The Four Immeasurables

A Short Film by Keith Johnson

The Four Immeasurables

On a hot summer's day, a Chinese calligrapher prepares to paint. As he does so he begins to remember his past and the world that he was forced to abandon. Will he ever be able to keep alive the values of his own culture in an alien country?

Writer–Director's Statement

It is a truism that the only world that matters is the world in our heads. The way we understand how to function in the world that surrounds us—the sense we make of things—is directly related to the representation of things in our minds.

No one knows this better than the artist, for whom the challenge is not to attempt the impossible by representing the world verbatim with all its paradoxes and complexities, but to draw out the essence of the world that surrounds him and interpret it in the language of his own craft.

Chinese Art, of which none is more revered than calligraphy, goes one step further than Western Art in this respect. Painting in this culture takes on an almost mystical, meditative aspect. Through the execution his craft, the artist practises the Daoist virtues that lead to a good life: Harmony, Respect, Purity, and Tranquillity—the 'Four Immeasurables' of the film.

> **" Words create a world. "**

Nothing seemed a better metaphor for the migrant experience in a new country, which is for me a personal experience. A migrant does exactly this: he attempts to recreate the old world in the new and that world has to be out of necessity one of the imagination. That attempt, of course, is ultimately doomed. Art is not reality, nor can it keep reality out. Reality, like Nature or Change, always manages to find a way to upset the order we impose on the world.

Key Crew Biographies

Keith JOHNSON
[**Writer | Director | Producer**]
纪·莊信

Keith studied Arts/Medicine at the University of New South Wales. He completed the Certificate IV in Film at Metro Screen in 2005 where he wrote and directed his first short film *Warzone* on a budget of $100. This film premiered at the *Paste* Rock'n'Reel festival in Georgia, USA in 2005.

Natural Selection, his second short film, has screened at IndieFest USA and the Festivus Film Festival in Denver, Colorado, as well as winning an Award of Merit in the Accolade Competition in 2009.

The Four Immeasurables is his third short film.

CHEUNG Chi Lik
[**Calligrapher**]
張志力

Franz Cheung is a Chinese artist from Hong Kong who holds a Master of Studio Art from the Sydney College of the Arts. He teaches Chinese brush art at Macquarie University and the Art Gallery of NSW. He is currently the president of the Australian Oriental Calligraphy Society based in Chatswood.

He also conducts workshops and short courses at numerous festival, events, and celebrations all through Sydney in venues as diverse as libraries, schools, and art centres.

Franz provided the calligraphy for the landscape photo album *Tranquil Waters Australia*, which he coauthored with Ian Carlson and was published in 2005 by Australian Gallery Publishing.

Sidat DE SILVA
[**Cinematographer**]
薛達·秋·菁華

The past few years for Sid have been full of projects that pushed him in new directions. A challenge in 2008 was to transform a Holocaust marionette play into a piece of cinema. For Qantas Sid had the opportunity to shoot the one-take-only shot of the maiden landing of the airline's first Airbus A380.

Sid has shot commercials (for national TV, the Web and new media), music videos, and many short films, including one where he had to cover a scene so that one actor could play three roles in it. On *The Four Immeasurables* the challenge was to help recreate Ancient China in a park in northern Sydney.

Sid has shot Keith's second and third short films, and this creative collaboration looks set to last into the future.

Charli DUGDALE
[**Production Designer**]
察理·德道

Charli completed the design course at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in 2008.

As a young art director she has a distinctive whimsical style and a sharp eye. Her work with Bell Shakespeare, Brisbane Festival, Queensland Arts Council, Coogee Bay Festival, and numerous independent film and theatre directors has seen her design work span the fields of theatre, dance, circus, and physical theatre.

Charli's work has been showcased internationally, the most notable being the Prague Quadrennial in 2007.

Rolmar BALDONADO
[**Editor**]
羅馬·巴東那都

Finishing his masters in drama editing at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) in 2006, Rolmar is a freelance editor working in various formats and genres; notably documentaries, drama, and commercials.

Alon ILSAR
[**Composer**]
雅龍·伊撒

Alon is a composer, producer, drummer, instrument designer, and electronic percussionist.

His theatre credits include the Company B production of *Keating!* the musical (2006–2008), the touring production Strut & Fret's *Barrel of Monkeys*, touring with Circus Monoxide as musical director, drummer and keys player, playing drums in Wes Snelling's *Kiosk*, improvising drums in *Spontaneous Broadway*, and composing and sound designing for *Emergence*.

Most recently Alon wrote, directed, and performed in the choose-your-own-adventure musical game piece *The Colors Interactive Comeback Show*, funded by the Australia Council for the Arts. It was performed

at the Adelaide Fringe Festival, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, and the Sydney Comedy Festival.

Alon has also recently received an Australian Council for the Arts grant to design and build a new electronic percussion instrument called the 'Air Sticks'.

Richard BARON
[Sound Designer]

理察。拜朗

Richard is a Sydney-based sound designer, computer scientist, and documentary film director. Specialising in hybridised synthetic/acoustic soundtracks, his sound design work can be heard in numerous independent film, TV, and Web-based projects.

In 2009 Richard was awarded Best Achievement in Sound for a Short Film by the Australian Screen Sound Guild (ASSG) for his work in *The Distance Between*.

Background Notes

Ancient characters carved onto oracle bones are the oldest existing record of a fully developed writing system in China, dating from 1400 BCE. The earliest characters originated from direct depictions of various objects, which were modified through the centuries into their modern day forms. This complex relationship between spoken and written forms led to the unique situation of a written language that was universally comprehensible even if the spoken dialects were not mutually intelligible, an important step in uniting diverse peoples over a large geographical area into a unified empire.

Chinese calligraphy (*shu*) developed alongside the invention of a writing system as people began to appreciate the beauty of the form and it rose in importance to become one of the Four Arts of the Chinese literati (*qin qi shu hua*). The others were playing the *qin* (a string musical instrument), playing *qi* (a strategic board game), and painting (*hua*).

To the artist, calligraphy is a mental exercise that coordinates both body and mind. There is an infinite variety of forms depending on the concentration of the ink, the absorptivity of the paper, and the flexibility of the brush.

The practice of this art encompasses the same virtues that characterise other traditional art forms from China, such as the tea ceremony or *cha dao*. These virtues, or ethics, are derived from the Daoist values of Respect, Purity, Tranquillity, and Humility. They are the keys to the path (*dao/tao* literally means 'path'

or 'way') through which human beings strive to live in harmony with the universe.

Chinese immigration to Australia can be traced to the earliest days of European settlement in the late 18th Century. Many were lured here in the gold rushes of the mid–19th Century, when Australia became known to the Chinese as New Gold Mountain (新金山). (The original Gold Mountain was California.)

The relationship of the Chinese migrant community to the white community has not always been an easy one. The presence of Chinese prospectors on the goldfields led to violent clashes such as the infamous Lambing Flat riots of 1861 and the passing of a Parliamentary Act later that year to reduce the number of Chinese people entering the colony.

Other policies followed, most notoriously the White Australia Policy, restricting 'non-White' immigration into Australia until the mid-1970s. However, in spite of the heavy racism, a Chinese community continued to thrive in Australia, with Chinese people taking up various occupations, most notably storekeepers, hawkers, and market gardeners.

The policy of Multiculturalism that Australia has pursued since the 1970s has seen a resurgence of new arrivals from China and Chinese-speaking regions. Many have been economic migrants; others have been refugees from difficult political situations. After the Tian'anmen Square protests in 1989, the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke famously allowed students from Mainland China to settle in Australia permanently.

In the 2001 Australian Census, Chinese was the sixth-most common self-reported ancestry[1]. And in 2005–2006, China itself (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan) was the third major source of migrants to Australia behind the United Kingdom and New Zealand[2].

Water has always had an ambivalent place in Chinese culture. Though life comes from water and Chinese civilisation began along the banks of the Yellow River, China historically regarded the sea as a city moat at the end of the earth and turned the interests of their civilization inland. This insularity is reflected in a startling lack of maritime interests for such a powerful nation with a long coastline[3]. Yearly flooding would result in the deaths of thousands of people. Thus, Water was something to be revered and feared at the same time.

Strangely enough, water has had a similar place in the Australian consciousness. The driest continent on earth, subject to regular water restrictions and ongoing drought, water is arguably the most valuable resource the country has, but also one of its most devastating. Summer floods destroy property and lives, ongoing drought is breaking the backs of rural areas: water is powerful and something to be feared.

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[1] "Population Characteristics: the ancestry of Australia's population". *Australian Social Trends, 2003*. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003.
[2] "Migration: permanent additions to Australia's population". *Australian Social Trends, 2007*. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007.
[3] Lianfen, Y. (1993). "Water in Traditional Chinese Culture". *Journal of Popular Culture*, 27 (2), pp. 51–56.

SIDAT DE SILVA
[all others Alex Weitlinger]

Complete Cast

Painter	Cheung Chi Lik
Woman	Pearl Tan
Voice of the Painter	Warren Lee

Complete Crew

Writer–Director	Keith Johnson
Producer	Keith Johnson
Co-Producer	Sidat de Silva
Executive Producer	Alex Weltlinger (18 on 9 Media Arts)
Cinematographer	Sidat de Silva
Production Designer	Charli Dugdale
Film Editor	Rolmar Baldonado
Original Score by	Alon Ilsar
Sound Designer	Richard Baron
Production Manager	Dinusha Ratnaweera
Focus Puller	Brendan Gribble
Clapper/Loader	Daniel Christie
Gaffer	Richard Hawkins
Key Grip	Lester Bishop
Make-up & Hair Artist	Kerrie Allott
Make-up Assistant	Lindsey Pearson
Voice-over Sound Recordist	Tony Robson
Production Stills	Alex Weltlinger
Title Sequence Animation	Richard Nickel
Sound Mix	Tony Robson
Laboratory Services	Werner Winkelmann (Neglab)
Telecine & Digital Colourist	Dwaine Hyde (The Lab Sydney)

Score performed and recorded by Alon Ilsar	
Violin	Daniel Weltlinger
Voice	Alison Flett
Chinese Subtitles	SBS In Language
French Subtitles	Matthew Herrmann
Spanish Subtitles	Chester Omana

Special thanks to Will's Quills, Hornsby Shire Council, and the family of Franz Cheung

ORIGINATED ON
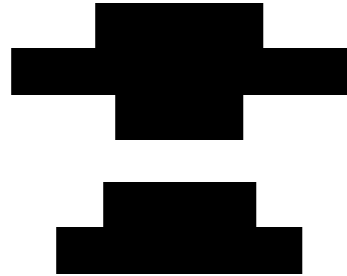
FUJIFILM

Supplied by Awesome Support

Camera and lenses supplied by Lambert Productions

LAMBERT PRODUCTIONS
CAMERA EQUIPMENT RENTAL

Contact Details

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Specifications

Title	*The Four Immeasurables* / 和敬清寂
Running Time	00:06:42:07 (25fps)
Aspect Ratio	16:9 (full-height anamorphic)
Soundtrack	Stereo (not Dolby-encoded)
Spoken Language	English
Subtitles	Simplified Chinese, French, Spanish
Delivery Formats	**Digital Betacam** (PAL & NTSC)
	– Ch 1 & 2: Stereo Full Mix (Lo/Ro)
	– Ch 3 & 4: Stereo Music & Effects (Lo/Ro)
	QuickTime Movie (PAL)
	– Video: Apple Uncompressed 8-bit 4:2:2
	– Audio: PCM 24/48 stereo
	DVD-Video (Region 0, PAL & NTSC)
	– Selectable subtitles in Chinese, French & Spanish in PAL version only
Shooting Format	Super 16mm
Camera	ARRIFLEX 16SR 3

和敬清寂