

HAWAII COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES & HAWAII INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PRESENT



FILM FOR THOUGHT 2018

THE
COMMONGOOD

HUMANITIES IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE



EATING UP EASTER | GENERAL MAGIC | INVENTING TOMORROW
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF DESIRE | TEN YEARS: JAPAN

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THE COMMON GOOD: HUMANITIES IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

Taking The Common Good as our theme, again, we note dramatic stories of tension and strife in the world. But this should hardly be seen as only a contemporary condition. It is evident in all too many historical periods, perhaps with lessons to learn.

Consider the time described by May Ann Glendon in *A World Made New* on forging the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, marked by the Cold War, Arab and Palestinian conflict, a civil war in China, and much else, but also a time for leadership. Three philosophers and a moral force of nature come to mind: Peng-chun Chang from China, French legal genius Rene Cassin, existentialist Charles Malik from Lebanon who came to speak for an emerging "third world," and of course Eleanor Roosevelt who chaired the UN committee charged with drafting, debating and passing the Declaration. Even though they occasionally had their strings pulled by political overseers, each demonstrated enough integrity and open-mindedness to carry the complex thing through. Most striking was Chang, with a Confucian quote for every key debate and disagreement. Not only were the aphorisms of Confucius and stories of Mencius insightful, they demonstrated a strong case for human rights not being just Western, imperialist values, Equality and liberty, civil rights for minorities and women, a right to education and work, had non-Western voice and sources as well. Chang advocated for a particularly Chinese expression of human rights in the concept of ren, which he called "two-man mindedness" (also translated as "human-heartedness"). The final United Nations tally in 1948 after years of work was forty-eight in favor, eight abstentions, and none opposed, an extraordinary endorsement of the common good.

In a similar vein, we find the idealistic stories in *INVENTING TOMORROW* of young people from around the world with their impressive energies and STEM innovations. Without a love of community and place, without a moral outrage and belief in the rights of future generations, why would they care enough to seek answers to destruction of their waters, land and air? What would drive their inspiration and passion? Similarly, in *EATING UP EASTER* (*TE PITO O TE HENUA*), with no appreciation of cultural traditions and moral belief in indigenous rights, who would care about global and local ("glocal") fairness? The films reveal our human-heartedness and two-man mindedness.

It is equally intriguing to watch the mind play out impossible, "what if" stories in *TEN YEARS JAPAN* and *GENERAL MAGIC*. What will society look like in ten years, given the core of our current understanding? Why did the internet and its power to change the world happen when and how it did, and not before when similar discoveries were about? The imagination of the humanities is in the stories we tell about the past, future and present as we strive to make common sense of it all -- even if the worlds we choose to live in and connect with are only virtual, as in *PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF DESIRE* -- How do we define the public square and what it means for us? In the end, "humanities," a word not much used in daily talk, can be seen as our "human ties," what binds us together, or tries to.

William James once told the Indian myth of the world resting on the back of an elephant, which rested on the back of another elephant, and so on, until the last elephant rests on the back of a turtle. He asked the audience, what does that turtle rest on? A woman answered, it's no use Mr. James, it's turtles all the way down. In the humanities, it's stories all the way down. Please enjoy this year's Film For Thought films, humanities essays in this companion booklet, and after-film discussions in that spirit.

ROBERT G. BUSS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Hawai'i Council for the Humanities

EATING UP EASTER



WORLD PREMIERE

CHILE, UNITED STATES 2018 | ENGLISH, FRENCH, SPANISH, RAPANUI W/
ENGLISH SUBTITLES | 75M

9-NOV 5:30 PM DOL

10-NOV 11:00 AM DOL

16-NOV 6:15 PM WAI

1-DEC 3:30 PM PAL

SYNOPSIS

The iconic carved statues of 'Easter Island' have fascinated visitors for hundreds of years, but the culture that crafted them - the Rapanui people - are often left to the imagination of outsiders. Deforested and barren, the island of Rapa Nui has limited primary industries, but has benefited economically from the rise of tourism, but must now contend with unsustainable waste and the disappearance of local ways of life.

Documentary filmmaker Sergio M. Rapu passes on this story to his newborn son, while his father - a local entrepreneur - tries to set up the island's first mall to bring the advancements of the Western world closer to the community. Meanwhile, a local ecologist struggles to contend with the island's escalating waste problem, while two musicians fight to make their community music school a reality. Interlacing these stories with the history of the island and its people, EATING UP EASTER captures the complexities of balancing local authenticity with the commercial demands of modern globalization, and demonstrates that sustainability is not only ecological, but also cultural.

—Duncan Caillard

DIRECTOR	Sergio M. Rapu
SCREENWRITER	Elena Rapu
PRODUCERS	Sergio M. Rapu, Elena Rapu
CINEMATOGRAPHER	Jeff Saunders

THOUGHTS

Producer/Director Sergio Mata'u Rapu narrates this film as a story to his son, to teach Koa about his tūpuna (ancestors). This approach reminds me of Shawn Wilson's narrative method in *Research Is Ceremony*, which begins as a story to his sons. Using the relationship between storyteller and audience, Wilson develops relationships with ideas, stating, "The relational is central to Indigenous ways of knowing and acting. We are always accountable to all our relations." I invite you to develop a relationship with the ideas brought forth in this film and to ponder your own relational accountability to your people and planet – past, present and future.

EATING UP EASTER (TE PITO O TE HENUA) is a creation of masterful storytelling which privileges Rapanui voices, relationships, and knowledge. A richly woven tapestry of stories, the film addresses issues of cultural identity, language preservation, colonization and resistance, ecological destruction, and development. The stories are told from the perspectives of four Rapanui: Sergio Rapu, the first Rapanui archaeologist and governor; Mahani Teave, a concert pianist; Enrique Icka a construction engineer and musician; and Mama Piru, an ecologist and activist.

Being Chamoru of the US territory of Guahan and currently a resident of Hawai'i, Rapa Nui's history of colonization and native resistance echo stories from my home and I imagine this also resonates with Kānaka Maoli (Hawaiians). Colonization led to development, globalization and growth in tourism and immigration. Mahani characterizes the rapid globalization as "a giant snowball eating up everything - culture, kids, elders - everything goes into it." Sergio Rapu notes, "the culture still exists but is camouflaged by development, by tourism" and Mayor Petero Edmunds laments, "The older way of life is respect, love, social responsibility. Newcomers impose their customs on Rapanui. It is killing our own way of life."

Environmental impacts of tourism and increased materialism by residents are staggering. Standing amidst tons of plastic water bottles and soda cans waiting to be recycled, Mama Piru speaks the harsh reality, "The tourists go back, but all the trash that came on the plane with them stays on the island." According to Sergio Mata'u Rapu, "Almost everything we own comes from somewhere else, but anything we throw away stays where we live. On our island, that can be a problem." The problem is compounded by the fact that Rapa Nui is situated in the South Pacific Gyre and is the recipient of ocean garbage. In the footage of a coastal cleanup effort, the juxtaposition of Rapanui stooping to collect trash against a backdrop of majestic moai is painful.

The film also highlights concerns about loss of language and culture. Mahani warns, "what will happen if we lose our language, we lose all the meaning of ancient stories which are told in Rapanui...the deep meaning which comes from a word which sometimes cannot be translated." For Mahani and her husband Enrique, teaching music to youth is one path to language preservation and "cultural rescue."

All four featured in this documentary are agents of change who articulate Rapanui visions of sustainable development. For Mama Piru, "to be sustainable is to have no trash, to be ecologists like the people of old," Enrique espouses a similar dream to "make the island 100% sustainable." The film shares two stories of development guided by Rapanui—the first shopping mall designed, funded, and built by/for Rapanui and the Toki Music School which is the island's first bioconstruction prototype and a model for sustainable building design and construction.

Called Te Pito O Te Henua, the navel of the world, Rapa Nui may be a microcosm of our planet. Lessons shared here about recovery and sustainability can serve as models for the rest of the world. Sergio Mata'u Rapu tells his son, "The story of our island is the story of adapting to change...you come from a long line of survivors who acted when there was no action, who came together when there was no community, and who looked beyond themselves for the good of our planet...You are more wise now than you will ever be."

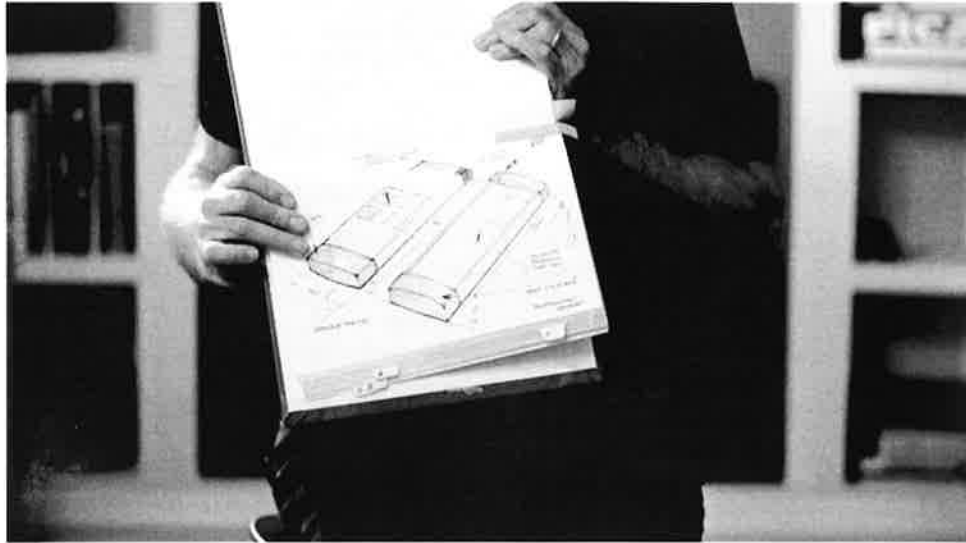
May you enter into this story and find your own wisdom.

Maururu Nui-Nui, Si Yu'us ma'āse: Mahalo.

MARY THERESE PEREZ HATTORI

Associate Professor of Education
Director of the Center for Teaching & Learning
Chaminade University of Honolulu

GENERAL MAGIC



HAWAII PREMIERE

UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES 2018 | ENGLISH | 93M

12-NOV 8:15 PM DOL

14-NOV 3:15 PM DOL

SYNOPSIS

What do the iPhone, Android, eBay, Google+ and Obama's Office of Science and Technology Policy all have in common? Their founders, directors and lead engineers were all involved in 'General Magic,' a 1990s tech start-up so ahead of their time that it developed a smartphone fifteen years before the iPhone but collapsed after virtually nobody bought one.

Founded by the engineers behind Apple's original Macintosh computer wanting to create the 'next big thing,' General Magic shipped the first handheld wireless personal communicator in 1994, and lay the foundations for social media, e-commerce and even the emoji before the internet was even in the average home. Combining rare archive footage with contemporary stories of the Magicians today, GENERAL MAGIC tracks the progress of anytime, anywhere communication from a thing of sci-fi fiction in 1994 to a reality in our pockets and on our wrists today, along with the company's meteoric collapse. This is the story of one of history's most talented teams and what happens when those who dream big fail, fail again, fail better and ultimately succeed.

An astonishing true story of a band of optimists who genuinely believed they were going to change the world but were in almost every way ahead of their time, GENERAL MAGIC captures the personal and professional price of ambition and shows that even the greatest successes of our time can come out of what in the moment seems like failure.

—Duncan Caillard

DIRECTORS	Sarah Kerruish, Matt Maude
SCREENWRITERS	Sarah Kerruish, Matt Maude
PRODUCERS	Dee Gardetti, Sarah Kerruish, Matt Maude
CINEMATOGRAPHER	Matt Maude

THOUGHTS

General Motors, General Electric, and General Dynamics have become household words. But General Magic? Not so much. This early 1990s Silicon Valley start-up once retained some of the most creative and visionary minds in the tech industry. Then for a variety of reasons the company went bankrupt, forcing its employees to find work elsewhere as the General Magic brand faded from public memory about as quickly as it emerged.

But GENERAL MAGIC is ultimately not a story about how a potential tech giant failed by being in the right place at the wrong time. That is the superficial narrative, and like all good, multi-layered stories, it works even at that level. Upon closer reflection, however, the film reveals how revolutionary shifts in human consciousness are often rooted in human imagination, creativity, and playfulness prior to materializing as innovative technologies adopted by the mass consumer market.

The evolution of human consciousness is inextricably tied to the evolution of human communication technology, as the rise of the printing press, telegraph, telephony, broadcast, satellites, Internet and other technologies illustrate. The General Magic environment, necessarily secretive for proprietary purposes, was a thriving and prolific incubator of ideas about how people in the future would want to communicate with each other and with machines. To outsiders at the time, those ideas may have seemed preposterous. A sophisticated computer in one's pocket? Why? But to the passionate developers within the company, inspired by the company's leaders and each other, those ideas were nothing less than prescient.

A number of the luminaries who worked at General Magic in the 1990s help to narrate this occasionally Shakespearean tale. You have all the elements of a good drama here – ambition, hopes and dreams of heroic proportions, clandestine operations, betrayal, and even some foolery. That General Magic could not deliver the tangibles that Apple and Android would later stake claim to has an element of tragedy to it. But the film makes an important distinction between tragedy and failure. What was generated within the walls of General Magic was prologue to later successes at other tech companies. In questioning the conventional definition of failure, the film challenges us to likewise question the conventional definition of success.

The General Magic "origin story" transcends this one company at this one particular period in technological history. General Magic co-evolved with another life-changing technological breakthrough of the 1990s, the World Wide Web, which disrupted a lot of good ideas based on the pre-Web Internet. New technologies do not evolve in a vacuum, and one technological innovation has the potential to offset or enhance another. That truism is universal.

An interesting side story in the film involves a youthful, long-haired Pierre Omidyar who worked as a programmer at General Magic for a time. Omidyar shared his embryonic idea for an online auction website with some of his co-workers, who, to put it mildly, did not quite understand its potential and dismissed it as an online flea market. Undeterred, Omidyar pursued development of that online flea market, which became eBay and made him a multi-billionaire.

Some of the most poignant scenes from GENERAL MAGIC involve interviews with former employees, now much older and wiser, reflecting on the perceived meaning of their collective experience. Many of them went on to other technology firms (e.g., Google, Twitter, Sam Sung, Blackberry, eBay, LinkedIn, Adobe, Dreamweaver, Apple, Safari Browser, etc.) and were part of technological revolutions whose time had come, but they retained that General Magic optimism of wanting to change the world, and not always in the corporate sector. Megan Smith joined the White House under President Barack Obama as the first female Chief Technology Officer of the United States. Joanna Hoffman focused on non-profit activities involving education and the environment.

The question of failure and its significance in life is a common thread woven through this film, and the answer is reassuring. Failure, one of the narrators declares, is not the end. It is the beginning. At this magnitude of intended change, where billions of lives may be affected by a technological device, success happens when the time is right and matures out of a nursery of failures – maybe in someone else's house. This archetypal narrative framework is not only about General Magic but often about life in general.

More than 25 years ago, this was Marc Porat's vision of the next big thing in communication technology: "A tiny computer, a phone, a very personal object. It must be beautiful. It must offer the kind of personal satisfaction that a fine piece of jewelry brings. It will have a perceived value even when it's not being used. It should offer the comfort of a touchstone, the tactile satisfaction of a seashell, the enchantment of a crystal. Once you use it, you won't be able to live without it. It's just not another telephone, it must be something else."

Today's smart phones do not have the General Magic brand name on them. But reverse-engineer them at a narrative level and the story that unravels should include the General Magic vision that came to life once a upon a time in the not too-distant past.

KEVIN Y. KAWAMOTO

Independent Scholar of Media and Communications

INVENTING TOMORROW



HAWAII PREMIERE
UNITED STATES 2018 | ENGLISH | 87M

16-NOV 8:00 PM DOL
30-NOV 6:00 PM PAL

SYNOPSIS

Meet the passionate teenage innovators taking on the environmental threats facing their communities and the world. Every year, high school students from around the world travel to compete at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), offering original solutions to complex scientific problems. Tracking competitors from India, Indonesia, Mexico and Hawaii, *INVENTING TOMORROW* follows their trials competing on the world stage while navigating the doubts and insecurities that mark adolescence.

As the competition heats up and the competitors come together in Los Angeles, the drama becomes surprisingly compelling. Like Jeffrey Blitz's 2002 spelling-bee documentary "Spellbound," director Laura Nix charges the finalists' preparations and performances with energy and charm that keeps us enthralled from start to finish.

Hopeful, bright and inspiring, *INVENTING TOMORROW* puts our future in the hands of some seriously impressive kids.

—Duncan Caillard

DIRECTOR Laura Nix
PRODUCERS Diane Becker, Laura Nix
CINEMATOGRAPHER Martina Radwan

THOUGHTS

Questions that lead us to improve something in our communities can start from observations in our familiar places, conversations with family members, and shared concerns followed by persistent curiosity. Even under challenging circumstances, the seed of an idea can, with support from friends, family, teachers, and mentors can grow into a life-changing science research project. *INVENTING TOMORROW* focuses on six high school students from Hilo, Hawai'i; Monterrey, Mexico; Bangalore, India; and Bangka, Indonesia to show how a question about an environmental problem can grow into research projects that lead to the ultimate high school research competition, the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). Intertwined with the story of the science, technology, engineering, and math in the students' research is the story of how many other people provide support as they develop their skills and knowledge, forge new relationships, and build new science identities that lead to empowering personal visions of the future.

I saw this happen with my Kaiser High School chemistry students who followed their interests in research projects. To make the study of fossil fuels and air pollution real we visited Mr. Glenn Minami's automotive shop. Mr. Minami, a former race car mechanic introduced us to the hidden workings of internal combustion engines: intake, compression, ignition, exhaust and catalytic converters that removed carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and incompletely burned fuel from exhaust. Ideally, all that would exit the tail pipe would be water vapor, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen gas. But was that true? Natalie Ching wondered what residues might be in the catalytic converter and if they could have an impact on health. Mr. Minami cut open a catalytic converter to help her pursue her question. With support from her teacher, family, and microbiology mentor at UH-Manoa, Natalie showed catalytic converter residues increased mutation rates in bacteria. Her project won the Hawaii State Science and Engineering Fair and a few weeks later her parents and I accompanied her to the International Science and Engineering Fair in Chicago. Her findings of potentially carcinogenic compounds in catalytic converters led a researcher at General Motors to contact her. A few years later Natalie graduated from UC-Berkeley as an engineer and began a career in Silicon Valley.

Like Natalie, the students in *INVENTING TOMORROW* began with a question about an environmental problem that affected them, their families and immediate community. For a 16-year old girl in Bangalore, India, it was raw sewage flowing into lakes her father swam in as a youth. For three teenage boys in the industrial city of Monterrey, Mexico, it was air pollution that claimed the life of a relative. For two teenage girls in Indonesia, it was the lead in waste water released by boats dredging for tin just offshore from their fishing village. For Hilo High School student Jared Goodwin, it was the tons of arsenic, used to termite-proof canec, dumped into Wailoa Pond where four generations of his family lived. The 1946 and 1960 tsunamis took many lives, destroyed his family's home, and stirred up and redistributed the arsenic in the pond. Where was it now and could it affect his family and community? His grandmother's stories about the tsunami and support from his UH-Hilo mentor inspired and guided research that led to his top environmental award at the 2017 International Science and Engineering Fair. On October 5, 2018, the Hawaii Tribune-Herald reported that the Department of Health would remove over 2000 cubic yards of arsenic-laden soil at a cost of more than \$300,000 from two vacant lots near Waiakea Villas.

These students invented tomorrow by taking steps to research and address a problem in their communities. The teenager from Bangalore created an app and inexpensive water test kits so community members could test their water and share data with scientists and government agencies. The students from Monterrey, Mexico developed a catalytic paint that used sunlight to convert nitrogen oxides into fertilizer that would wash off in the rain. The young ladies from Indonesia created a filter to remove lead from dredge waste water. They were brilliant researchers deeply concerned for the health of their communities and typical teenagers who cheered for their countries at ISEF, sang pop songs, took selfies, and looked forward to meeting peers from other countries. *INVENTING TOMORROW* has a message for all viewers—to be observant, to be curious, to speak to elders who lived healthier, more sustainable ways of life. It conveys a positive message, that all of us can invent a better tomorrow through our choices and actions.

PAULINE W. U. CHINN

Professor of Science Education
Curriculum Studies, College of Education
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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF DESIRE



HAWAII PREMIERE

CHINA, UNITED STATES 2018 | CHINESE W/ ENGLISH SUBTITLES | 95M

11-NOV 5:00 PM DOL

16-NOV 1:30 PM DOL

SYNOPSIS

In a digital universe where live streamers earn as much as \$200K a month, can virtual relationships replace real-life human connection? Join two online stars doing just that—rising from isolation to fame and fortune in China. Brought together in a series of bizarre competitions, they discover that happiness in their virtual world may be as elusive as in the real one.

Winner of the documentary competition at this year's SXSW Film Festival, *PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF DESIRE* examines the entire food chain feeding on this streaming idol phenomenon. The featured stars are Shen Man, an approachable former nurse who belts out pop tunes, and Big Li, a confident, manic comic with the mien of a Chinese Alex Jones. Supporting them are several rich donors who find purpose by pumping astonishing amounts of renminbi into idol competitions. At the bottom are the actual fans, called "diaosi"—largely lonely salaried workers who obsessively track their favorite idols on their glowing smartphones. As we work our way through this vicious ecosystem and learn what makes these participants tick, the film identifies the only winner: YY, the streaming platform, which generates extraordinary profits from the stars' massive audience and the handsome share of donations it extracts.

A darkly humorous portrait of an entire nation hooked on contrived entertainment, *PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF DESIRE* offers a despairing preview of what might be in store for us.

—Ryan Wu

DIRECTOR	Hao Wu
PRODUCER	Hao Wu
CINEMATOGRAPHER	Hao Wu

THOUGHTS

Charles Dickens thus describes the time before French Revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities*: It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us. Those lines are perfect for describing today's China, as depicted through a group of live streaming hosts and hostesses seeking money and fame in the virtual world of live streaming in the documentary *PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF DESIRE*, directed by Wu Hao.

Living-streaming culture began in China as early as 2005 when public video chat room services were used to host public performance. During the past years, living streaming has become increasingly popular in China with the proliferation of mobile devices equipped with high-definition cameras and high-speed internet. Live streaming industry in China quickly rose in 2016, and in 2017, there was an influx of capital going into live-streaming market. It is reported that the number of users of live streaming platforms reached 398 million in 2017, and it is predicted to exceed 500 million in 2019. Unlike live streaming in North America where it is used almost exclusively for live events and sharing among close friends, in China it has a wide range of uses, including such entertainment as showroom performances of singing dancing, music instruments and talk shows, e-commerce, personal knowledge sharing, and personal experience sharing.

The kind of live streaming featured in the documentary is a unique category which is called show-room live-streaming in China. Most of the streamers are beautiful young girls like 22-year-old Shen Man, who sing and dance in front of a webcam, to satisfy the sexual fantasy of their viewers who tend to be men. Of course, there are other viewers like 18-year-old migrant worker Yong who seek a sense of connection and belonging in watching live streaming.

The virtual world may serve as a window showcasing today's China, an increasingly stratified society where family socioeconomic status plays an increasingly role in determining a person's opportunity to education and employment, where money dictates almost everything, and where ambitious individuals climb up the social ladder, unscrupulously. The singing of those hosts and hostesses may be off the key, their dance moves may be uncoordinated, and they may sound crude. But they are able to attract fans who often feel lonely and isolated. They provide instant gratification to their viewers, and they feed the lust and desire of a society that lacks belief and morality.

Yet it was with sympathy, rather than despise, that I watched them. Growing up in the bottom strata of the society where competition for basic living is fierce and cruel, they know the importance of money in life. They do not want to stay in the bottom all their lives. They want to be the master of life, not merely spectators. The threshold of entering live streaming is low: One only needs a webcam, a speaker, and access to high-speed Internet, and thus the platform becomes a tantalizing dream-maker for those young people living in the bottom strata of society.

A few of them do succeed in making a fortune, and are able to afford a rich or even luxurious life, like Shen Man who earns \$40,000 a month in digital gifts and payments and Big Li who earns \$60,000 a month. But they only represent the top few who can earn \$20,000 a month or more among the 3.5 million streamers in the world's most populous country. Many of the hosts and hostesses can barely make a living: Only 5 percent earn more than \$1,500 and 70 percent less than \$15.

Even for those who manage to rise to the top, are they really happy? Shen Man feels like a money-making machine, Big Li breaks down at the end, and all he knows is that he misses his son. Is it only his son he misses? No, more than that, He misses connection, he misses authenticity, and he misses humanity lacking in this cold and cruel virtual world.

At the other end of the stream are the so-called Diaosi, a self-deprecating term for young men of mediocre appearance and social standing who has to face everyday struggles and hardships. Yong is such a Diaosi: He earns about \$400 a month as a waiter in a massage parlor and later a worker in a factory. Like the hosts and hostesses, they were born into the bottom of the social strata. Unlike the hosts and hostesses, they are reconciled to stay there. Unlike those hosts and hostesses who at least get attention, make some money at some point, they are the spectators of life throughout. With meager income, they can only watch other people spending money on their idols. By supporting a host or hostess, they are disillusioned into believing that they have the freedom to choose whom they like and whom they identify with, that they belong somewhere, and that they are not left behind by the fast-turning machine of society.

Also at the other end of the platform are a few wealthy patrons. Some of them are there for fun and pleasure, and they are usually called Tuhao, wealthy people who lack culture and taste. To them, live-streaming broadcasting is a game which can make them feel important through spending lavishly and flamboyantly. Other wealthy patrons, though, are there for serious business. YY Fish does not invest in Shen Man for fun as he can get 60 percent of her income. Those are the people who form agencies to recruit, train and spend money to make certain hosts/hostesses popular. Those few most wealthy patrons are above the Diaosi fans and hosts/hostesses in this biological chain.

At the very top of this chain, however, is the owner of the platform, in this case, the CEO Chen Zhu of YY Entertainment who capitalizes on the deep sense of loneliness and isolation among people. As he says: "This platform helps release some energy that is otherwise suppressed ... Most of them live in the virtual world. They may lack friends in real life." It is a virtual world, but it is more than real. This is the China today, where the jungle law rules, and where the big fish eats small fish and small fish in turn eats even smaller shrimp. People like Chen Zhu are the ultimate winners. It is the best of times because sky seems to be the only limit and the world has been flattened by the development of technology. It is the worst of times because behind the hustle and bustle of each showroom is a group of lonely souls, restless and aimless.

BAOYAN CHENG

Associate Professor
Comparative/International Education,
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University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

TEN YEARS: JAPAN



NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

HONG KONG, JAPAN 2018 | JAPANESE W/ENGLISH SUBTITLES | 99M

10-NOV 3:45 PM DOL

12-NOV 1:00PM DOL

SYNOPSIS

From the producers of the award-winning Hong Kong omnibus *TEN YEARS* and Executive Producer Hirokazu Kore-eda, comes *TEN YEARS: JAPAN*, a series of 5 shorts from up-and-coming Japanese filmmakers about their vision of Japan in 10 years time.

These futuristic shorts, reminiscent of a Japanese version of *BLACK MIRROR*, include a future Japan plagued by pollution and an ageing population; a society where morality and personal history are manipulated by technology; a world in which a.i. takes over the management of child rearing and education; a post-apocalyptic future where underground living is the norm; and a nation overshadowed by the spectre of war. Showcasing the talents of five filmmakers who are true talents-to-watch, *TEN YEARS: JAPAN* is an honest, dark, and revolutionary look at what the future may hold.

—Anna Page

DIRECTORS

Akiyo Fujimura, Chie Hayakawa, Kei Ishikawa,
Yusuke Kinoshita, Megumi Tsuno

PRODUCER

Miyuki Takamatsu

THOUGHTS

The films in this series deal with the issues that Japan has been facing since the last 10 years – what to do with an aging population, the effort to enhance the use of high technology in the training of a workforce, single parenting, ecological disasters and their impact on the communities, and renewal of the tension between Japan's pro-peace older generation, and their children who be involved in Japan's war efforts.

High technology is quite ubiquitous in these films, which is Japan's signature as a modern nation. A young executive's future, as well as that of his family (including that of an unborn child), hinge on being a good "salesman" for his company. Plan 75 is actively promoting a euthanasia packet that guarantees senior citizens would die in comfort. Family histories are not written any more in diaries or memoirs, but embedded in a "digital inheritance card."

Radiation has destroyed the world, while super-computer has replaced parents as the sole determinant of children's education and careers, making parents irrelevant, even unnecessary. Finally, better (i.e., deadlier) weapons have boosted Japanese security confidence such that it has now disposed of its "peace constitution" and replace this with a belligerent temperament that has reinstated a pre-World War II draft and send this army to global hotspots and regional threats (China?).

Humans are not gently going into that good night. They feel guilty as they try to bribe seniors to accept the euthanasia's package of medicines. Children hold steadfast to their nascent notions of "freedom," playing with animals to the puzzled irritation of a supercomputer. They pursue their imaginations of what is above their underground homes and defy their parents who are too traumatized to the poisoning of the earth to believe that the planet can heal herself.

Not everyone can resist. Technology brings in money, and in the end, you accept that sacrificing the older generation for higher pay and an insured future for you and your children. Plan 75 has succeeded to resolve human dilemmas.

But the films show that humans can prevail over machines. And as it turns out, the elderly are not the kind of people that Plan 75 managers think they can exploit as a captive market. In the last film, it was an elder artist who designed the banner announcing a military draft to fight the country's wars. It had ceased to be a beautiful country and by using the emblem – a symbol of peace for her generation – she wanted to impress on her young guest the irony.

He understood, and you get a sense in the last part of the film that he was going to try to reverse this militarism, beginning with reconnecting with his fellow workers. Alas, this latent pacification will have to start with a sacrifice. The worker he berated at the onset of making a mistake with the banner, had joined the army and was killed.

The sacrifice becomes the perfect counterfoil to the other young man whose loyalty to his company enabled him to boost the sale of the euthanasia package, get a salary raise enough to fulfill the middle-class dream – a house in the suburbs.

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SPECIAL THANKS

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