

CENTER FOR EAST ASIAN STUDIES
FRIDAY NOON FILM SERIES

PRESENTS

Contemporary Ethnographic and Documentary Films on Japan

This film series is composed of ethnographic and documentary films made in the last two decades. Like the East Asian Civilizations course offered this quarter, the films chosen for this series challenge the notion of an ethnically homogeneous, mono-cultural Japan by focusing on heterogeneity and difference in ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and locality. The films also show how a variety of people, in and outside of Japan, challenge the dominant socio-cultural values and engage in various everyday resistances and social activism. The themes of the films include war crimes and responsibility, politics, religion, labor, family, popular culture and mass media, and nationalism. Another organizing theme of the series is that the films are made by a diverse group of people, including women and minorities, thereby challenging the dominant images of Japan presented in mainstream films on Japan created primarily by male directors. All films are either dubbed or subtitled in English.

This series will be presented by Tomomi Yamaguchi, CEAS Post-Doctoral Fellow

January 7: The Murmuring ナヌムの家(1)

Byun Young Joo, 1995, 98 min.

This is the first in a three-film series from the female director Byun Young Joo on the lives of former “comfort women” in Korea. The film documents the powerful testimonies of the former “comfort women,” who were abducted, sexually abused and tortured by the Japanese military at the “comfort stations” established in Japanese colonies during WWII. At the House of Sharing, the survivors support each other in everyday living, and engage in activism to ask for an apology and compensation from the Japanese government. When released in 1995, the film had a significant impact on the feminist and peace activist communities in Japan. The winner of several film awards, including the Ogawa Shinsuke Prize at the Yamagata International Film Festival in 1995.

January 14: 50 Years of Silence: the Story of Jan Ruff-O’Herne

Net LANDER, 1994, 58 min.

The film features the story of the war-time experiences of Jan Ruff-O’Herne and other young Dutch women who were forced to become “comfort women” in Indonesia during WWII. After 50 years of keeping her war-time experience secret, she made the brave decision to speak out publicly, after seeing media reports of activism by former Korean “comfort women.” Jan wrote a book on her experiences under the same title. Winner of two documentary awards in Australia.

Doubles: Japan and America’s Intercultural Children

Regge LIFE, 1995, 58 min.

Under the US occupation of Japan after WWII, a number of children were born in and out of wedlock between American soldiers and Japanese women. Some of these intercultural children went back to the United States, while others remained in Japan, with or without their fathers and mothers. The film explores the lives of such intercultural children. It includes documentary footage of the occupation period in Japan.

January 21: The Japanese Version

Louis ALVAREZ and Andrew KOLKER, 1991, 56 min.

This film describes Japan in the late 1980s, focusing on the country’s fascination with things American. It explores how Japanese people not only imported things from the U.S., but modified them and created their own versions. Popular cultural scenes such as love hotels, weddings, cowboy-themed bars, American “tarento” (TV talents) on TV, and a popular TV game show called Ultra Quiz, are investigated.

The Good Wife of Tokyo

Claire HUNT and Kim LONGINOTTO, 1992, 52 min.

Kazuko Hohki has lived in England for fifteen years, and goes back to Tokyo with her band, the Frank Chickens. The film not only examines Kazuko's own experiences of culture shock and the generation gap, but also portrays the everyday lives of women, including Kazuko's mother, actively involved in a conservative new religion, Seichō no Ie.

January 28: Shinjuku Boys

Kim LONGINOTTO and Jano WILLIAMS, 1996, 53 min.

The film introduces the lives of three "onabe" who work as hosts to serve female customers at the New Marilyn Club in Shinjuku, Tokyo. Onabe are female to male transsexuals and transgenders, who live as men. They are portrayed on the job and in their private lives, and talk about their own experiences living as onabe, their gender identities, and their sexual experiences with their girlfriends and customers. Hearing three onabe speak out, their diverse sexualities emerge. A great film for thinking about the complex relationships among sex, gender and sexuality in contemporary Japan. The film won several major documentary prizes at lesbian and gay film festivals.

Ripples of Change ルッキング・フォー・フミコ

Nanako KURIHARA, 1993, 57 min.

The director of the film, Kurihara, who lives in New York, searched for the memories of her deceased friend, Fumiko and her participation in the women's liberation movement in 1970s Japan. Kurihara went back to Japan to meet women who participated in the women's liberation movement in the 1970s, including renowned women's liberation activists such as Mitsu Tanaka and Emi Funamoto. She interviewed the activists about their motivations, experiences and current lives. The film also includes rare footages of feminist activism in Japan in the 1970s.

February 4: Gaea Girls

Kim LONGINOTTO and Jano WILLIAMS, 106 min.

Again from award-winning directors, Longinotto and her frequent collaborator Williams, Gaea Girls is a film on a group of professional women wrestlers in Japan. It documents the behind-the-scenes of the world of professional wrestling, such as their hard training, boot-camp like intensive regimen, and daily lives. Some wrestlers, from the major star Nagayo Chigusa, and young new trainees, are depicted in the film. Their training and wrestling matches are equally as violent as those of male wrestlers.

February 11: Japanese Devils: Confessions of Imperial Army Soldiers from Japan's War Against China=Riben Guizi 日本鬼子

Minoru MATSUI, 2000, 160 min.

This extremely shocking and courageous film features fourteen Japanese ex-servicemen who broke Japan's unwritten code of silence by speaking out about their brutal war crimes in China from 1931 to 1945. The shocking confessions are of common violence in their own units, the medical experiments on humans conducted by Unit 731, and the brutal slaughter, torture, arson, and rape committed against Chinese civilians. After their period of "re-education" while imprisoned by Communist China, these soldiers went back to Japan only to find harsh discrimination against themselves as aka ("Communists.") This highly controversial film won acclaim by many scholars and critics in and outside of Japan when released, but currently, it is not commercially distributed— so don't miss this showing!!

February 18: A

Tatsuya MORI, 1998, 135 min.

On March 20, 1995, the Aum Shinrikyo cult attacked the Tokyo subways with poison sarin gas, killing 12 people and injured over 5,000 people. The director Mori gained access to the inside of the Aum compound, and

portrayed the daily lives of the Aum members. By doing so, he also explored the problem of the distorted information delivered via the mainstream media, and the society that produced the Aum cult. A highly controversial film that garnered both praise and harsh critiques in Japan for the director's stance toward the Aum cult.

February 25: A2

Tatsuya MORI, 2001, 131 min.

In this a sequel to A, the director Mori picked up his camera for the first time in about two years. Aum Shin-rikyo, now renamed Aleph, still continued to exist, with branches in many locations. The film depicts some residents' movements to remove the Aum members from their own cities and towns, Aum's contested relations with the police, and again, the underlying problems of contemporary Japanese society.

March 4: Overstay

Ann KANEKO, 1998, 45 min.

Six young foreign workers from Pakistan, Peru, Iran and the Philippines who are living in Japan share their stories in this film. They talk about their motivation to come to Japan, their families and friends back home, their harsh lives in Japan, discrimination against them, visa-related problems, and their cultural identities. The camera follows their daily lives in the periphery of Japan, and delivers a powerful message about the significant yet frequently neglected or misunderstood social issue of ethnic minorities and foreign workers in contemporary Japan.

Osaka Story

Toichi NAKATA, 1994, 84 min.

Filmmaker Toichi Nakata went back to Japan and produced a film about his own family, with a zainichi (resident) Korean father and a Japanese mother, as a graduation project in his film school in England where he had been living for three years. The film depicts everyday lives in a zainichi community in Osaka, and family conflicts and problems in the Nakata family. At the end of the film, the director himself struggles with whether or not he should disclose his own "secret".

March 11: The New God 新しい神様

Yutaka TSUCHIYA, 1999, 99 min.

A young Japanese woman, Karin Amamiya, is a right-wing activist, and a female vocalist in an ultra-nationalist punk rock band that she formed with her friend, Hideto Ito. On the other hand, the director of the film, Tsuchiya, is a left-wing filmmaker who considers the root problem of Japanese society to lie in the emperor system. Tsuchiya gave his video camera to Amamiya, and she started to film her daily life, thinking, and activism. She met major right-wing and left-wing activists in the film, as well as traveling to North Korea with a member of the Red Wing Army. There she met the "Yodo-gou" criminals who were also Red Wing Army members who hijacked an airplane in 1970. The film offers great material to think about the "emptiness" and political apathy that many young people have in contemporary Japan, and at the same time, the emergence of new nationalism there.

ALL SCREENINGS ARE FREE AND TAKE PLACE AT JUDD 302, BEGINNING AT 12:40 PM. FEEL FREE TO BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH TO EAT WHILE WATCHING