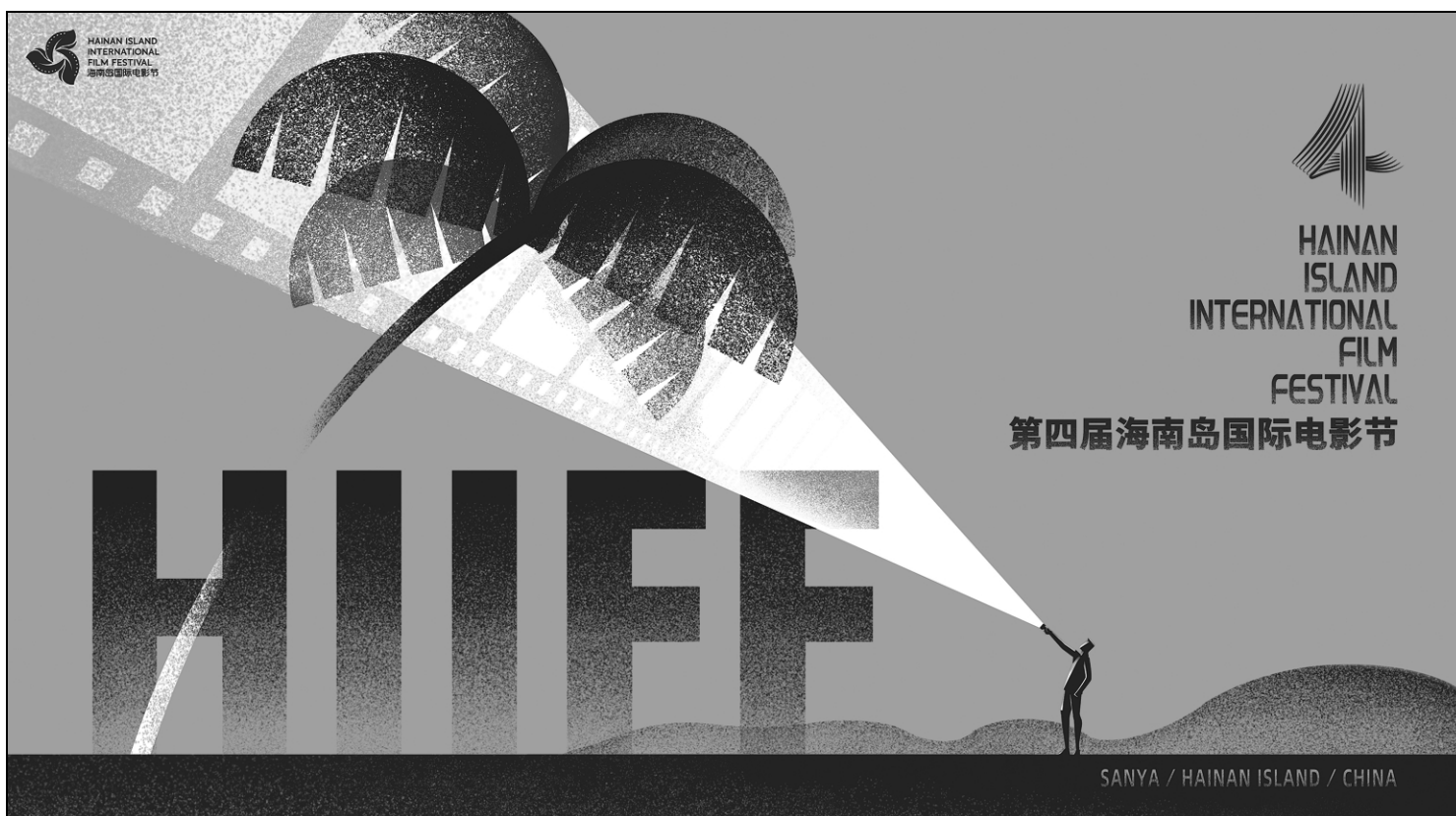


## LIFE



# Shining a light on Hainan

Film festival set to illuminate global appeal of island province, **Chen Bowen** reports in Haikou.

When people think of Hainan province, the first image that pops into their heads tends to be that of coconut trees and beaches. That is why they featured in the main poster of the 4th Hainan Island International Film Festival, which will be held in Sanya, Hainan, from Dec 3-10.

In the festival's poster, the coconut tree and beach "are reminiscent of the tropical island's high-quality ecological environment", Wang Dongju, general manager of Hainan Island International Film Festival Co, said at a news conference on Nov 15.

Adopting a bold contrast of yellow and green, it resolves around the theme of "light", which means to "live toward the light and move forward with the shadow".

The white light and a man's silhouette in the poster symbolize movies. And the silhouette alone represents filmmakers who are relentlessly striving forward. In the man's hand, light gradually turns into a film reel and illuminates the coconut tree, "which stands for the integration of the film industry and Hainan that can brighten up the sky and create dreams", Wang explained.

"The poster integrates film with Hainan's typical elements, adopts a minimalist design style and carries on the main visual tone of the previous three film festivals," she added. "With a love of movies and yearning for Hainan, we hope to bring people from all over the world a wonderful journey of light and shadow on the island."

"The HIIFF will make an effort to present Chinese and Hainan characteristics by deeply integrating film, music, technology and other elements, truly making it a festival for global filmmakers, Hainan resi-

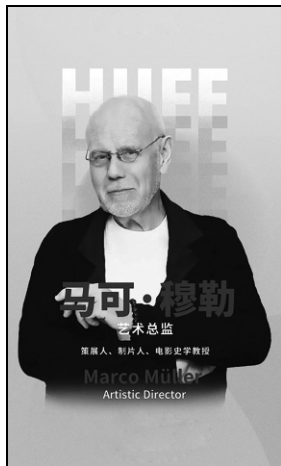


**Top:** The main poster of the 4th Hainan Island International Film Festival features a film reel and Hainan's typical elements such as a coconut tree and beach. **Above:** (From left) Actress Yan Bingyan, filmmaker Marco Muller and director Huang Jianxin are set to participate in the festival that will be held from Dec 3-10 in Sanya. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

dents and tourists, as well as an influential cultural event for exchanges and cooperation," said Zhang Jun, head of Hainan's provincial film bureau.

This year's HIIFF Golden Coconut Awards set up three categories, namely feature films, documentary features and short films. Among them, a group of newcomers will premiere in the feature film category, and more young directors are choosing the festival to make their debut. They pay attention to various themes with diversified perspectives.

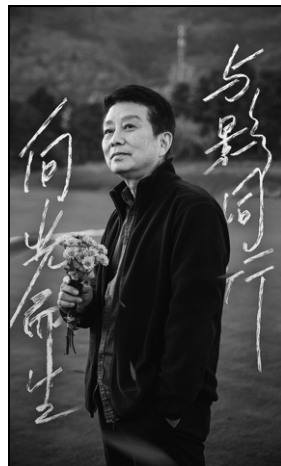
In the category of short films, more Chinese creators living overseas join the competition and present their views on global topics. Some university students from across the world opt to express themselves through the creative medium of short films.



This year's Golden Coconut Awards collect outstanding films produced after Aug 15, 2021, from around the world. Selection started in July and ended in September. A total of 3,761 films from 116 countries and regions have been submitted. Among them, 3,050 films were registered from outside China, accounting for 81.1 percent of the total. In the competition unit, 12 feature films, eight documentary features and 12 short films are expected to be shortlisted.

The jury committee of the Golden Coconut Awards will select the best film, best director, the jury award, best actor, best actress, best screenwriter, best documentary feature and best short film, among other awards from the lists of finalists.

This year, the HIIFF has invited Marco Muller, an internationally renowned curator, film historian,



critic and film producer, to serve as the film festival's artistic director, and join the curatorial team of seven international film selection art consultants to choose the highest-quality films for the festival.

Muller has served as the artistic director of several international film festivals, including the Venice International Film Festival in Italy. The Italian filmmaker has also helped acclaimed Chinese directors, such as Zhang Yimou, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Jia Zhangke and Chen Kaige, get selected for international film festivals, making an important contribution to the international profile of Chinese films.

The much-anticipated event will also hold public screenings across the island. Some 80 to 100 films are expected to be exhibited and organized across the six categories of

"gala, fest best, Asian new directors, panorama, new horizons and classics".

"It aims to carry on the uniqueness and openness of Hainan's screenings, enhance the public's participation, and attract more people to learn about the HIIFF," said Zhang.

"A notable feature of the HIIFF is its internationalization," said Xia Fei, chairman of the Hainan Federation of Literary and Art Circles. "We have invited many internationally renowned filmmakers to help raise the international profile of Chinese films. The confirmation rate of international guest invitations could reach 95 percent. With the film festival, we also hope to enhance the cultural and global influence of Hainan Free Trade Port."

"The HIIFF is one of the leading projects for Hainan to build a free trade port with Chinese characteristics," said Zhou Chunhua, head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Sanya Municipal Committee. "The 4th HIIFF is an international large-scale cultural event and an important platform to showcase the construction achievements of Hainan Free Trade Port, as well as the image of Hainan and Sanya."

"By holding this event, we hope to display Hainan's unique geographical and cultural advantages, attract more production teams to come and make movies in Hainan, and boost the local tourism and cultural sectors, as well as other related industries," said Wang. "At the same time, we have further enhanced the film festival to create an international cultural exchange platform."

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## China has woken up to demand for 'sleep assistants'

CHONGQING — Insomnia has become a nightmare for many Chinese people, so a new occupation called "sleeping assistant" has sprung up to help the unfortunate sleepless masses enjoy a good night's slumber.

In the daytime, Shen Ye, 23, has a white-collar job as an administrative staff member in a State-owned enterprise. But at night, he serves as a "sleeping assistant" that receives orders from an online shop.

Having charged clients hundreds of yuan an hour, Shen shoulders an important task that pillows, aromatic products and medicines would fail to fulfill — to make his clients fall asleep as soon as possible.

"I have been doing this job for over two years to earn some spare money," says Shen. He says the market demand is huge and he "never lacks clients".

Insomnia has plagued more than 300 million people in China, according to a report released by the Chinese Sleep Research Society in 2021.

Shen's secret is his broadcaster-style voice, sensitivity and experiences. He works mainly by telling stories to customers and chatting with them via voice calls.

According to Shen, it is not easy to be recruited as a "sleeping assistant" by the online shop. It requires a sweet voice, a good-looking appearance, a bachelor's degree, and some talent.

The online shop categorizes "sleeping assistants" into different levels based on comprehensive evaluations. Thus, the price of a one-hour voice call can vary from 50 yuan (\$7) to 310 yuan.

For 18-year-old Su Xiao, another "sleeping assistant", things are slightly different.

"I did this purely out of boredom and curiosity," says Su. She only charged 15 yuan per night. Her clients are mostly young people who, plagued by work or life stress, find it very difficult to fall asleep.

Su adds that one of her clients, who used to stay awake until 3 am, now can fall asleep by midnight after purchasing her service for four consecutive days. Her service content is similar to Shen's, including chatting and reading stories.

"Nowadays, the excessive competition at work can put people under so much strain, especially young people, that they can't fall asleep. The 'sleeping assistants' can help ease their loneliness and anxiety," says Jiang Chenggang, director of the sleep and psychology department at the Chongqing Health Center for Women and Children.

Jiang adds that this new occupation also reflects how the internet has changed the way people deal with insomnia. Now, more targeted services are on offer, such as sleep monitoring applications, intelligent beds, and memory foam pillows.

Data released by the market research firm iiMedia Research shows that the overall market size of the country's "sleep economy" has grown from about 262 billion yuan in 2016 to approximately 378 billion yuan in 2020, and is expected to reach 1 trillion yuan by 2030.

XINHUA

# Balancing prosperity and authenticity in ethnic tourism

In 2021, President Xi Jinping toured remote rural areas of Guizhou province, celebrating the eradication of absolute poverty in the last nine districts of the country marked by the government as underdeveloped. In the Miao ethnic group village of Huawu, Xi commended the villagers' creative repackaging of traditional Miao embroidery techniques in order to promote rural vitalization.

Xi's tour was part of a wider effort to develop the region by leveraging its unique ethnic culture.



**Conrad Anthony Second Thoughts**

Other cultural commodities the Miao are looking to capitalize on include: folk dances such as *shuigu*, which is performed in water; batik, a patterned cloth used in traditional garments, produced by dyeing with indigo and dipping in beeswax; performances with *lusheng*, a reed pipe; silverwork, which the Miao originally perfected to produce ceremonial ornaments; and a variety of other cultural displays and artisanal handicrafts, many of which originally served a symbolic, ritual function.

This is combined with a push to build afresh, or repurpose family properties, to increase the number of inns and restaurants in ethnic villages, where stilt houses, snaking, steep-shored rivers and tower-

ing peaks make for breathtaking surroundings.

These efforts have been massively successful in repurposing traditional culture in order to survive in the commercialized landscape of the reform and opening-up era. In 2021, 644 million tourists, mostly domestic, visited Guizhou, generating \$98 billion in income. The per capita GDP for rural residents has increased 2.7 times from 2012-21, according to the provincial government, and 9.23 million residents have been lifted out of poverty. In Huawu, the Miao village visited by Xi, income rose even more sharply, from 2,450 yuan (\$347) in 2012 to a projected 28,000 yuan this year.

The economic benefit of these

projects is clear. However, the jury is still out on the extent of the sociocultural change they have produced. A study by Wang Xiaoyan, an anthropologist at the Center for Studies of Education and Psychology of Ethnic Minorities in Southwest China, is illustrative. His research into a Miao village in Congjiang county, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, shows that traditional culture is still very much alive, just not in the places one might think.

The object of his study was one of the first villages to be earmarked by the provincial government for tourism development in 1999. The villagers were organized into troupes and performed a repertoire of activities derived from

traditional cultural elements. Through economic integration and increased income, they were able to purchase more varied goods, and developed what he termed "commodity consciousness". However, external aspects of their culture, like costume, hairstyles, songs, dances and musical instruments, were subsumed into the tourist industry and, in some cases, discarded as an organic part of life; they remained only to serve as entertainment for visitors.

He was, however, able to identify many yet-living aspects of the culture, especially in the intimate spheres of life that are most difficult for the market to penetrate. Courtship ritual, kinship practices, marriage and burial ceremonies,

tree worship, the role of practitioners of magic in religious rite — all were still in use, though sometimes in modified form, catering to ongoing social necessity.

There is a good argument to be made that bringing the benefits of China's rapid growth to isolated communities that have historically been left behind trumps the maintenance of cultural authenticity. But it begs the question, how much connection do these tourist activities really have to the past, and how much are they dictated by the logic of contemporary market economics?

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