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Japan Society Announces Full Lineup for JAPAN CUTS: Festival of New Japanese Film

**12th Edition Includes Over 30 Films Never Before Seen in NYC,
With Unprecedented Number of Special Guests, Including Awardee Kirin Kiki**

July 19-29, 2018, at Japan Society



New York, NY (June 11, 2018) – Japan Society announces the full lineup of the 12th annual [JAPAN CUTS: Festival of New Japanese Film](#). Described by *The New York Times* as “meticulously curated” and “an annual highlight of New York’s film calendar,” the summer festival brings a wide range of the best and hardest-to-see films made in and around Japan today—from blockbusters, independent productions and anime, to documentaries, avant-garde works, short films, and new restorations.

This year’s edition spans ten days — from July 19 through July 29 — and features 28 feature-length films and 9 short films across the **Feature Slate**, **Classics: Rediscoveries and Restorations**, **Documentary Focus**, and **Experimental Spotlight** sections. Among them are 3 World Premieres, 3 International Premieres, 11 North American Premieres, 8 U.S. Premieres, 3 East Coast Premieres, and 7 New York Premieres. In addition, JAPAN CUTS 2018 boasts the most confirmed guest filmmakers, actors, and producers in the festival’s history, many visiting New York with films for the first time.

As previously announced, the festival is proud to honor the beloved actress **Kirin Kiki** with this year’s **CUT ABOVE Award for Outstanding Performance in Film**. An industry veteran with over 50 years of screen credits behind her, Kiki is recognized today as one of her generation’s leading talents. She is best known internationally as a frequent collaborator of renowned auteur Hirokazu Kore-eda (*After the Storm*), with whom she worked this year on the Cannes Film Festival Palme d’Or-winning *Shoplifters* (alongside actors Sakura Ando and Lily Franky, two previous recipients of the CUT ABOVE Award). In addition to the **Centerpiece Presentation** title *Mori, The Artist’s Habitat*, Kiki is featured in this year’s JAPAN CUTS with a 10th Anniversary 35mm screening of Kore-eda’s landmark family drama *Still Walking*.

For its tentpole **Opening Film** selection, JAPAN CUTS hosts the North American Premiere of *Ramen Shop*, a moving Japan/Singapore/France co-produced drama directed by **Eric Khoo** in which secret family recipes help bridge generations and cultures. Khoo and the film’s star **Takumi Saitoh** appear in-person for the July 19 screening, which is followed by an opening night party. The **Centerpiece Presentation** is the North

American Premiere of Shuichi Okita's *Mori, The Artist's Habitat*, a fictionalized biopic centered on a single day in the life of reclusive Tokyo artist Morikazu Kumagai and his wife Hideko. The screening is preceded by the CUT ABOVE Award ceremony and is followed by a Q&A with star **Kirin Kiki** and post-screening party. Finally, the **Closing Film** is the epic *Hanagatami*, a meditation on youth and love amidst the backdrop of war, directed by pioneering filmmaker **Nobuhiko Obayashi**, best-known for his cult classic *House* (1977). A Q&A with star **Shunsuke Kubozuka** follows the U.S. Premiere screening.

"JAPAN CUTS is dedicated to deepening appreciation of Japanese film culture in a transnational context," says Japan Society Senior Film Programmer Aiko Masubuchi, who organizes the festival with Japan Society Film Programmer Kazu Watanabe and JAPAN CUTS Programmer Joel Neville Anderson. "This dynamic 12th edition includes more guests than ever before, offering unprecedented opportunities for intercultural exchange between New York audiences and an exciting new generation of creators alongside established masters. In putting together this year's diverse slate of imaginative, daring work, we were continually energized by new discoveries that expanded our understanding of Japanese film culture as well as our own current historical moment. It is with that sense of excitement and spirit of discovery that we share this summer's lineup."

Most filmmakers and talent available for interviews; please reach out to Caitlin@CaitlinHughesPR.com with all talent and ticket requests. Full slate of films below.

JAPAN CUTS 2018 FULL LINEUP

All films screen at NYC's Japan Society (333 E. 47th St., New York, NY 10017) and are presented in Japanese with English subtitles, unless otherwise noted.

Opening Film



Ramen Shop (North American Premiere)

Thursday, July 19 at 7:00 pm

Dir. Eric Khoo. With Takumi Saitoh, Seiko Matsuda, Mark Lee, Jeanette Aw.

2018, 89 min., Drama. In English, Japanese, Mandarin, and Cantonese with English subtitles.

Masato (Takumi Saitoh) helps run a ramen shop in Takasaki, Japan with his emotionally distant father. Upon his father's sudden death, a suitcase of old family photographs and journals that belonged to his long-deceased Singaporean mother motivates Takumi to learn about his roots and the mystery of his parents' relationship in Singapore. With the help of a Japanese expat food blogger (pop idol Seiko Matsuda) and his maternal uncle (comedian Mark Lee), Masato undergoes a journey of discovery that unlocks secret family recipes, reveals painful pasts and begins a process of reconciliation that bridges national histories and generations. Filled with delectable scenes featuring Singaporean cuisine, this moving drama by Singapore's leading auteur Eric Khoo celebrates the power of love, family and good food. **Intro and Q&A with director Eric Khoo and star Takumi Saitoh. Followed by the Opening Night Party.**

Centerpiece Presentation



[Mori, The Artist's Habitat](#) (North American Premiere)

Thursday, July 26 at 7:00 pm

Dir. Shuichi Okita. With Tsutomu Yamazaki, Kirin Kiki, Ryo Kase, Ken Mitsuishi.

2018, 99 min., Comedy.

In the last 30 years of his long life, reclusive artist Morikazu Kumagai (1880-1977), aka Mori, almost never left his Ikebukuro home. Instead, he took pleasure in a daily routine of observing the cats, fish, birds and insects living in his luxuriant garden for hours, eventually rendering them into his distinct paintings. Featuring a colorful cast headlined by screen legends Tsutomu Yamazaki (*Tampopo*) and Kirin Kiki (*Still Walking*), this delightful, offbeat comedy directed by Shuichi Okita (*Mohican Comes Home*) imagines a day in the life of Mori and Hideko, his wife of over 50 years, as they entertain a throng of welcome and unwelcome visitors, including a pair of condo developers whose encroaching presence signals the end of an era. **Intro and Q&A with star Kirin Kiki, with CUT ABOVE Award ceremony. Followed by the Centerpiece Party.**

Closing Film



[Hanagatami](#) (U.S. Premiere)

Sunday, July 29 at 7:00 pm

Dir. Nobuhiko Obayashi. With Shunsuke Kubozuka, Takako Tokiwa, Mugi Kadowaki, Shinnosuke Mitsushima.

2017, 169 min., Drama.

A passion project that was in gestation even before his legendary debut *House* (1977), veteran director Nobuhiko Obayashi's follow-up to *Seven Weeks* (JAPAN CUTS 2015) is an adaptation of Kazuo Dan's 1937 novella about a group of teenagers living in the coastal town of Karatsu as the Pacific War creeps ever closer. An ensemble cast of Japanese cinema's rising stars plays out Obayashi's fever dream of youth, desire and romance within an extravagantly stylized cinematic hyperreality full of his signature green screen composites, elaborate lighting and dizzying editing. With the horror of war in view, the doomed characters

burn with desire to live their lives to the fullest, suggesting both a warning and a call for compassion and peace from the 80-year-old director. **Intro and Q&A with star Shunsuke Kubozuka.**

Preceded by Short Film:

"How Can You Know Where to Go If You Do Not Know Where You Have Been"

Dir. Mizuki Toriya, 2018, 6 min, Animation/Documentary.

In this tender and inspired short, the director sets delicate sand imagery to a conversation with her grandmother who experienced WWII in Kobe.

Feature Slate

In Alphabetical Order



Still from Yoko Yamanaka's *Amiko*

[Amiko](#) (U.S. Premiere)

Sunday, July 29 at 2:45 pm

Dir. Yoko Yamanaka. With Aira Sunohara, Hiroto Oshita, Maiko Mineo, Ayu Hasegawa.

2017, 66 min., Drama/Comedy.

16-year-old Amiko is bored by her mundane life as a high schooler in Nagano until she meets Aomi, a classmate on the soccer team who shares her cynical point of view (and love of Radiohead), and develops a major crush. Though she doesn't speak to him for months, when Aomi suddenly drops out of school and moves to Tokyo with a former student who represents everything she loathes, Amiko takes off after him to make sense of the betrayal. Shot and edited with a bold, unpredictable style that matches its title character's rebellious playfulness, this invigorating micro-budget debut by 20-year-old director Yoko Yamanaka successfully avoids coming-of-age clichés to offer a wholly original take on the messy contradictions and yearnings of youth. **Intro and Q&A with director Yoko Yamanaka.**

Preceded by Short Film:

"NAGISA" (New York Premiere)

Dir. Takeshi Kogahara, 2017, 18 min, Drama.

A single poolside conversation with a classmate lingers on in the memory of a high school boy.

[blank 13](#) (New York Premiere)

Friday, July 20 at 9:15 pm

Dir. Takumi Saitoh. With Issei Takahashi, Mayu Matsuoka, Takumi Saitoh, Lily Franky.

2018, 70 min., Drama.

Thirteen years after abandoning his wife and two sons by stepping out for a pack of cigarettes and never returning, deadbeat gambler Masato (Lily Franky) dies of stomach cancer. At his funeral, a motley crew of fellow mahjong players, pachinko parlor employees and former drinking buddies gather to pay their respects and tell stories, revealing aspects of Masato's life that complicate his sons' resentment towards him. Based on the childhood experiences of screenwriter Koji Hashimoto, this directorial debut by popular actor Takumi Saitoh takes a unique approach to the dysfunctional family drama and funeral comedy, effectively utilizing

flashbacks and unexpected shifts in tone to explore what it means to be part of someone's life, for better or worse. **Intro and Q&A with director/star Takumi Saitoh.**

[BLEACH](#) (U.S. Premiere)

Saturday, July 28 at 7:45 pm

Dir. Shinsuke Sato. With Sota Fukushi, Hana Sugisaki, Ryo Yoshizawa, Taichi Saotome, MIYAVI.

2018, 108 min., Action.

The highly anticipated live-action adaptation of the mega popular Tite Kubo manga and anime series about the adventures of supernaturally gifted, orange-haired teenager Ichigo Kurosaki (Sota Fukushi). Capable of seeing spirits, Ichigo meets a "Soul Reaper" (shinigami) by the name of Rukia Kuchiki (Hana Sugisaki), who transfers her powers to him after being injured by an evil spirit known as a "Hollow." Under Rukia's guidance, Ichigo trains to harness his newfound Soul Reaper abilities in the battle against Hollows while Rukia does her best to fit in as a human high school girl. Skillfully directed by Shinsuke Sato (*I Am a Hero, Gantz*) with state-of-the-art CGI and a stellar cast, BLEACH raises the bar high for live-action manga adaptations. *Co-presented with AnimeNYC.* **Intro and Q&A with director Shinsuke Sato.**

[Born Bone Born](#) (North American Premiere)

Saturday, July 21 at 12:00 pm

Dir. Toshiyuki Teruya. With Ayame Misaki, Eiji Okuda, Michitaka Tsutsui, Yoko Oshima.

2018, 111 min., Comedy.

This second feature by Okinawan comedian Toshiyuki Teruya, a.k.a. Gori (one half of the popular comedy duo Garage Sale) is a sunny, humanistic comedy set in Aguni, a remote island of Okinawa. A visibly pregnant Yuko (Ayame Misaki, *Radiance*) returns home to find her family still grappling with the recent passing of her mother, Emiko, while her father (Eiji Okuda) becomes increasingly withdrawn and her older brother (Michitaka Tsutsui) hopelessly combative. When neighbors start to gossip about Yuko's fatherless unborn child, the local matriarch comes to her defense alongside a childhood friend. Soon, it will be a year since Emiko's passing, and time to exhume her and wash her bones as dictated by the island's Senkotsu ritual.

[Call Boy](#) (North American Premiere)

Tuesday, July 24 at 9:15 pm

Dir. Daisuke Miura. With Tori Matsuzaka, Sei Matobu, Ami Tomite, Yuki Sakurai, Kenta Izuka.

2018, 119 min., Erotic Drama.

A bored university student (Tori Matsuzaka) with a penchant for Greek philosophy moonlighting as a Shimokitazawa bartender is picked up by a mysterious woman (Sei Matobu) who invites him to join her male escort service, launching a journey of self-discovery through the sexual satisfaction of a range of wealthy middle-aged clients. With nods to *American Gigolo's* critical vision of '80s flash, director and playwright Daisuke Miura (*Love's Whirlpool*) unabashedly embraces awkward erotic excess to reveal social fault lines through the subculture of sex work. The film's ceaseless parade of customers' kinks eventually flattens the shock of explicit onscreen acts, taking the intimate lives of its characters out from under the neon to the bright light of day. **This film is unrated, but is not recommended for persons younger than 18 years of age due to strong sexual content.**

[Dear Etranger](#) (New York Premiere)

Sunday, July 29 at 12:00 pm

Dir. Yukiko Mishima. With Tadanobu Asano, Rena Tanaka, Kankuro Kudo, Shinobu Terajima.

2017, 127 min., Drama.

Career-oriented forty-something divorcees Makoto (Tadanobu Asano) and Yuka (Shinobu Terajima) have each remarried, Makoto living with the younger Nanae (Rena Tanaka) and her two daughters from a previous marriage, and Yuka with her second husband and Makoto's daughter. When Nanae becomes pregnant and Yuka's husband ill, each family member is forced to reconsider the bonds of family beyond bloodlines and normative tradition. Yukiko Mishima's (*A Stitch of Life*) contemporary realization of Kiyoshi Shigematsu's 1996 novel (with a screenplay adapted by Haruhiko Arai) is a moving new entry in Japan's family drama genre. Giving each character complex weaknesses and desires, Mishima brings extraordinary performances from veteran cast and young newcomers Raiju Kamata and Sara Minami.

[Dream of Illumination](#) (International Premiere)

Saturday, July 21 at 2:30 pm

Dir. Thunder Sawada. With Sara Shida, Yuya Takagawa, Maho Yamada, Akira Hamada.

2017, 91 min., Drama.

After moving place to place due to her divorcé father Ueda's (Yuya Takagawa) work as a real estate agent, high school senior Nana (Sara Shida) has spent the most time in the small town of Rokujo. Facilitating the purchase of low-value land by foreign buyers for development, Ueda is the scorn of the dwindling population of farmers stuck in debt and harboring provincial attitudes toward outsiders. As Nana considers her next step, her father reveals the secret trauma linking him to this land and its people. Writer/director Thunder Sawada's critical examination of the precarity of rural life and inevitability of change boasts a warmly authentic cast, gorgeous B&W cinematography by Mizuki Nishida, and a trembling, moody score by Kenji Kariu. **Intro and Q&A with director Thunder Sawada, star Yuya Takagawa, and producer Kazuyuki Kitaki.**

[KUSHINA, what will you be](#) (International Premiere)

Wednesday, July 25 at 6:30 pm

Dir. Moët Hayami. With Miyuki Ono, Tomona Hirota, Yayoi Inamoto, Ikumi Satake.

2018, 68 min., Drama.

A meditation on youth, separatist politics and the rejection of patriarchy, Moët Hayami's remarkable debut feature tells the story of Onikuma (Miyuki Ono, *Evil Dead Trap, Black Rain*), who founds an independent community of women in the mountain woods. Her daughter Kagu (Tomona Hirota, "YEAH") was 14-years-old and pregnant with child when they first escaped modern society. Now that daughter, Kushina (Ikumi Satake), is reaching the same age and wondering about the world beyond the mountain. When a well-meaning anthropologist (Yayoi Inamoto) and her male assistant (Suguru Onuma) enter this precarious utopia, Onikuma is prepared to take all necessary steps to protect it, even if it means threatening the future Kushina might imagine for herself. **Intro and Q&A with director Moët Hayami and star Tomona Hirota.**

[Last Winter, We Parted](#) (North American Premiere)

Saturday, July 21st at 5:00 pm

Dir. Tomoyuki Takimoto. With Takanori Iwata, Takumi Saitoh, Mizuki Yamamoto, Kazuki Kitamura, Reina Asami.

2018, 118 min., Mystery/Suspense.

An ambitious, young freelance journalist (Takanori Iwata) takes on the closed case of a famous fine arts photographer (Takumi Saitoh) whose beautiful female subject died on set in a gruesome fire. As details of the artist's eery fascinations with physical mortality emerge, the writer pitches the increasingly salacious story to a skeptical editor (Kazuki Kitamura) just as it takes a dangerous turn. Directed by Tomoyuki Takimoto (*Brain Candy*), this exceptional mystery/thriller features a top-notch cast, skillfully employing *noir* genre conventions as alternating protagonists adopt the film's investigation. With shades of *Blow Up*, thematic focus on visual control and manipulation causes the lurid narrative of erotic obsession to turn in on itself, even as the plot twists toward its conclusion. Based on the novel by award-winning author Fuminori Nakamura.

[Night is Short, Walk On Girl](#) (East Coast Premiere)

Saturday, July 21 at 10:15 pm

Dir. Masaaki Yuasa. With Gen Hoshino, Kana Hanazawa, Hiroshi Kamiya, Ryuji Akiyama.

2017, 93 min., Animation.

Spunky college student Otome embarks on a booze-soaked romp through Kyoto in search of a book from her childhood. As the night stretches on for what seems like years, her quest takes on epic, hallucinatory proportions--starring a fanged god of used books, a guerilla theater troupe, a committee of crab-dancing philosophers, and love-inducing carp that fall from the sky. Meanwhile, an upperclassman at her university (voiced by pop star Gen Hoshino) undergoes a series of equally improbable misadventures in his attempts to win her heart. Adapted from the award-winning novel by Tomihiko Morimi, acclaimed animation director Masaaki Yuasa's first feature in a decade is a delightful trip down the rabbit hole into questions of fate and interconnectedness, rendered in an astounding visual style.

Preceded by Short Film:

"DREAMLAND" (New York Premiere)

Dir. Mirai Mizue, 2018, 5 min, Animation.

Simple rectilinear figures assemble into surprisingly complex “cities” that pulse along to Scarlatti Goes Electro’s hyperkinetic score.

Outrage Coda (New York Premiere)

Saturday, July 28 at 5:15 pm

Dir. Takeshi Kitano. With “Beat” Takeshi Kitano, Toshiyuki Nishida, Ren Osugi, Tatsuo Nadaka, Ken Mitsuishi.

2017, 104 min., Action.

The third entry in the *Outrage* yakuza series finds Takeshi Kitano’s Otomo on South Korea’s idyllic Jeju island running enforcement for Chang (Tokio Kaneda) in regional organized crime. The heap of bodies Otomo left on mainland Japan created an opening for the Hanabishi clan to preside over an uneasy union of yakuza syndicates, led by ex-stock trader Nomura (Ren Osugi), now purging old school gangsterism for slick corporate corruption. Interrupting Otomo’s semi-retirement, Hanabishi-kai lieutenant Hanada (Pierre Taki) makes a stir at a Jeju resort, causing Otomo to seek Chang’s retribution and settle his own score. Kitano relishes knotting crime world bureaucracy into a ball of double-crosses with stylish momentum, displaying the absurdity of toxic masculinity and emptiness of violence. **This film is unrated, but is not recommended for persons younger than 18 years of age due to excessive violence.**

Passage of Life (North American Premiere)

Saturday, July 21 at 7:30 pm

Dir. Akio Fujimoto. With Issace, Htet Myat Naing, Niina Kuromiya, Kaung Myat Thu.

2017, 99 min., Drama.

Years after fleeing Myanmar and settling in Japan, an undocumented Burmese family faces an uncertain future as their application for political refugee status gets rejected. Khine and her husband Issace debate the dangers of going back to their home country while their Japan-raised sons, 7-year-old Kaung and 5-year-old Htet, struggle to connect with their Burmese identity despite Khine’s attempts to keep them linked through language lessons. Working with a cast of mostly non-actors, whose real-life experiences inform the narrative, first time director Akio Fujimoto constructs a remarkably affecting social realist drama that conveys the emotional stresses and socioeconomic struggles of life as a refugee in Japan with sensitivity, empathy and a documentary-like sense of immediacy. **Intro and Q&A with director Akio Fujimoto.**

Radiance (New York Premiere)

Wednesday, July 25 at 8:45 pm

Dir. Naomi Kawase. With Masatoshi Nagase, Ayame Misaki, Chihiro Ohtsuka, Noémie Nakai.

2017, 101 min., Drama.

Misako Ozaki (Ayame Misaki, *Born Bone Born*) is enthusiastically learning the craft of creating audio descriptions at a company producing soundtracks for visually impaired cinemagoers. Collaborating with a group of consultants with limited eyesight, she struggles to balance accuracy with space for visual imagination, clashing with Masaya Nakamori (Masatoshi Nagase, *Electric Dragon 80.000 V, Mystery Train*), a celebrated photographer with deteriorating vision. Together they learn to open their senses to the world around them. Approaching her subject with characteristic sincerity and sensuality, Naomi Kawase (*Sweet Bean, The Mourning Forest*) harnesses playful metafilmic devices from documentary style to a film-within-a-film featuring Tatsuya Fuji and Misuzu Kanno. Lensed by photographer Arata Dodo and featuring a vibrant score by Ibrahim Maalouf.

Preceded by Short Film:

“Across the water” (World Premiere)

Dir. Nao Yoshigai, 2018, 9 min, Avant-Garde/Performance.

A misty body of water holds the moving human form, flesh, glass, and fabric placed in iridescent relation.

Side Job. (U.S. Premiere)

Sunday, July 22 at 4:15 pm

Dir. Ryuichi Hiroki. With Kumi Takiuchi, Ken Mitsuishi, Kengo Kora, Tokio Emoto, Atsushi Shinohara.

2017, 119 min., Drama.

Living in temporary housing following the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear catastrophe of March 11, 2011, Miyuki (Kumi Takiuchi, *Greatful Dead*) works as a clerk for Iwaki city. Her father (Ken Mitsuishi, *Outrage Coda*) lost his wife as well as his livelihood of farming in the disaster, and spends his days in pachinko parlors slipping further into depressive alcoholism. On weekends, under the pretense of English courses, she takes the express bus to forgetful Tokyo and adopts her alter ego as a hotel call girl. Fukushima native Ryuichi Hiroki, known for gritty romantic indies (*Vibrator*) and studio genre crowd pleasers (*Her Granddaughter*), adapts his own novel in one of the most earnest and poignant dramatic treatments of the long aftermath of 3/11. **This film is unrated, but is not recommended for persons younger than 18 years of age due to strong sexual content.**

[Thicker Than Water](#) (North American Premiere)

Saturday, July 28 at 2:30 pm

Dir. Keisuke Yoshida. With Masataka Kubota, Hirofumi Arai, Keiko Enoue, Miwako Kakei.

2018, 103 min., Drama/Comedy.

Hard-working Yuria (Keiko Enoue) runs a small printing company. Despite her best efforts, she can't seem to attract the attention of Kazunari (Masataka Kubota), a polite yet aloof client who is more interested in flirting with Mako (Miwako Kakei), Yuria's ditzzy younger sister and employee. Meanwhile, Kazunari has his hands full with Takuji (Hirofumi Arai), his rough-hewn brother who was recently released from prison and is crashing at his apartment. With perceptive insight, director Keisuke Yoshida (*Himeanole, My Little Sweet Pea*) highlights the comedic heights and dramatic lows of these impossibly mismatched but mutually dependent sibling pairs as they deal with familial duties, business dealings and matters of the heart. Featuring a stellar breakout performance by *manzai* comic Keiko Enoue. **Intro and Q&A with director Keisuke Yoshida.**

[TOURISM](#) (International Premiere)

Sunday, July 29 at 5:00 pm

Dir. Daisuke Miyazaki. With Nina Endo, Sumire, Takayuki Yanagi.

2018, 77 min., Drama. In Japanese, English, and Malay with English subtitles.

When Nina (Nina Endo) wins free airline tickets, she leaves her dingy apartment and part-time factory job in Yamato City, Japan for Singapore with her friend Su (Sumire). Wandering aimlessly through the tourist district, they are underwhelmed by national monuments and return to the familiarity of giant shopping malls, selfie stick in hand. But when Nina loses track of both Su and her smartphone, she stumbles into a more unmediated experience with Singapore's streets, food and people. Director Daisuke Miyazaki's follow-up to *Yamato (California)* (JAPAN CUTS 2017) is a pleasantly lowkey riff on alienation and materialism within a globalizing society shot in pseudo-documentary style, replete with quirky dance sequences, Snapchat filters, ghosts and a mysterious child narrator.

[Tremble All You Want](#) (U.S. Premiere)

Saturday, July 28 at 12:00 pm

Dir. Akiko Ohku. With Mayu Matsuoka, Daichi Watanabe, Anna Ishibashi, Takumi Kitamura.

2017, 117 min., Romantic Comedy.

Yoshika (Mayu Matsuoka) has had a crush on Ichimiya (Takumi Kitamura), whom she calls "Ichi" (One), since she was in middle school. Now a 24-year-old salarywoman, her all-consuming fixation has prevented her from even considering another candidate for boyfriend until an office colleague, whom she dubs "Ni" (Two), asks her out. As she sorts out her Ichi vs. Ni predicament through mile-a-minute monologues spoken to a cast of regular characters and aloud to herself, Yoshika gradually reveals the depths of her obsessions, which become increasingly troubling as her fantasy life and reality start to collapse into each other. Adapted from the novel by award-winning author Risa Wataya, director Akiko Ohku's delightfully off-kilter romcom offers a refreshing twist on a familiar genre.

[Violence Voyager](#) (U.S. Premiere)

Friday July 20 at 11:30 pm

Dir. Ujicha. With Aoi Yuki, Naoki Tanaka, Shigeo Takahashi, Tomorrowo Taguchi.

2018, 84 min., Animation.

An American boy named Bobby and his friend Akkun set out for the mountains to build a secret hideout. On their way, they stumble upon a mysterious amusement park called "Violence Voyager." It doesn't take long for

things to get weird as the boys discover a group of scared children who can't seem to escape and soon find themselves under attack by robot-like humanoids. For his three years in the making follow-up to *The Burning Buddha Man* (2013) director Ujicha again employs a blend of animation and manga called "geki-mation," creating grotesque body horror nightmare imagery from painstakingly detailed, hand-painted paper cutouts. Chock-full of B-horror, sci-fi and *kaiju* film references, this blood-soaked late-night flick is not for the kiddies. **This film is unrated, but is not recommended for persons younger than 18 years of age due to disturbing content.**

[We Make Antiques!](#) (East Coast Premiere)

Sunday, July 22 at 12:00 pm

Dir. Masaharu Take. With Kiichi Nakai, Kuranosuke Sasaki, Tomochika, Aoi Morikawa.

2018, 110 min., Comedy.

A whip smart, laugh out loud buddy comedy that gently satirizes the antiques trade, directed by Masaharu Take (*100 Yen Love*). Toshio (Kiichi Nakai), a smooth-talking antiques dealer with a keen eye but perpetual bad luck, finally strikes gold when he finds a tea bowl with a letter written by 16th century tea master Sen no Rikyu. Or at least he thinks he does. When it's revealed that he was actually sold immaculate fakes made by a group of conmen led by disgraced potter Sasuke (Kuranosuke Sasaki), Toshio sees another opportunity and decides to go in with them to pull off an elaborate heist. Their plan: create a priceless Rikyu bowl and reap the massive rewards.

[Yocho \(Foreboding\)](#) (U.S. Premiere)

Tuesday, July 24 at 6:30 pm

Dir. Kiyoshi Kurosawa. With Kaho, Shota Sometani, Masahiro Higashide, Ren Osugi.

2017, 140 min., Sci-Fi.

When people around her start going mad, Etsuko (Kaho, *Our Little Sister*) finds the cause of their affliction in the hospital where her husband Tatsuo (Shota Sometani, *Himizu*) works with the mysterious Dr. Makabe (Masahiro Higashide, *Asako I & II*). What she discovers are extraterrestrials in human form that are capable of removing "concepts" from people with the touch of a hand and are prepping for an invasion. Etsuko, however, also finds she is immune to their powers. Featuring his flair for depicting modern alienation while utilizing ingenious scene set ups and subtle humor, Kiyoshi Kurosawa (*Journey to the Shore, Cure*) returns with this lo-fi sci-fi steeped in the body snatcher genre that expands on the world of *Before We Vanish* (2017).

Classics: Rediscoveries and Restorations

In Alphabetical Order



Still from Masayuki Suo's *Abnormal Family*

[Abnormal Family](#) (North American Premiere)

Friday, July 27 at 11:30 pm

Dir. Masayuki Suo. With Kaoru Kaze, Miki Yamaji, Usagi Aso, Ren Osugi.

1984, 63 min., Softcore "Pink Film."

Before going on to win Japan Academy Prizes for *Sumo Do, Sumo Don't* (1992) and his international hit comedy *Shall We Dance?* (1996), director Masayuki Suo began his filmmaking career in the softcore pink film genre with this playful, erotic homage and parody of Yasujiro Ozu's family dramas. Utilizing a *Tokyo Story*-like premise about a buxom daughter-in-law's relationship with her husband's nuclear family and a father's feeling of isolation from his children, *Abnormal Family* is full of nods to Ozu's cinematic universe that will delight (or deeply offend) fans of the Japanese cinema master—including tatami-level medium close-ups, stilted dialogue, and an uncanny Chishu Ryu impression by Ren Osugi—while also fulfilling the requisite number of sex scenes. New 4K restoration by Rapid Eye Lab. **This film is unrated, but is not recommended for persons younger than 18 years of age due to strong sexual content.**

[Still Walking](#) (10th Anniversary Screening)

Friday, July 27 at 6:30 pm

Dir. Hirokazu Kore-eda. With Hiroshi Abe, Yui Natsukawa, You, Kirin Kiki.

2008, 114 min., Drama.

The Yokoyama family gathers for an annual commemoration of the eldest son Junpei, who drowned fifteen years ago while saving someone's life. Over the course of the day, suppressed tensions and resentments are gradually revealed amidst forced pleasantries and shared meals as second son Ryo (Hiroshi Abe) endures feelings of inferiority in front of his curmudgeon father (Yoshio Harada) and passively judgmental mother (Kirin Kiki), both of whom disapprove of his recent marriage to a widow (Yui Natsukawa) with a 10-year-old son. Dedicated to his late mother, Hirokazu Kore-eda's 2008 drama is among his most personal films—a masterfully directed, emotionally nuanced expression of the love, heartbreak and comfort within family relationships—and a modern classic of Japanese cinema.

Documentary Focus

In Alphabetical Order



Still from Hikaru Toda's *Of Love & Law*

[Of Love & Law](#) (East Coast Premiere)

Friday, July 20 at 6:30 pm

Dir. Hikaru Toda. With Kazuyuki Minami, Masafumi Yoshida, Yae Minami, Kazuma Tsujitani.

2017, 94 min., Documentary/LGBT.

An artist named Rokudenashiko charged with violating Japan's obscenity law through her vagina-themed artworks. A teacher fired for not singing the national anthem at graduation. People denied legal status due to being born outside the rigid family registration structure. These are some of the cases taken up by Japan's first law firm founded by an openly gay couple, Masafumi Yoshida and Kazuyuki Minami. Hikaru Toda's rousing and urgent crowdsource-funded documentary captures Fumi and Kazu's professional and personal lives at their Osaka-based office representing marginalized individuals who challenge the status quo of a nation projecting homogeneity, while they themselves reflect on their desire to be parents, and love and care for each other amidst their dedicated work. **Intro and Q&A with director Hikaru Toda.**

[Sennan Asbestos Disaster](#) (North American Premiere)

Sunday, July 22 at 6:45 pm

Dir. Kazuo Hara. With Yoko Okada, Kazuyoshi Yuoka, Kazuko Minami, Miyoko Sato, Chiuko Ishikawa. 2017, 215 min., Documentary/Environmental.

Beginning in the 1970s Kazuo Hara (*The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*) developed the iconoclastic "action documentary" style breaking ethical norms of nonfiction filmmaking to follow a protagonist collapsing personal boundaries in pursuit of political truths in disability rights, queer self-determination, or wartime atrocity. Ten years in the making, the epic *Sennan Asbestos Disaster* builds on this method, joining citizens of Sennan, Osaka seeking legal reparations from the government for exposing their working class community to asbestos factories' deadly toxins. A powerful ensemble piece gaining strength from the warmth of everyday people standing up to the state for their rights, this radical film analyzes collective action and its limits, locating poisonous threats in self-regulating social mores as much as environmental pollution. **Intro and Q&A with director Kazuo Hara, producer Sachiko Kobayashi, and film participants.**

[Toward a Common Tenderness](#) (North American Premiere)

Sunday, July 22 at 2:15 pm

Dir. Kaori Oda.

2017, 63 min., Documentary/Political/LGBT. In Japanese and Bosnian with English subtitles.

Produced between Japan and Bosnia-Herzegovina, this entrancing essay film contends with the essential questions of documentary cinema: representing an other with their own emotions and inner life, whether a family member or a person from another culture. Kaori Oda (*Aragane*) knits together unused personal footage from her experiences home in Japan and studies with Béla Tarr at his Film Factory in Sarajevo from 2013-2016. Becoming a masterclass in the art and ethics of filmmaking, the film powerfully engages questions of queer identity, cross-cultural communication, representing poverty and labor, and the power of the camera. A poetic wonder, effortlessly lifting up epiphanies coalesced in images of the everyday. **Intro and Q&A with director Kaori Oda.**

Experimental Spotlight

In Screening Order



Still from Nao Yoshigai's "Stories floating on the wind"

[Empty Orchestras and the Speed of Your Voice](#)

Friday, July 27 at 9:00 pm

The human voice exhibits new texture when housed in the audiovisual containers of cinema. These works let the oral utterance sail while the image plays along, whether sounding out non-verbal affect, revealing the architecture of breath, reciting historical fantasy, or following a whistle into the sky, and scream through the night. Total running time is approximately 87 minutes. **Intro and Q&A with director Nao Yoshigai, director Yohei Suzuki and actress Elisa Yanagi.**

Films:

“WAAAHH” (New York Premiere)

Dir. Sawako Kabuki, 2018, 1 min.

A baby’s wail reverberates through life and its wrenching physical sensations.

“Breathing House” (World Premiere)

Dir. Nao Yoshigai, 2017, 12 min.

Last gasps of the Seiza-sha house in Kyoto devoted to Torajiro Okada’s still-sitting meditation method from the late-Meiji era’s intercultural ferment.

“Bivalvia: Act I” (U.S. Premiere)

Dir. Yu Araki, 2017, 20 min.

Songs reverberate between mollusc shells, karaoke lyrics guiding a history of seaborne tragic lovers from different shores.

“Stories floating on the wind” (World Premiere)

Dir. Nao Yoshigai, 2018, 9 min.

Along with vegetable and sea life, the camera is but one element of a sensual ride along a coastal road and playground in this masterful short.

“YEAH” (North American Premiere)

Dir. Yohei Suzuki, 2018, 45 min.

From the director of OW (2015), “YEAH” finds a young woman (Elisa Yanagi) investigating the sonic properties of its titular exclamation and enigmatic qualities of artificial light.

TICKETING

\$15/\$12 Seniors & Students/\$10 Japan Society Members. \$21/\$18/\$16 for July 19 screening of *Ramen Shop* and July 26 screening of *Mori, The Artist’s Habitat.*; **Special Offers:** 3-Film Pass: Purchase tickets for at least 3 different films in the same transaction and receive \$2 off each ticket (offer not valid for *Ramen Shop* on July 19 or *Mori, The Artist’s Habitat* on July 26). All-Access Pass (1 ticket for every film in the festival): \$350/\$270/\$215; Order tickets at www.japansociety.org or call or visit the Japan Society box office, Mon.-Fri. 11 am to 7 pm and weekends during the festival, 212-715-1258.

Tickets go on sale to Japan Society members June 11 and to the public on June 18.

About Japan Society

Founded in 1907, Japan Society in New York City presents sophisticated, topical and accessible experiences of Japanese art and culture, and facilitates the exchange of ideas, knowledge and innovation between the U.S. and Japan. More than 200 events annually encompass world-class exhibitions, dynamic classical and cutting-edge contemporary performing arts, film premieres and retrospectives, workshops and demonstrations, tastings, family activities, language classes, and a range of high-profile talks and expert panels that present open, critical dialogue on issues of vital importance to the U.S., Japan and East Asia. For more information, call 212-832-1155 or visit japansociety.org.

Credits

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SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

* Guest intro and/or Q&A

Thursday, July 19

7:00 PM - Ramen Shop* + Opening Night Party

Friday, July 20

6:30 PM - Love and Law*

9:15 PM - blank 13*

11:30 PM - Violence Voyager

Saturday, July 21

12:00 PM - Born Bone Born

2:30 PM - Dream of Illumination*

5:00 PM - Last Winter, We Parted

7:30 PM - Passage of Life*

10:15 PM - Night is Short, Walk On Girl, preceded by DREAMLAND

Sunday, July 22

12:00 PM - We Make Antiques!

2:15 PM - Toward a Common Tenderness*

4:15 PM - Side Job.

6:45 PM - Sennan Asbestos Disaster*

Tuesday, July 24

6:30 PM - Yocho (Foreboding)

9:15 PM - Call Boy

Wednesday, July 25

6:30 PM - KUSHINA, what will you be*

8:45 PM - Radiance, preceded by Across the water

Thursday, July 26

7:00 PM - Mori, The Artist's Habitat* + Award Ceremony + Party

Friday, July 27

6:30 PM - Still Walking

9:00 PM - Experimental Spotlight*

11:30 PM - Abnormal Family

Saturday, July 28

12:00 PM - Tremble All You Want

2:30 PM - Thicker Than Water*

5:15 PM - Outrage Coda

7:45 PM - BLEACH*

Sunday, July 29

12:00 PM - Dear Etranger

2:45 PM - Amiko*, preceded by NAGISA

5:00 PM - TOURISM

7:00 PM - Hanagatami*, preceded by How Can You Know Where to Go If You Do Not Know Where You Have Been