



THE KALGAN HORSE

A FILM BY ZICHEN ZHAO

LOGLINE

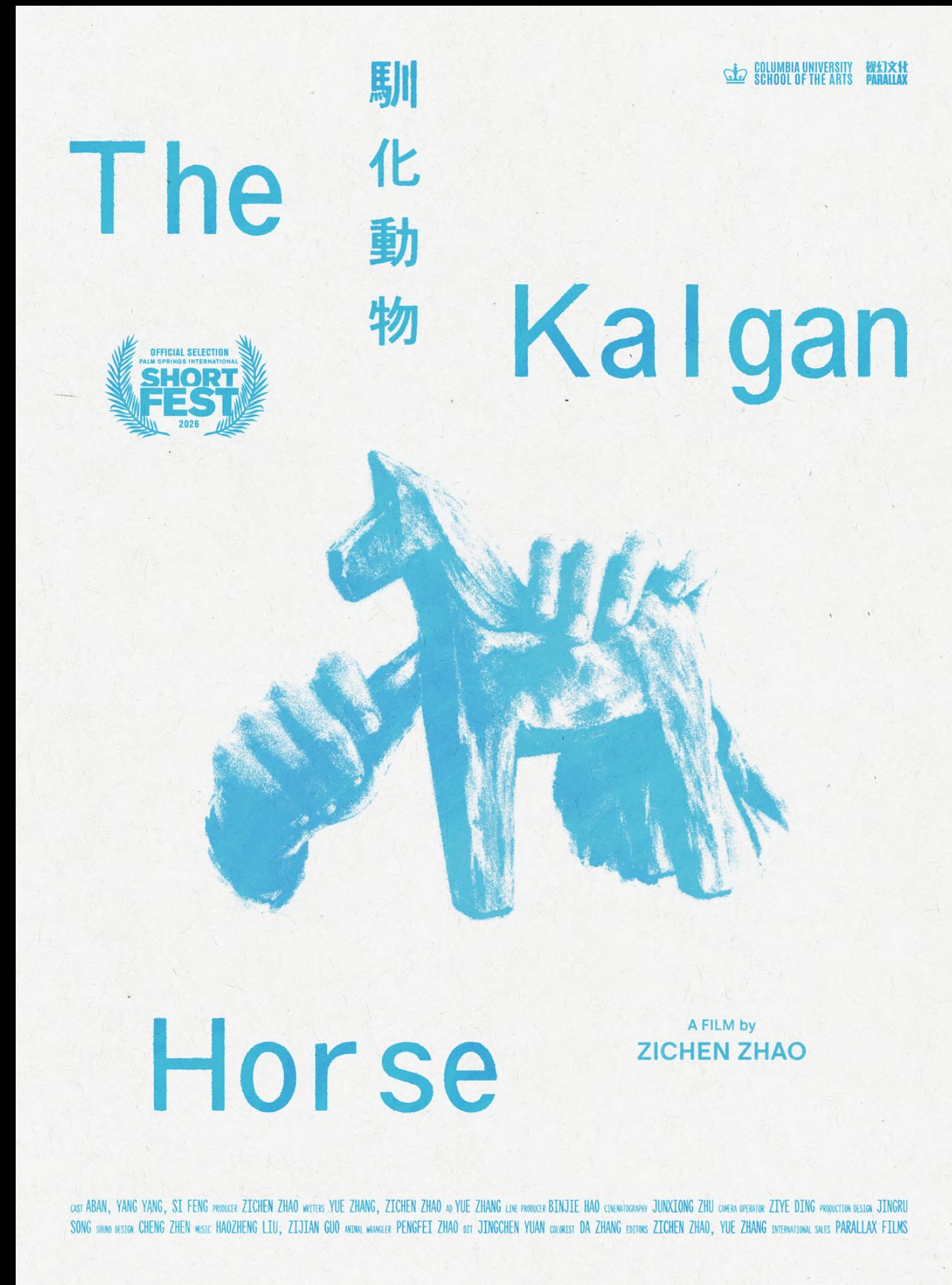
In the borderlands of farming and herding in northern China, a Mongolian horse awaits the fate of castration, while a 10-year-old boy, determined to protect it, must confront violence and cruelty beyond his understanding.

FESTIVALS

2026 Palm Springs International ShortFest - Official Selection (World Premiere)
2026 HollyShorts Film Festival - Official Selection (LA Premiere) - Best Cinematography Award
2026 Vancouver International Film Festival - Short Forum (International Premiere)
2026 Lucca Film Festival - Short Film Competition (European Premiere)
2026 El Gouna Film Festival - Short Film Competition (MENA Premiere)
2026 New Hampshire Film Festival - Official Selection (New England Premiere)
2026 SCAD Savannah Film Festival - Official Selection (Georgia Premiere)
2026 San Diego Asian Film Festival - Official Selection (SD Premiere)
2026 Athens Short Film Festival - Official Selection (Greek Premiere)



POSTER



TECH SHEET

TITLE

The Kalgan Horse

COUNTRY

China, USA

LENGTH

13 min

GENRE

Drama, Animal, Come of Age

COMPLETION DATE

June 2026

WORLD PREMIERE

Palm Springs International ShortFest 2026

LANGUAGE

Chinese

SUBTITLE

English

FORMAT

DCP 2K

CHROME

Color

ASPECT RATIO

1.33

SOUND

5.1 / Stereo



DIRECTOR STATEMENT

This film was shot in my hometown, Kalgan, China—a region situated at the threshold between farming and herding lands, where Mongolian steppe culture meets and intertwines with Han Chinese civilization. Here, animals and nature, humans and commodities, exist in constant tension—opposed yet interdependent.

Against this contradictory landscape, the film unfolds as a tender and brutal coming-of-age story. Beginning from an animal's perspective, it observes the intimacy between a horse and a boy, and the mutual gaze that emerges once that intimacy is broken. Through the relationship between the father and the son, the film also contemplates the so-called “masculinity” considered essential to a boy's growth. For the father, taming a horse entails the act of castration—yet through the eyes of an animal, might we also glimpse the hidden laws that govern human growth?



FILMOGRAPHY

The Kalgan Horse - 2026 - Short Film

DIRECTOR BIO

Zichen Zhao was born and raised in Kalgan, China. He earned his bachelor's degree in Screenwriting from Beijing Film Academy and an MFA in Film from Columbia University in New York. The short films he directed and produced have been selected for prestigious film festivals, including Vancouver IFF, Palm Springs ShortFest, HollyShorts, FIRST IFF, Cleveland IFF. His work focuses on the margins of contemporary life, critically examining gender, historical experience, and collective memory while exploring a distinctive and expressive cinematic language.





雪糕

冷饮

超

CREDIT

Director, Producer - Zichen Zhao

Writers - Yue Zhang, Zichen Zhao

Director of Photography - Junxiong Zhu

Camera Operator - Ziye Ding

Gaffer - Ganghui Lu

DIT - Jingchen Yuan

Editors - Zichen Zhao, Yue Zhang

Music - Haozheng Liu, Zijian Guo

Cast - Aban, Yang Yang, Si Feng

Assistant Director - Yue Zhang

Line Producer - Binjie Hao

Production Designer - Jingru Song

Costume Designers - Siyi Wu, Shiqi Liu

Sound Designer - Cheng Zhen

Colorist - Da Zhang

Animal Wrangler - Pengfei Zhao



CONTACT SHEET

Producer / Director

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