

# SKIN OF YOUTH



A film by Ash Mayfair





2025, 122 minutes, Vietnam/Singapore/Japan, 2.35, 5.1 Sound, in Vietnamese with English subtitles

## World Sales

### Diversion

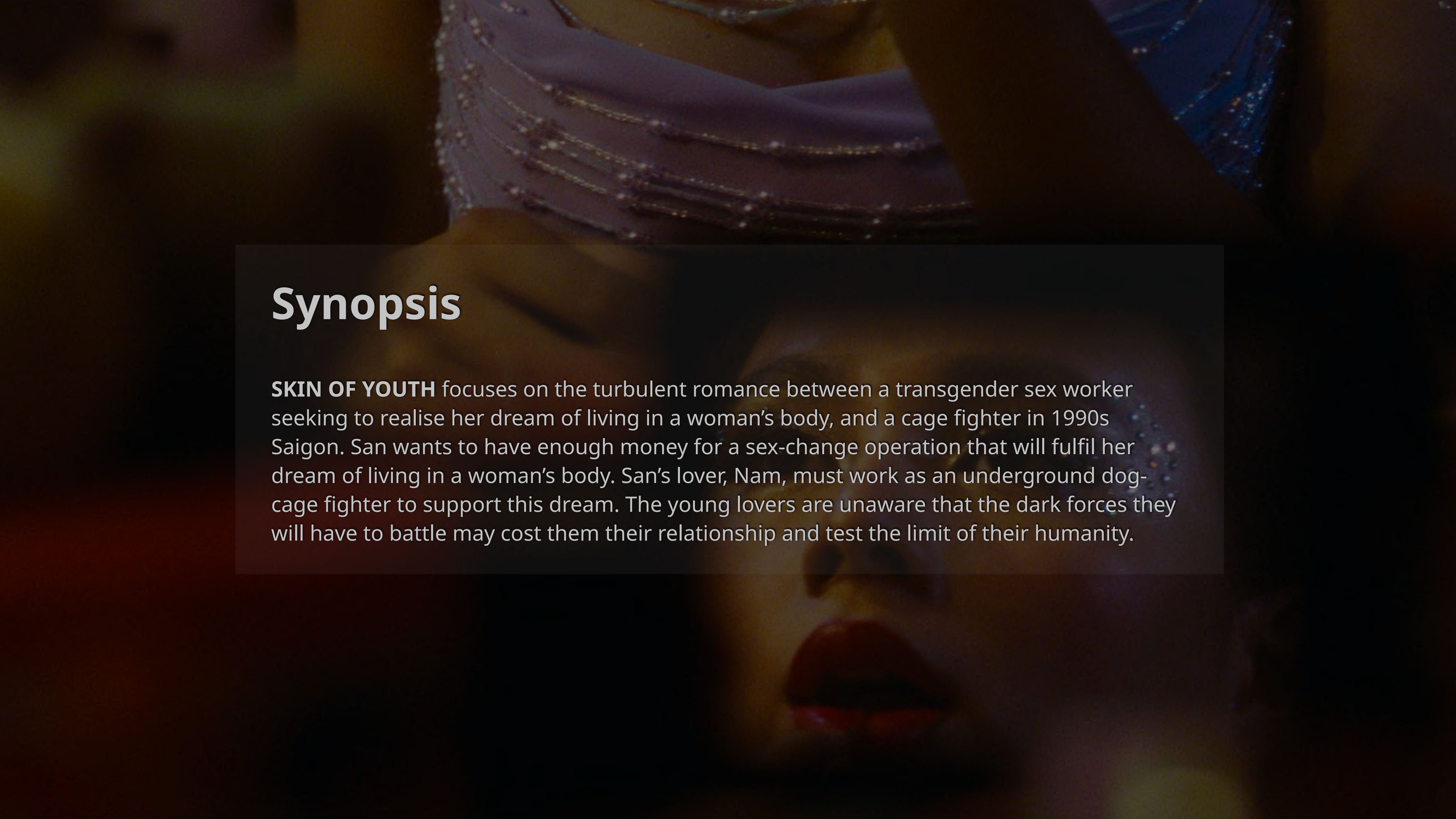
220/4 Soi Ladprao 42, Lane 4-1, Huay Kwang, Bangkok 10310  
Thailand

[www.diversion-th.com/sales](http://www.diversion-th.com/sales)

Sales contact: [sales@diversion-th.com](mailto:sales@diversion-th.com)

Festivals contact: [festivals@diversion-th.com](mailto:festivals@diversion-th.com)





## Synopsis

**SKIN OF YOUTH** focuses on the turbulent romance between a transgender sex worker seeking to realise her dream of living in a woman's body, and a cage fighter in 1990s Saigon. San wants to have enough money for a sex-change operation that will fulfil her dream of living in a woman's body. San's lover, Nam, must work as an underground dog-cage fighter to support this dream. The young lovers are unaware that the dark forces they will have to battle may cost them their relationship and test the limit of their humanity.







# Director's Statement

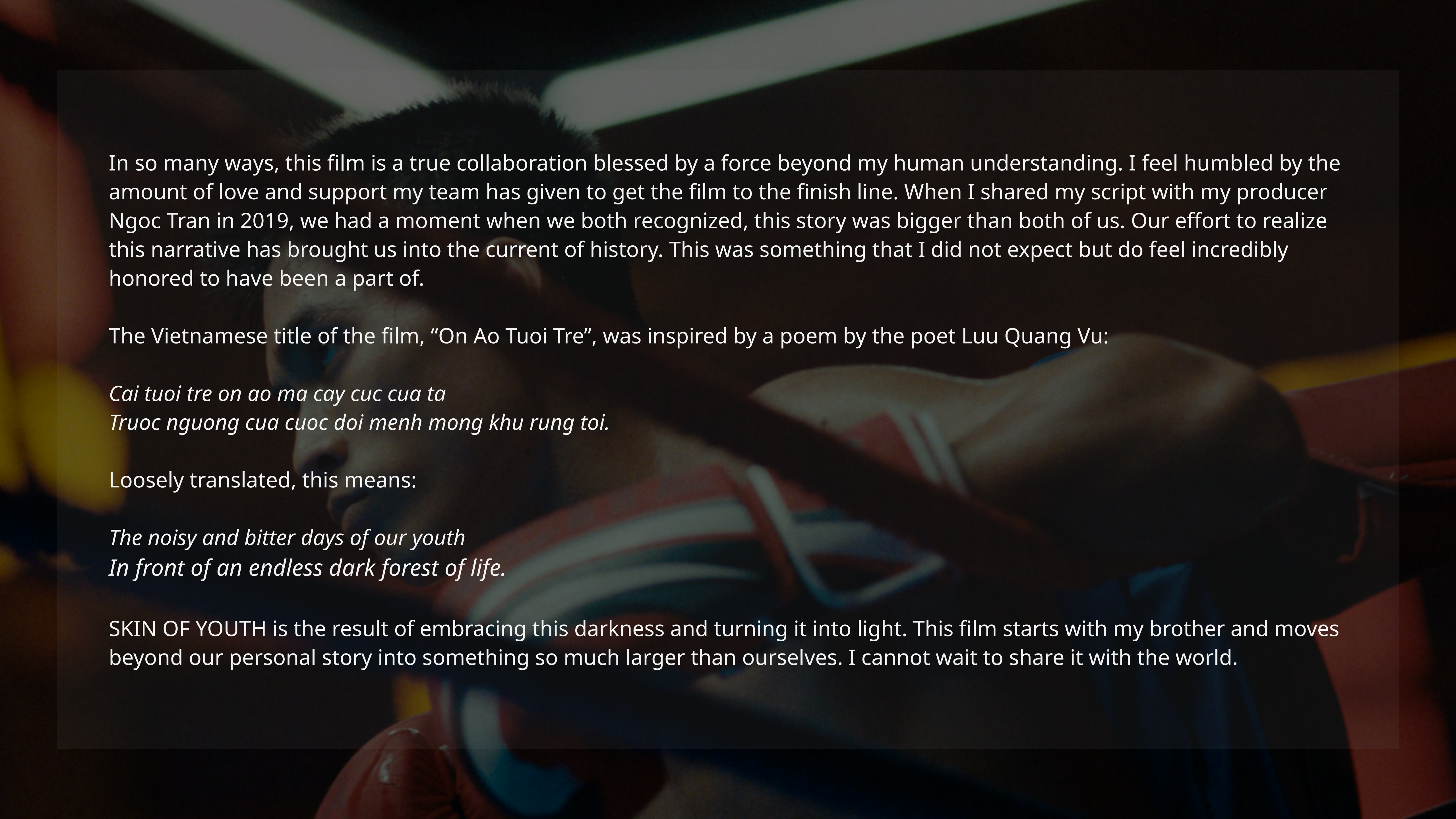
When he was two-year-old, my brother told me he was transgender. His exact words were: "Sister, I'm not a girl. I'm a boy!"

From the moment we had this conversation, I remember typing the word "transgender" into a search bar for the first time. **SKIN OF YOUTH (On Ao Tuoi Tre)** is a story fifteen years in the making. My brother is 17 now. In the process of trying to understand my brother, I have learned a tremendous amount from the LGBTQ community. The young transpeople I have met in Vietnam ever since have inspired and impressed me endlessly with their resilience and their light. This film is my attempt to share a small part of their journey.

Artistically, **SKIN OF YOUTH** was also the most challenging thing I have ever done in my life. I had to learn to listen to what the film was asking of me. I had to obey the demands of a creature that wanted to push the boundary of my cinematic comfort zone. I had to ask for so much from my cast and crew. My main actress was a 19-year-old trans girl who has never acted before. She ran away from home at 16. More than I could imagine, she was San, she was the character even before we met.

**SKIN OF YOUTH** is the first fiction film in Vietnam to have cast an actual transperson in the leading role. My cast and I spent several months together, rewriting nearly every single line of dialogue, visiting all the places in the story and familiarizing ourselves with the world of the characters. So many times, our working condition was exceptionally difficult. Being openly queer and trans is yet to be fully accepted in our country. Yet, we managed to create something we are all proud of.



A young man with dark hair, wearing a red and blue striped shirt, is looking down with a somber expression. The background is dark and out of focus, with some yellow and red elements visible.

In so many ways, this film is a true collaboration blessed by a force beyond my human understanding. I feel humbled by the amount of love and support my team has given to get the film to the finish line. When I shared my script with my producer Ngoc Tran in 2019, we had a moment when we both recognized, this story was bigger than both of us. Our effort to realize this narrative has brought us into the current of history. This was something that I did not expect but do feel incredibly honored to have been a part of.

The Vietnamese title of the film, “On Ao Tuoi Tre”, was inspired by a poem by the poet Luu Quang Vu:

*Cai tuoi tre on ao ma cay cuc cua ta  
Truoc nguong cua cuoc doi menh mong khu rung toi.*

Loosely translated, this means:

*The noisy and bitter days of our youth  
In front of an endless dark forest of life.*

SKIN OF YOUTH is the result of embracing this darkness and turning it into light. This film starts with my brother and moves beyond our personal story into something so much larger than ourselves. I cannot wait to share it with the world.









# Director's Biography

**Ash Mayfair** is an award-winning writer-director based in Los Angeles and Ho Chi Minh city.

After receiving an MFA in filmmaking at NYU, Ash wrote, directed and co-produced her first feature, **THE THIRD WIFE**. The screenplay was a recipient of the Spike Lee Film Production Award 2016.

The film premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2018 and won the NETPAC Jury Award. **THE THIRD WIFE** has garnered more than 20 awards worldwide, screened at over 70 film festivals and received distribution in 30+ territories. In 2020, **THE THIRD WIFE** earned three Spirit Award Nominations in the US including the Someone To Watch nomination for Ash.

**SKIN OF YOUTH** is her second feature. **SKIN OF YOUTH** is one of 4 winners of the NYU Purple List for the best unproduced screenplays written by graduates and is a semi-finalist of the Academy Nicholls Competition in 2020. Ash is also an alumna of the Sundance Film Two Lab 2020 and a recipient of the Berlinale Nipkow Fellowship 2020.



**Presented by** Annam Productions, Donga Films,  
Akanga Film Asia, Bitters End  
and Mayfair Pictures

**Starring** Trần Quân  
Võ Diên Gia Huy  
Phan Thi Kim Ngân  
Hajime Inoue

**Director Of Photography** Chananun Chotrungroj  
**Composer** Tôn Thất An  
**Production Designer** Đỗ An  
**Costume Designer** Nguyễn Công My Hanh  
**Hair And Makeup** Nguyễn Kiều Thu  
**Editor** Julie Béziau  
**Colorist** Yov Moor  
**Sound Mixer** Edouard Morin  
**Casting Director** Hoàng Trần Minh Đức

**Executive Producer** Trần Việt Anh  
**Associate Producer** Kayo Yoshida  
**Co-Producer** Yuji Sadai  
**Producers** Trần Thị Bích Ngọc  
Ash Mayfair  
Fran Borgia

**Written and Directed by** Ash Mayfair

