

## *A Simple Life:*

### **Ann Hui's Documentary Aesthetic in Fictional Filmmaking**

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In *A Simple Life (Taojie)* (2012), Hong Kong director Ann Hui explores aging through a creative experimentation of documentary aesthetic in fictional filmmaking. In doing so, Ann Hui gives voice to marginalized social groups, preserves memory of a passing generation, and records local family history in postcolonial Hong Kong, whose culture, as Akbar Abbas puts it, is characterized by disappearance. *A Simple Life* is not only about the disappearance of human life, but also the disappearance of local history and even Hong Kong cinema. The mixed use of professional and non-professional actors, on-location shooting, typecasting, and star presence gesture towards a meta-commentary on filmmaking in Hong Kong and its survival in the post-CEPA era, when low-budget and mid-range films are squeezed out by co-productions with mainland China, along with the anxiety over the loss of local flavor. On a larger scale, Ann Hui's *A Simple Life* corresponds with a number of films such as *Echoes of the Rainbow* (Alex Law, 2010), which features a coming-of-age tale that captures the memory of a passing generation in Hong Kong. In tackling aging—an imminent and inevitable process of life that is unglamourized and under-represented on screen, Ann Hui questions our own mortality and dignity in aging through an engagement with documentary aesthetics.