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One of Hong Sangsoo's most delightful comic mysteries is now available in the U.S. When painter Youngsoo (Kim Joohyuk) learns that his girlfriend, Minjung (Lee Yoo-young), was recently seen having drinks with another man, he can't help but question her about it. It doesn't go well and they part on bad terms. The next day, Youngsoo tries to find her, but can't. As he wanders and frets, Minjung has a series of encounters with other men. But to them it seems she's not herself.

Featuring a supporting cast of Hong regulars including Kwon Haehyo, Yu Junsang and Kim Euisung, Yourself and Yours is a pleasing puzzle full of mistaken identity, excessive drinking and lots of he-said, she-said. As the rumors pile up, Hong asks: In a relationship, how important is it to know everything?

86 min. | South Korea | 2016

About the film

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At least two female doppelgangers drink coffee and soju, flirt with various men, and spark gossip and mass confusion in Hong Sang-soo's "Yourself and Yours," a wise and gently absurdist allegory about how best to approach relationships. An inspired reversal of Luis Buñuel's "That Obscure Object of Desire," which had two different actresses playing the same woman, the film casts one actress playing multiple versions of herself — or so it would seem. Following last year's exceptionally ambitious (and just plain exceptional) "Right Now, Wrong Then," the film reps a confident return to the low-key pleasures of Hong's recent work, graced by a swooning romantic spirit. While a slot in the New York Film Festival may help boost its profile, it otherwise stands to reach the horizon. The multiple Minjungs act like a manifestation of Youngsoo's insecurities and hang-ups, because he's tortured by the thought of her violating his trust and drinking with other men. Hong advocates for a more liberated relationship, with the women, especially, unbound by their partner's controlling impulses. When Minjung says, "Don't try to know everything," it doubles as a thesis statement.

Yet such insights fall lightly in "Yourself and Yours," which sets the tone with Dalpalan's jaunty score in the opening credits and never darkens, even with Youngsoo's mother on death's door. As Minjung (and/or her doppelgangers), Lee You-young is so charming and self-possessed around her suitors that a withering cut-down ("I've never seen a truly impressive man") lands like a kiss. And when the liquor starts to flow, any lingering negative feelings dissipate in the buzz, like a bar confrontation that stumbles drunkenly into a male bonding session.

Hong doesn't impose any structural gamesmanship on the film, and he only presses the central gimmick as far as it needs to go for Youngsoo and Minjung to sort through their relationship, sometimes it's better just to let some things go. The multiple Minjungs act like a manifestation of Youngsoo's insecurities and hang-ups, because he's tortured by the thought of her violating his trust and drinking with other men. Hong advocates for a more liberated relationship, with the women, especially, unbound by their partner's controlling impulses. When Minjung says, "Don't try to know everything," it doubles as a thesis statement.

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Later that evening, Youngsoo confronts Minjung about breaking her promises to him, (Youngsoo limits Minjung to five glasses of soju and two beers a night, which is without him, despite their agreement that he would keep track of her alcohol intake. “clueless about women,” and relays a rumor that Minjung has been spotted drinking the idea, calling him Should he get married? His neighbor (Kim Eui-sung) laughs o

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 Yourself (and Yours)
 by Scott Tobias

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At least two female doppelgangers drink coffee and soju, flirt with various men, and spark gossip and mass confusion in Hong Sang-soo’s “Yourself and Yours,” a wise and gently absurdist allegory about how best to approach relationships. An inspired reversal of Luis Buñuel’s “That Obscure Object of Desire,” which had two different actresses playing the same woman, the film casts one actress playing multiple versions of herself — or so it would seem. Following last year’s exceptionally ambitious (and just plain exceptional) “Right Now, Wrong Then,” the film reprs a confident return to the low-key pleasures of Hong’s recent work, graced by a swooning romantic spirit. While a slot in the New York Film Festival may help boost its profile, it otherwise stands to reach the Hong faithful down the expected festival and theatrical pipeline.

“Yourself and Yours” opens with Youngsoo (Kim Joo-hyuck) in emotional crisis. His mother is gravely ill, having gone nearly two full days without eating, and her mortal state has him thinking about Minjung (Lee You-young), the other woman in his life. Should he get married? His neighbor (Kim Eui-sung) laughs off the idea, calling him “clueless about women,” and relays a rumor that Minjung has been spotted drinking without him, despite their agreement that he would keep track of her alcohol intake. (Youngsoo limits Minjung to five glasses of soju and two beers a night, which is temperate only by Hong’s supremely boozy standards.)

Later that evening, Youngsoo confronts Minjung about breaking her promises to him, but she denies the rumors forcefully and leaves him on his own. From there, things get a little weird. When grey-haired writer Jaeyoung (Kwon Hae-hyo) recognizes Minjung at a coffee shop, she treats him like a total stranger, claiming not to go by that name. She appears several scenes later at a bar, where filmmaker Sangwon (Yu Jun-sang) eagerly makes her acquaintance, but once again, she refutes the claim that they’ve ever met before. By the time Youngsoo re-enters the picture, after fruitlessly searching for her at home and work, Minjung’s true identity is a question mark.

Puzzling over who the real Minjung is — or how many doppelgangers there truly are, if any — isn’t worth expending the mental energy. And that’s the underlying insight of “Yourself and Yours”: In a healthy relationship, sometimes it’s better just to let some things go. The multiple Minjungs act like a manifestation of Youngsoo’s insecurities and hang-ups, because he’s tortured by the thought of her violating his trust and drinking with other men. Hong advocates for a more liberated relationship, with the women, especially, unbound by their partner’s controlling impulses. When Minjung says, “Don’t try to know everything,” it doubles as a thesis statement.

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Hong doesn’t impose any structural gamesmanship on the film, and he only presses the central gimmick as far as it needs to go for Youngsoo and Minjung to sort through their relationship. Buoyed by Hong’s romantic optimism, the immensely satisfying conclusion hints at the possibility of love as a renewable resource, so long as both partners are flexible to different terms. “Yourself and Yours” asks the audience to take the same leap — best to keep an open mind and go with the flow.

(Yourself and) Yours
 by Robert Koehler

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