys reading, playing piano, ballet dancing, and is interested in photography and painting. Her debut in the *LUNCHBOX* triggered her great interest towards acting and filming and she looks forward to next opportunity. Audrey will relocate to San Jose, CA in 2022.

# CREDITS

## Executive Producers:

Karmen Dann, Margaret W. Wong, Andrew Chou, Shawn Shih, Frank Yu, Crystal Lin

## Additional Cast:

Little Melissa - Melba Dann  
Little Stacey - Ivy Bowen  
Little Janet - Addison Johnson  
Preteen Melissa - Brenna Sherman  
Preteen Stacey - Meredith Zeallear  
Preteen Janet - Autumn Fallon  
Bo - Marko Gibbs  
Teen Melissa - Hannah Marijon  
June - Nora Kim  
Announcer - Brian Francetic  
Stunt Coordinator - Rick Ficke  
Whispers - Alison Preece, Carrie Keating, Nick Duckworth

## Additional Crew:

Costume Design - Jillian Cainghug  
Edited by - Anne Hu  
Casting by - Karmen Dann & Erica Hart, CSA  
Music by - Timo Chen & Simon TaufiQue  
Production Manager - Jessie Ng  
Associate Producers - Wynee Hu, Kung Ching Liao  
1st AD - Danny Mulvaney  
2nd AD - Samantha Walls Sather  
Script Supervisor - Yaya Wu  
2nd Unit DP - Benjamin Chew  
1st AC - Kevin Lin  
2nd AC - Jack Brodke  
Loader - Quinton Jackson  
Drone Operator - Patrick Fenner  
Art Director - Christina Lambert  
Food Stylist - Anna Lee  
Assistant Food Stylist - Monica Plunkett  
Location Scout - Mike Wendt  
Key Hair & Make-Up - Kristephan Warren-Stephens  
Hair & Make Up Assistant - Jessica Thomas, Victoria Hollar  
Assistant Costume Designer - Maria Morillo  
Costume Assistant - Bengamin Galela  
Gaffers - Spencer Lookabaugh, Patrick James Ryan  
Key Grip - Andrew Yacobucci  
Swing G&E - Karson Kennedy, Zachary Benson  
Sound Mixer - Kerry Stephens  
Boom Operator - Sam Thompson, Chauncey Taylor  
Covid Compliance - Erin Forbes

Production Assistants - Jeremy Schwochow, Macin Sheeder, Sarah Parr, Johnny Lam, Andrew Cirincione, Stella Smith, Kendall Mullenhour

Art Production Assistants - Cyan Reyes, Latricia Williams

Crowdfunding Intern - Rocky Nguyen

Legal Services by Paul Szynol, Film Law Group

Translation - Kadi Tsang

Assistant Editor - Andrew Hallenberg, Jason Hood

Color - Light Iron

DI Supervising Colorist - Sam Daley

DI Colorist - Keith Jenson

DI Producer - Bonnie Gross

DI Account Executive - Ryan Duffy

Graphic Designer - Joey Salim

Poster Designer - Andrea Granados

Re-Recording Mixer & Sound Effects Editor - Elliott Taylor

Visual Effects - Novelty Hat

Visual Effects Supervisor - Michael Barnett

Digital Composer - Abigail O'Reilly

Additional Music by Audio Network - "Bounce It Big" Dave James, "So Sweet" - Pete Masitti, Dave James

With support from:

The NYC Women's Fund for Media, Music, and Theater by the City of New York Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment in association with The New York Foundation for the Arts.

This film is made possible (in part) by the Queens Council on the Arts with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.

This film was produced with grants from:

The Future of Film is Female, TaiwaneseAmerican.org, Britt Penrod Award

Fiscal Sponsorship by Asian Cinevision



THE FUTURE  
OF FILM  
IS FEMALE



QUEENS  
COUNCIL ON  
THE ARTS

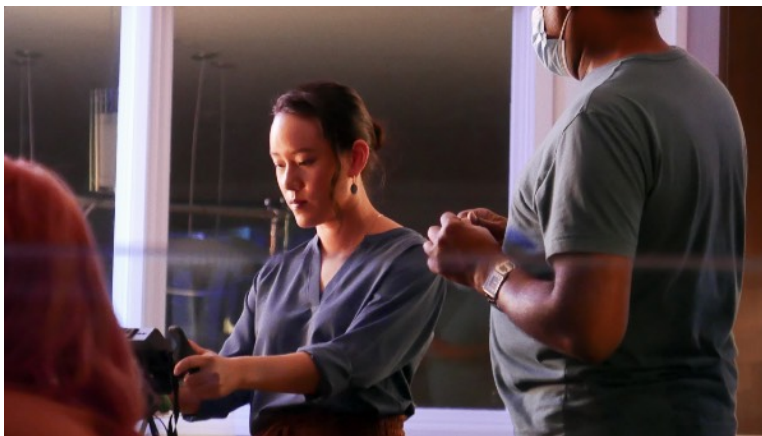




Preteen Shirley (played by Elizabeth Gao) in the middle school cafeteria.  
Photo Credit: Quinton L. Jackson



The “Lunchbox” crew preps the present-day kitchen.  
Photo Credit: Quinton L. Jackson



Director, writer, and lead actor Anne Hu (who plays Adult Shirley) checks the monitor.  
Photo Credit: Quinton L. Jackson

# AWARDS & FESTIVAL ACCEPTANCES

## Festival Awards:

Cleveland International Film Festival (April 2023)

- WINNER Best Ohio Short Audience Choice Award

DisOrient Asian American Film Festival of Oregon (March 2023)

- WINNER BEST SHORT NARRATIVE

## Festival Nominations:

Queens World Film Festival (November 2022)

- Nominated for BEST SCREENPLAY and BEST DIRECTOR NARRATIVE SHORT

## Festival Acceptances:

- Hawaii International Film Festival
- Queens World Film Festival
- San Diego Asian Film Festival
  - (Asian Film Festivals named “LUNCHBOX” in their “15 Short Films You Shouldn’t Miss at the 23rd San Diego Asian Film Festival”)
- Sedona International Film Festival
- DisOrient Asian American Film Festival of Oregon
- Cleveland International Film Festival
- FilmFestDC
- Julien Dubuque International Film Festival
- NewFilmmakers LA
- The Asian American Showcase
- American Pavilion Emerging Filmmakers Showcase at the Cannes Film Festival
- Houston Asian American & Pacific Islander Film Festival

## Pre-Production, Production, and Post-Production Grants & Awards:

- 2022 Britt Penrod Award from From the Heart Productions
- 2022 Recipient of the NYC Women’s Fund for Media, Music, & Theater
- 2022 and 2020 Queens Arts Fund New Work Grant Winner
- 2021 TaiwaneseAmerican.org Grant
- Winter 2021 The Future of Film is Female Grant Winner
- Top 10 Finalist 2021 SHIFT Creative Fund
- Top 10 Finalist 2019 ScreenCraft Short Screenplay Competition





## CONTACT

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