



**Name in English:** Ang Lee  
**Name in Chinese:** 李安  
**Name in Pinyin:** Lǐ Ān  
**Gender:** Male  
**Birth Year:** 1954  
**Birth Place:** Taiwan  
**Current location:** Larchmont, New York

### **Twice Academy Award Winner for Best Film Director**

**Profession (s):** Director, Screenwriter

#### **Education:**

Master of Fine Arts, Film Production, New York University, 1984; Bachelor of Fine Arts, Theater, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 1982; National Taiwan Academy of Arts, 1973

**Awards:** 2012, Best Director Award, Academy Awards; 2012, Best Direction - International, Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts; 2007, Golden Lion Award, Venice Film Festival; 2006, Best Director Award, Critics Choice Awards; 2006 Best Director Award, Golden Globes; 2006, Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Motion Pictures, Directors Guild of America; 2006, David Lean Award for Direction, BAFTA Awards; 2005, Best Director Award, Academy Awards; 2005, Golden Lion, Venice Film Festival; 2001, Best Foreign Language Film, Academy Awards; 2001, David Lean Award for Direction, BAFTA Awards; 2001, Best Film not in the English Language, BAFTA Awards; 2001, Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Motion Pictures, Directors Guild of America; 2001, Best Director Award, Golden Globes; 1996, Best Film Award, BAFTA Awards; 1996, Golden Bear Award, Berlin Film Festival; 1993, Golden Bear Award, Berlin Film Festival

#### **Contribution (s):**

Ang Lee is a Taiwanese born American and world renowned director. His most notable films include Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, Hulk, Brokeback Mountain, for which he was awarded the Academy Award for Best Director in 2005, and Life of Pi, for which he was awarded the Academy Award for Best Director in 2012. Ang Lee is the first person of Chinese and Asian descent to have won the Best Director Award and the only one to have done so twice.

On October 23, 1954, Lee was born in the rural town of Chaochou, Pingtung, to parents that had fled China following the defeat of the Nationalists during the Chinese Civil War. Lee's father was an educator and served as a principal. Lee first attended two elementary schools in Hua Lian, an eastern county in Taiwan, where his father worked, and eventually moved to Tainan. In Tainan, Lee attended various institutions before attending the National Tainan First Senior High School where his father was the

principal. Growing up in a traditional Chinese family with an educator as a father, Lee grew up with high expectations for him to succeed in academics, something that Lee never quite achieved. Lee was much more fascinated with the stage performances and movies that he became acquainted with at a young age during the weekly free movie screenings at the school his father worked in. After two consecutive failed attempts at the college entrance exam, Lee decided to enroll in the then three-year college program at the National Arts School. Lee's decision was a great disappointment to his father, who'd always hoped for his son to become a professor.

In 1979, Lee decided to further his education in the United States, where he entered a bachelor's degree program in theater in 1980 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The university was also where he met his future wife, Jane Lin. They married in New York in 1983, the year after Lee graduated. Lee had by then entered New York University (NYU), where he received a Masters degree in Fine Arts. At NYU, Lee not only directed many short plays, but also served as the assistant director of his classmate, Spike Lee's, thesis project, *Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads*. Simultaneously, Lee's own thesis work, *Fine Line*, won him NYU's awards for Best Film and Best Director. Lee's performance during his graduate studies drew much attention and caught the eyes of many. Lee was signed to the renowned William Morris Agency, but despite the high expectations, Lee soon found himself unemployed.

Lee was unsuccessful in finding work for the next six years. His wife, Jane, by then a doctor in microbiology, became the sole source of family income while Lee prepared the meals and did the housework. Through it all Jane continued to support Lee's pursuit of his artistic career. The situation further strained Lee's relationship with his father as it seemed to validate his lack of support for his son's artistic career.

In 1990, things began to change. After entering two screenplays into the Taiwanese National Screenwriting Competition, Lee won both the first and second place awards. While attending the awards ceremony, Lee, who was in desperate straits financially, had to borrow a suit from his younger brother for the event and even broke down upon seeing the full course meal presented by the Assistant Director of Taiwan's Government Information Office to celebrate his success.

Lee's work caught the eyes of producer Li-Kong Hsu who invited Lee to film the first-place award winning screenplay, *Pushing Hands*, which was an immediate success and the critical turning point for Lee's career. Following the first film's success, the second-place screenplay, *The Wedding Banquet*, was also entered into production, and brought Lee's fame to new heights after winning the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival in 1993. In 1994, Lee presented the world with his third piece, *Eat Drink Man Woman*, which was also a critically acclaimed, winning a Best Foreign Film nomination from the Academy Awards and the Independent Spirit Award.

Lee's first films were heavily influenced by his bicultural background, often drawing a contrast between Eastern and Western cultures and the conflicts that stem from such differences. The films also revealed the struggles to choose a path unsupported by

family or society, as seen in *The Wedding Banquet*. In the eyes of many critics this reflected Lee's own struggles with his father over his artistic career choice.

In 1995, Lee premiered in Hollywood with *Sense and Sensibility*, successfully bringing Lee to America as a leading director. The film earned an Oscar nominations for Best Picture, another Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, and multiple British Academy Awards. Lee himself was voted as the year's Best Director by the National Board of Review and the New York Film Critics Circle. Lee then directed two more movies, *The Ice Storm*, and *Ride with the Devil*, but it was *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, that took Lee's fame to new heights in 2000. The film was the highest grossing foreign language film to be released in America, had 14 Oscar nominations, and 16 British Academy Award nominations. It eventually won the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar, Best Director at the Golden Globe, and four more British Academy Awards. In 2005, he directed *Brokeback Mountain*, and became the first of Asian heritage and non-white person to win the Academy Award for Best Director. This critically praised body of work proved that Lee's success wasn't just a Chinese phenomenon but belonged squarely within western mainstream culture.

As related to the Taipei Times, "Lee has said that growing up in an authoritarian environment in Taiwan and living as an outsider in the US made him into a quiet person with low self-esteem. Filmmaking, he said, gave him the opportunity to achieve something that could be shared and appreciated by others."

Lee also related that he finally reconciled with his father, who upon his deathbed, told his son to keep doing what he loves without fear.

From a no name director that couldn't find work, Lee has combined his Chinese and American cultural experiences into a widely respected array of films earning him fans from across the world.

**External Links:**

<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2008/great-directors/ang-lee/>

<http://memo.cgu.edu.tw/yun-ju/CGUWeb/SciLearn/Introduction/intro01Learn/LeeAnn.htm>

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000487/bio>

<http://movies.nytimes.com/person/166472/Ang-Lee/biography>

<http://blog.ilc.edu.tw/blog/index.php?op=printView&articleId=101948&blogId=4783>

<http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2006/03/07/2003296130>