

Show

ROLE MODEL: Film-maker Boo Junfeng was presented with Singapore's highest youth accolade in the arts and culture category.

TNP PICTURE:
GAVIN FOO



Rebel if you must, but...

Be prepared to take responsibility, says youth award-winning director Boo Junfeng

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GO AHEAD and be a rebel, but only if you are prepared to take responsibility for being one.

Local director Boo Junfeng recalled how his most memorable moment in film-making was when he "sneak-screened" his first short film, *Un Retrato De Familia* (A Family Portrait), at Ngee Ann Polytechnic's now defunct Advanced Diploma in Film Production's graduation screening in 2004.

"I did not have the permission to screen it, but I did it anyway," he said.

The 27-year-old was speaking to The New Paper at the National Youth Council's Singapore Youth Award (SYA) 2011 media conference last week.

Having won Singapore's highest youth accolade in the arts and culture category, Boo hopes to influence more youths to chase their dreams and follow their passion.

His mantra?

"Don't be afraid to make mistakes, because that's how you learn and grow."

Shoulder responsibility

"If it is something you feel strongly for, then just do it, but only if you can shoulder the responsibility that comes with it," he added.

Although he had not got approval to do so, Boo said he felt a sense of pride when he screened *Un Retrato De Familia* at the ceremony and was pleasantly surprised to receive positive feedback.

He said: "We kind of went around the rules and didn't end up getting into trouble. It turned out really well.

"Someone came up to me after that and told me that my film touched her, and that was all that matters."

The SYA has been around since 1975, when it was known as the National Youth Service Award.

To date, 126 individuals have received the prestigious honour for their contributions in fields such as arts and culture, community and youth services,

entrepreneurship, science and technology and sports and adventure.

It aims to recognise and commend young people who have excelled in their specialities, inspired others through their work and have given back to the community.

Boo made his feature film debut last year with *Sandcastle* and has shot many short films that focus on issues like heritage, alienation, family and sexuality.

He said: "Most of my films have a young protagonist, and I've found that people actually can relate to these characters, even if they're not from the same age group."

Boo's SYA-winning predecessors in the arts and culture category include local film-makers like Royston Tan in 2010 and Ho Tzu Nyen in 2009.

Boo believes in reaching out to young people by inviting them to work with him on his various film projects like *Sandcastle* and the Pink Dot 2011 promotional video.

As long as they are interested in learning more about the craft, he will gladly have them come onboard.

However, when asked if he would have wanted a mentor when he was a teenager, Boo immediately said no.

He explained: "When I was delving deeper into film-making, I learnt a lot by trial and error.

"I made so many mistakes, and yet I'm so thankful for the company that I was in, that's how I learnt."

He added: "I don't believe in being prescriptive, I would rather that youths learn from me on my sets and I can help them to become the film-makers they aspire to be."

The award has encouraged him to continue working with young people to develop their passion for film-making.

Boo said he was working on some script ideas for his next film, but they were too preliminary for him to elaborate on.

He believes in "indirectly" inspiring people.

He said: "I find it amazing how a film I write in my bedroom can make a difference to a complete stranger."