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**Japan Society and the Agency for Cultural Affairs Announce  
Inaugural ACA Cinema Project Online Film Series**

**21st CENTURY JAPAN: FILMS FROM 2001-2020  
February 5-25, 2021**

**A selection of 30 films celebrating the past 20 years of Japanese cinema streams online throughout the U.S. on Japan Society's virtual cinema, including films by Hirokazu Kore-eda, Naomi Kawase and Takashi Miike**

**Plus, online U.S. premieres of Sion Sono's *Red Post on Escher Street* and Yukiko Mishima's *Shape of Red*, a special focus on Kiyoshi Kurosawa and a selection of breakout films by up-and-coming filmmakers**



*Red Post on Escher Street* © 2021 "Red Post on Escher Street" Film Partners

**New York, NY (January 7, 2021)** – Japan Society and the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan (ACA), in collaboration with the Visual Industry Promotion Organization (VIPO), announce the inaugural ACA Cinema Project online film series ***21st Century Japan: Films from 2001-2020***, streaming nationwide on Japan Society's Virtual Cinema from **February 5-25, 2021**.

As Japan's film industry enters its third decade in the new millennium, this 30-film online series takes a look back at the last 20 years of Japanese cinema to celebrate some of the most remarkable narrative fiction films and filmmakers that define the era. Covering a wide range of

production styles and genres—from small budget independent debuts to festival favorites and award-winning major studio releases—this diverse slate of feature and short films offers a guided tour of modern Japanese cinema, including special spotlights dedicated to the work of **Kiyoshi Kurosawa** and a selection of breakout films by up-and-coming filmmakers. A large majority of the films included are streaming in the U.S. exclusively on Japan Society's Virtual Cinema.

Series highlights include the online U.S. Premiere of ***Red Post on Escher Street***, the latest film by cult favorite director **Sion Sono** (*Love Exposure*, 2009)—a comically reflexive, wildly unhinged, return-to-roots feature about a talented young director undergoing the production of a new film. *Red Post on Escher Street* is co-presented with Grasshopper Film, who will screen the title in tandem with Japan Society as part of the newly launched Projectr Movie Club from February 5-18. In addition, director **Yukiko Mishima**'s female-driven romantic drama ***Shape of Red*** makes its online U.S. premiere—a steamy tearjerker about a tenuous love affair adapted from the novel by Naoki Prize-winning author Rio Shimamoto featuring popular stars Kaho and Satoshi Tsumabuki.

Other highlights include harder-to-see gems by some of Japan's most internationally prominent filmmakers, including: **Hirokazu Kore-eda**'s 2009 Doona Bae-starring fantasy drama *Air Doll*; **Naomi Kawase**'s 2014 Cannes competition title and self-proclaimed masterpiece *Still the Water*; **Takashi Miike**'s 2005 family-friendly monster adventure film *The Great Yokai War*; **Shinya Tsukamoto**'s 2015 adaptation of Shohei Ooka's famous anti-war novel *Fires on the Plain*; trailblazing gay director **Ryosuke Hashiguchi**'s 2001 LGBT-themed comedic drama *Hush!*; and the award-winning 2006 murder mystery drama *Sway* by **Miwa Nishikawa**, whose latest film *Under the Open Sky* (2020) premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival.

“While it's impossible to really capture the last two decades of Japanese narrative fiction filmmaking in its full breadth, we are excited to share at least the tip of the iceberg for these three weeks in February,” says K. F. Watanabe, Deputy Director of Film at Japan Society. “Online or otherwise, a large majority of these titles remain unavailable to watch with English subtitles in the U.S., so I hope this series provides an opportunity to create new fans of filmmakers such as Naoko Oigami or Shuichi Okita and expand any preconceptions of what modern Japanese cinema can offer.”

Katsura Toda, Senior Specialist for Arts and Culture at the Agency for Cultural Affairs, says, “The ACA Cinema Project was launched with the hope of sharing the diverse appeal of Japanese films to audiences around the world and to create more opportunities for these films to be seen. We are pleased to present U.S. audiences with the works of a great variety of directors—including well-established masters, filmmakers with distinctive voices and rising stars of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—and hope that many people will be able to encounter Japanese films in a fresh way.”

\$99 All-Access Passes with a 21-day rental window go on sale January 29 through February 4. \$8 individual tickets with a 3-day rental window go on sale February 5. Individual tickets for *Red Post on Escher Street* and *Shape of Red* are \$12. Japan Society members receive a 20% discount on all tickets via coupon code.

All films screen online at [japancuts.japansociety.org](http://japancuts.japansociety.org) in Japanese with English subtitles unless otherwise noted. All titles available within the U.S. from February 5-25 unless sold out or

otherwise noted. Titles also available beyond the U.S. are noted below. Lineup and other details are subject to change. For complete information visit [japansociety.org](http://japansociety.org).

**Screeners available for most titles. Please send all press inquiries to Michael Lieberman at [pr.lieberman@gmail.com](mailto:pr.lieberman@gmail.com). For inquiries regarding Japan Society and its Virtual Cinema, please contact Allison Rodman at [arodman@japansociety.org](mailto:arodman@japansociety.org).**

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### **FULL LINEUP**

*Films listed chronologically by year of domestic theatrical release from the most recent.*

#### **SPECIAL SCREENING**

##### ***Red Post on Escher Street***

**Dir. Sion Sono. 2020. 148 min.**

##### **\*\*US Online Premiere**

When filmmaker Tadashi Kobayashi (Tatsuhiko Yamaoka) begins to hold open auditions for a new studio-sponsored film, a wave of experienced and aspiring actors scramble to apply, yearning for a chance to work with the genius director. Behind the scenes, however, Kobayashi struggles to finish the script on schedule and the production quickly spirals out of control. A funny, chaotic and consistently interesting showcase of Sion Sono's versatile talents, *Red Post on Escher Street* is a return-to-roots film for the director that develops, in typical Sono fashion, into a boldly subversive affair—a brazenly tongue-in-cheek portrait of the Japanese film industry that harkens to Sono's own career as one of the most distinctive voices in world cinema. *Co-Presented with Grasshopper Film. Availability limited to February 5-18.*

#### **SPECIAL SCREENING**

##### ***Shape of Red***

**Dir. Yukiko Mishima. 2020. 123 min.**

##### **\*\*US Online Premiere**

When a young housewife and mother named Toko (Kaho) has a chance run-in with her old flame Akihiko (Satoshi Tsumabuki) at a party, she finds herself suddenly thrown into a passionate love affair that reawakens long-suppressed desires and threatens to dismantle her seemingly perfect life. The latest film by veteran director Yukiko Mishima (*Dear Stranger*)—adapted from a 2012 Rio Shimamoto novel by Mishima with co-writer Chihiro Ikeda—*Shape of Red* is a beautifully lensed, thoughtful and sensual melodrama that questions the cost of individual freedom and the roles women are expected to play in contemporary Japanese society. *Available to stream in North America.*

##### ***Listen to the Universe***

**Dir. Kei Ishikawa. 2019. 119 min.**

In this domestic box office hit adapted from the award-winning, bestselling novel by Riku Okuda, four young classical pianists compete in a high stakes international piano competition as they manage their respective friendships, insecurities and desires to win. An inspiring multi-character drama that celebrates the intrinsic power of music, *Listen to the Universe* features a who's who of some of the most talked about young actors in Japan, including: Mayu Matsuoka (*Shoplifters*); Tori Matsuzaka (*The Journalist*); Win Morisaki (*Ready Player One*); and Oji Suzuka, who made his screen debut with this film and won the Japan Academy Film Prize for Newcomer of the Year along with Morisaki. Directed with visual flair by rising director Kei Ishikawa (*Gokuroku: Traces of Sin*). *Available to stream in the U.S. and Canada.*

### ***Mori, the Artist's Habitat***

**Dir. Shuichi Okita. 2018. 99 min.**

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 (*The 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.

### ***The Miracles of the Namiya General Store***

**Dir. Ryuichi Hiroki. 2017. 129 min.**

In 2012, three teenage orphans on the run take refuge in an abandoned small town general store late at night. Before long, a letter dated from 1980 in which the writer asks for advice is dropped through the store's mail slot, providing the boys a mysterious and miraculous connection to the past. Embarking on a myriad of correspondences from across time, the trio gradually discover the store's special history. Adapted from the popular novel by bestselling mystery author Keigo Higashino, *The Miracles of the Namiya General Store* is a nostalgia-fueled family drama that takes a loving look back to simpler times in Japan to offer hope for the future.

### ***The Actor***

**Dir. Satoko Yokohama. 2016. 123 min.**

Screen actor Takuji Kameoka (Ken Yasuda) built a career from his masterful performances, and he would be a household name if it weren't for the fact that his filmography consists entirely of bit parts. As the prospect of a breakout role in a foreign arthouse director's newest work appears, so too does the possibility of winning the heart of a charming izakaya owner (Kumiko Aso) who seems to understand Kameoka's hidden loneliness. A long-awaited follow-up to her breakout indie feature *Bare Essence of Life* (2009), director Satoko Yokohama's fantastical tribute to the film industry spotlights the workaday human magic underlying the gleam of cinema.

### ***Fires on the Plain***

**Dir. Shinya Tsukamoto. 2015. 87 min.**

Departing from his penchant for dystopian cityscapes, Shinya Tsukamoto—director of *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989) and acclaimed pioneer of Japanese cyberpunk—plunges us into the jungles of the Philippines during the end of WWII. Adapted from the classic semi-autobiographical novel by Shohei Ooka (previously adapted by Kon Ichikawa in 1959), *Fires on the Plain* depicts the degradation of an abandoned, sickly soldier of the Japanese Imperial Army (played by Tsukamoto) as he witnesses, and partakes in, the horrific atrocities of war.

Tsukamoto's updated, visceral take on the source material is a full-throated scream that warns contemporary Japan about the realities of warfare—a warning he heeds every year on the anniversary of the war's end when cinemas across Japan host revival screenings of this film. *Available to stream in North America.*

### ***Still the Water***

**Dir. Naomi Kawase. 2014. 120 min.**

In the aftermath of a typhoon, a tattooed body washes ashore on the subtropical Japanese island of Amami-Oshima and is discovered by teenager Kaito (Nijiro Murakami). Meanwhile, his

girlfriend Kyoto (Jun Yoshinaga) must deal with the imminent death of her mother, an island shaman. Together, on the cusp of adulthood, the pair struggle to make sense of the cycles of life and death as they seek to understand their place in the world. A poignant and poetic coming-of-age tale, Naomi Kawase's self-described masterpiece is a culmination of the filmmaker's impressive career, invested in the exploration of deeply spiritual themes expressed through lush visuals steeped in natural light.

### ***The Devil's Path***

**Dir. Kazuya Shiraishi. 2013. 128 min.**

When yakuza thug Junji Sudo (actor and musician Pierre Taki) lands behind bars on death row, he seeks out journalist Shuichi Fujii (Takayuki Yamada) in order to publicly reveal the details of three unknown murders and implicate his accomplice—a real estate broker who goes by “Doc” (Lily Franky)—who Sudo insists is the true mastermind behind his crimes. Against his editor's wishes, Fujii investigates Sudo's claims and starts to uncover the grisly details of each horrifying murder. Based on true crime cases, *The Devil's Path* is a dark vision of mankind's capacity for evil that catapulted the career of Kazuya Shiraishi, one of the most prolific Japanese directors of the last decade.

### ***The Drudgery Train***

**Dir. Nobuhiro Yamashita. 2012. 114 min.**

Gruff middle school dropout Kanta Kitamachi (Mirai Moriyama) works as a day laborer and spends his money on cheap booze, peep shows and second-hand paperbacks while overdue on his rent. A perpetual loner with no social skills, Kanta unexpectedly hits it off with a new, easy-going co-worker around the same age (Kengo Kora) who tempers Kanta's worst habits and helps him pursue his unrequited crush on a cute bookstore clerk (Atsuko Maeda). Adapted from a novel set in 1988 Tokyo, *The Drudgery Train* is an unconventional coming-of-age tale and class-inflected character study that manages to upend every expectation of its unlikely yet likeable hero, directed by slacker comedy auteur Nobuhiro Yamashita (*Linda, Linda, Linda*). Available to stream in North America.

### ***Rebirth***

**Dir. Izuru Narushima. 2011. 147 min.**

In despair from a series of tragedies brought on by her affair with a married man, Kiwako (Hiromi Nagasaku) abducts her lover's 6-month-old baby and raises the child as her own for four years before getting caught. Now a college-aged adult laden with her own relationship issues, the formerly abducted child Erina (Mao Inoue) confronts her repressed past with Kiwako to discover the truth about herself. A huge hit in Japan that never saw a stateside theatrical release, *Rebirth* swept the 2012 Japan Academy Film Prize in every major category, racking up 13 nominations and 11 wins, including Picture of the Year.

### ***Confessions***

**Dir. Tetsuya Nakashima. 2010. 106 min.**

On the last day of term, a grieving middle school teacher (Takako Matsu) reveals that two of her students are responsible for the death of her four-year-old daughter, who was found drowned in the school swimming pool. She delivers a planned confession—a death knell detailing her carefully planned vengeance—that leaves the typically raucous classroom reeling and prompts the students' psychological torment that follows. A dark and stylish odyssey of increasingly disquieting proportions, Nakashima's lavishly shot, breathless thriller took Japan by storm upon release and eventually landed on the shortlist for the 2011 Academy Awards Foreign Language Film nominations. Available to stream in the U.S. and Canada.

### ***Air Doll***

**Dir. Hirokazu Kore-eda. 2009. 125 min.**

A present-day fable for the increasing disconnect we find in urban life, Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Air Doll* transports the Galatea myth to present day Tokyo. When an inflatable sex doll named Nozomi (Bae Doona) finds that she has grown consciousness and a heart, she begins to wander the city in quiet awe and fascination. As she takes on a new life of her own, Nozomi also discovers the innate complexities of being human, including the heartbreak of loneliness. Joining forces with cinematographer Mark Lee Ping-Bing (*In The Mood for Love*), Kore-eda's intimate direction relays the struggles of finding human connection in the mess of modern society. *Available to stream in North America.*

### ***One Million Yen Girl***

**Dir. Yuki Tanada. 2008. 121 min.**

After a roommate dispute lands her at the police station, 21-year-old Suzuko (Yu Aoi, *Wife of a Spy*) becomes the object of family ridicule and neighborhood gossip. Fed up with the unwanted attention, she vows to move out of the house once she earns one million yen (\$10,000), beginning a cycle wherein Suzuko drifts from town to town taking odd jobs and leaving every time she reaches her monetary goal. But when a romantic prospect unexpectedly crosses her path, Suzuko starts to reconsider her priorities. A wonderfully charming travelogue across Japan and an endearing portrait of youthful resilience written and directed by Yuki Tanada (*Romance Doll*).

### ***Sakuran***

**Dir. Mika Ninagawa. 2007. 111 min.**

Sold into a brothel within the Yoshiwara red light district of 18th century Edo as a young girl, rebellious Kiyoha (Anna Tsuchiya, *Kamikaze Girls*) rises through the ranks over the years despite herself and becomes next in line as oiran (head courtesan) while keeping a constant eye on finding a way out. Distinguished by its bold visual style—replete with gorgeous candy-colored sets and flashy period costumes—*Sakuran* is a kaleidoscopic tour de force and the feature film debut by celebrated art photographer Mika Ninagawa, who makes the most of her knack for eye-catching compositions. Adapted from the popular manga by Moyoco Anno and featuring a memorably vibrant soundtrack by renowned musician Ringo Sheena. *Available to stream in North America.*

### ***Sway***

**Dir. Miwa Nishikawa. 2006. 119 min.**

After a long absence, fashion photographer Takeru (Joe Odagiri) returns from Tokyo to his rural hometown to attend his mother's memorial service. Free from small town obligations, the Tokyo transplant barely conceals his condescension to his meek older brother Minoru (Teruyuki Kagawa), who inherited the humble family business. When the siblings take a trip to a nearby ravine with their childhood friend, a tragedy occurs that tests their relationship and reveals long-gestating resentments between them. This suspenseful and deeply felt exploration of familial ties by former Hirokazu Kore-eda acolyte Miwa Nishikawa (*Under the Open Sky*) launched the director as a major talent in contemporary Japanese cinema.

### ***The Great Yokai War***

**Dir. Takashi Miike. 2005. 124 min.**

Waking to prescient dreams of a Tokyo in ruins, young Tadashi (Ryunosuke Kamiki) finds himself swept up in a real life spirit war after being named "Kirin Rider" during a local matsuri. Befriending the mythical yokai of Japanese folklore, Tadashi and his newfound companions

must confront the malevolent villain Yasunori Kato (Etsushi Toyokawa) who, in preparation for the impending war, has been twisting spirits into demonic machines. Escalating into a boisterous romp through the spiritual realm, *The Great Yokai War* features a phantasmagorical assortment of yokai (from Kasa-obake to Yuki-onna) as cult director Takashi Miike's madcap flair for eye-popping visuals culminates into a special effects-laden spectacle for all ages.

### ***Yoshino's Barber Shop***

**Dir. Naoko Oigami. 2004. 96 min.**

In a small rural town where everyone knows each other, all boys have the same bowl haircuts known as the "Yoshino Cut," a local tradition administered by the town's proud (and sole) barber Mrs. Yoshino (Masako Motai). When a new kid with a cool haircut arrives from Tokyo and refuses to comply, however, four fifth-grader friends find their lives forever changed.

A visually inventive debut feature that playfully considers conformity and tradition, director Naoko Oigami gives special attention to the gestures, sounds and the comical inner-lives of her characters, bringing the light touch of Jacques Tati to her fictional Japanese countryside.

### ***Josee, the Tiger and the Fish***

**Dir. Isshin Inudo. 2003. 116 min.**

Through a haphazard series of events, lackadaisical college student Tsuneo (Satoshi Tsunabuki) finds himself entangled in the life of "Josee" (Chizuru Ikewaki), a young, strong-willed paraplegic woman and social recluse who named herself after a character in one of her favorite novels. As the pair's friendship blossoms into romance, they find their worldviews expanded and enriched through each other in unexpected ways. A genuinely moving reflection on love and loss adapted from a short story by Seiko Tanabe, Isshin Inudo's breakout independent feature film was a box office sensation that has since remained in the cultural consciousness: a Japanese anime adaptation and a Korean live action remake were both released within the last year. *Available to stream in North America.*

### ***The Twilight Samurai***

**Dir. Yoji Yamada. 2002. 129 min.**

At the turn of the Meiji era in late 1860s Japan, an impoverished and low-ranking samurai named Seibei (Hiroyuki Sanada) cares for two young daughters and a senile mother while working as a stock clerk. A widower, Seibei is too busy and embarrassed of his poverty to consider remarrying, but when he is introduced to his best friend's sister Tomoe (Rie Miyazawa), new possibilities are opened for him and his family. That is, until he is called upon to risk his life for the clan. A subversively unromantic depiction of the last days of the samurai, this late-period masterpiece from 71-year-old *Tora-san* director Yoji Yamada defies all expectations. *Available to stream in North America.*

### ***Hush!***

**Dir. Ryosuke Hashiguchi. 2001. 135 min.**

Soon after the disparate yet compatible Naoya (Kazuya Takahashi) and Katsuhiko (Seiichi Tanabe) start to settle into a relationship, a slightly unhinged young woman named Asako (Reiko Kataoka) asks Katsuhiko to father her child. While the couple navigate the implications of this unexpected proposal, they are forced to confront their conflicting understandings of what it means to be gay and in a committed relationship. A landmark work of LGBTQ Japanese cinema by pioneering director Ryosuke Hashiguchi, *Hush!* humorously and poignantly upends the traditional Japanese genre of the family drama to offer a deeply human story about three people doing their best to be true to themselves. *Available to stream in North America.*

## **FOCUS ON KIYOSHI KUROSAWA**

*Films listed alphabetically by title.*

### ***Bright Future***

**Dir. Kiyoshi Kurosawa. 2003. 115 min.**

Aimless and antisocial twentysomethings Mamoru (Tadanobu Asano) and Yuji (Joe Odagiri) share jobs at the same towel factory where they are irritated by a boss who is overly eager to befriend them. When Mamoru goes to extreme measures to deal with their problem and ends up in jail, he asks Yuji to look after his sole interest: a beautifully luminous jellyfish that is deadly upon contact. Making the most of his first time shooting on video, Kiyoshi Kurosawa finds new ways to imbue his signature sense of otherworldly dread in this enigmatic and haunting vision of disaffected youth at the end of their rope.

### ***Journey to the Shore***

**Dir. Kiyoshi Kurosawa. 2015. 128 min.**

Three years after his disappearance, Yusuke (Tadanobu Asano) returns home one night to his wife Mizuki (Eri Fukatsu) who is initially unphased by his sudden reappearance. Disclosing to her that he is indeed dead, Yusuke asks Mizuki to accompany him on a journey to see “beautiful places” and guides her to the people and places he encountered on his return voyage to her. As they travel, the pair confront the unresolved feelings and pent-up emotions they never had the chance to reconcile. An unconventional ghost story, Kurosawa’s tender melodrama is a lyrical rumination on dealing with grief and the inevitable parting of ways.

### ***Real***

**Dir. Kiyoshi Kurosawa. 2013. 127 min.**

A year after his longtime partner Atsumi (Haruka Ayase) is left comatose from a suicide attempt, Koichi (Takeru Satoh) is offered a chance to make contact with her consciousness through an experimental process called “sensing.” Venturing into her mind, Koichi discovers Atsumi languishing in a twilight world—an abject realm of her troubled psyche with ghostly manifestations that begin to bleed over into his own reality. Driven by brooding atmospherics and Kurosawa’s philosophical considerations, *Real* delivers an uncanny descent into the unknown as Koichi traverses Atsumi’s subconsciousness in an Orphean bid to bring his dreaming lover back to the living.

## **FILMMAKERS ON THE RISE**

*Films listed alphabetically by title. All films free to stream.*

### ***Blanka***

**Dir. Kohki Hasei. 2015. 75 min. In Tagalog with English subtitles.**

This international co-production set in the Philippines offers a bittersweet depiction of life on the streets for Blanka (Cydel Gabutero), a savvy 11-year-old orphan who begs and pickpockets in order to survive while hoping to save enough money to “buy” a mother. When Blanka forms a bond with a blind guitar player named Peter (Peter Millari), who discovers her singing talent, the duo start to turn their luck around as music performers—but can such happiness last? Equally heartwarming and heartbreaking, this narrative fiction feature debut by documentarian Kohki Hasei considers a child’s point of view in order to suggest hope in the face of adversity.

### ***The Chicken***

**Dir. Neo Sora. 2020. 13 min. In English and Japanese with English subtitles.**



On a peculiarly hot November afternoon, a young Japanese immigrant named Hiro (Junshin Soga) welcomes his cousin Kei (Taiju Nakane) to New York City. Scouting out a new apartment in Chinatown, Hiro takes Kei along for the ride and, on a whim, decides to buy a live chicken to butcher for dinner. As they traverse the city, the pair are shaken up by a medical emergency on the street that brings to relief their unwitting complicity in everyday instances of structural violence—and upsets Hiro’s dinner plans. Gorgeously shot on 16mm, Neo Sora’s deftly directed short film reinterprets a century-old short story by Naoya Shiga to offer pointed commentary on contemporary life. *Availability limited to February 5-11.*

### ***Complicity***

**Dir. Kei Chikaura. 2018. 116 min. In Japanese and Mandarin with English subtitles.**

Chen Liang (Yulai Lu), an undocumented Chinese immigrant in Japan, acquires a fake ID belonging to an existing person through a shady black market transaction. Spending his days doing illicit odd jobs that put him at risk for deportation, a new opportunity (meant for his identity’s real-life counterpart) leads him to a Japanese soba shop where he apprentices for an elderly soba master (Tatsuya Fuji, *In The Realm of the Senses*) who takes him under his wing. A moving debut feature from director Kei Chikaura, *Complicity* delivers a compassionate portrait of the immigrant experience in Japan and the struggle to live while in constant fear of being exposed.

### ***Lying to Mom***

**Dir. Katsumi Nojiri. 2019. 133 min.**

When stay-at-home mother Yuko (Hideko Hara) discovers the hanging corpse of her *hikikomori* (shut-in) son Koichi (Ryo Kase), she passes out from shock and goes into a coma. Waking in a hospital over a month later on the 49th day since Koichi’s passing, Yuko recalls nothing of the incident. On impulse, her daughter Fumi (Mai Kiryu) tells Yuko that Koichi is alive and well in Argentina—the first lie in a saga of deception that unfurls as Yuko’s family attempts to hide the truth from her. The debut feature by writer/director Katsumi Nojiri, who deftly handles the morose subject matter in a gently humorous way that offers earnest insight on family dynamics and the process of dealing with loss. *Available to stream in North America.*

### ***Our House***

**Dir. Yui Kiyohara. 2017. 80 min.**

Despite sharing a residence, Seri (Nodoka Kawanishi)—a schoolgirl living with her widowed mother—and Toko (Mei Fujiwara)—a young woman who has taken in an amnesiac named Sana (Mariwo Osawa)—seem to live in their lives in parallel universes. As time goes on, however, the liminal spaces between them begin to converge and intertwine in enigmatic ways. The debut feature by Yu Kiyohara (who made the film as a thesis project for film school at Tokyo University of the Arts), *Our House* elicits an aura of mystery and intrigue that imbues the domestic drama with a beguiling ambience and recalls the works of mentor Kiyoshi Kurosawa.

### ***Plan 75***

**Directed by Chie Hayakawa. 2018. 18 min.**

Set in the not-so-distant future where Japan’s increasing elderly populations have become detrimental to the country’s growth, this dystopian short film imagines a government initiative in which retired seniors—and other citizens deemed unproductive—are efficiently and systematically eliminated on a volunteer basis. Filmed as part of the omnibus feature film *Ten Years Japan* (2018), director Chie Hayakawa’s powerful work of speculative fiction offers pointed political commentary and a chilling vision of the potential future of so-called developed nations wherein the value of human lives is measured by the bottom line.

## **TALKS**

*Listed alphabetically by title. All talks free to stream worldwide.*

### **A Conversation with Kiyoshi Kurosawa**

In this unique conversation, director Kiyoshi Kurosawa answers a range of questions about his filmmaking career—including his three films included in this film series—that are proposed by writer, filmmaker and former New York Film Festival director Kent Jones and guest moderator Abi Sakamoto, writer and Film Project Manager at the Institut français du Japon - Tokyo.

### **What is Japanese Cinema in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?**

This video compiles responses from a selection of Japanese filmmakers involved with *21st Century Japan: Film from 2001-2020* who are asked two primary questions: 1) “How would you characterize the past 20 years of Japanese cinema?”; and 2) “Now that we are entering our third decade in the 21st century, what do you think the next decade of Japanese cinema will look like?” The result is a fascinating snapshot of modern Japanese cinema.

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### **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](http://japansociety.org).

### **About the ACA Cinema Project**

The ACA Cinema Project is a new initiative organized as part of the "Japan Film Overseas Expansion Enhancement Project," an ongoing project founded by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan (ACA) to create opportunities for the increased exposure, development and appreciation of Japanese cinema overseas through screenings, symposiums and other events held throughout the year. With *21<sup>st</sup> Century Japan: Films from 2001-2020*, ACA Cinema Project introduces a wide range of Japanese films in the United States, a major center of international film culture, together with Japan Society.

### **Credits**

*21st Century Japan: Films from 2001-2020* is co-presented by Japan Society and the Agency for Cultural Affairs in collaboration with Visual Industry Promotion Organization. Japan Society Film's programs are generously supported by the Lila Wallace-Acheson Reader's Digest Endowment Fund. Additional season support is provided by The Globus Family, David Toberisky, Geoff and Fumi Matters, George Gallagher, Laurel Gonsalves, James Read Levy, Akiko Koide and Shohei Koide, Masu Hiroshi Masuyama, Dr. Tatsuji Namba, David S. Howe, and Michael Romano. Transportation assistance is provided by Japan Airlines, the exclusive Japanese airline sponsor.

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