

The Carolina Asia Center
The University Program in Cultural Studies

OKINAWA DREAM SHOW AT UNC CHAPEL HILL

A RETROSPECTIVE OF THE FILMS OF TAKAMINE GO
MARCH 29 & 30
SWAIN HALL ROOM 01A
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

*Takamine Go will be our guest for both evenings
Admission is Free for all films*

Intensely personal, subversively political, Takamine's films are dreamlike narratives of life in Okinawa, an island crushed by Japanese colonialism and occupied by the American military. While Takamine explores the dark and tragic experiences of Okinawan history, he does so with playful wit and enthusiasm for the details of everyday life. A tireless experimenter, he brings a mastery of avant-garde cinema to his fascination with folklore and traditional performing arts, creating a surreal vision of the modern world. Takamine has been awarded the Cagliari Film Prize at the Berlin International Film Festival and his work has been screened in the New Directors/New Films series at MoMA. In 2003, the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival in Japan presented a series of his films, and the first American retrospective of his work will be held this month at Anthology Film Archives in New York.

TAKAMINE IN HIS OWN WORDS:

Thinking back on it now, it was by looking at the Okinawan landscape, confronting it, that I began to become conscious of making films. Around the time when Okinawa reverted to the Japanese mainland, the Okinawan landscape was undergoing tremendous change. Things just appeared and disappeared. But even if you lose sight of the landscape's roots, it's not like they go away so easily.

When I'm looking at the landscape, I'm not an outside observer. I wanted to try to capture the smell of death in the landscape with my 8mm camera. Of course, 8mm film is a visual medium, but I wanted to absorb the smell by looking. In other words, the Okinawan landscape was almost entirely covered with corpses during the Battle of Okinawa. During the post-war rebuilding there was an effort to bring closure to a lot of things, the Monument to the Star Lily (Himeyuri) Students Corps being a prime example. But even the normal landscape had corpses in it... I heard lots of real stories about that from my parents. All the time, moving between corpses, sometimes stepping and then leaping away. That's the kind of story I heard. In that case, I felt like the Okinawan landscape still has the uncollected mabui (souls) of the dead, more than spirits, wandering about. I wanted to capture everything about the landscape, including these souls, with my camera. In those days, a movie camera was like a vacuum cleaner to me - a vacuum cleaner that sucked up the smells, not just photographing the landscape and purveying meaning.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29 AT 7:00

SASHINGWA (DEAR PHOTOGRAPH)
1973, 15 minutes, color/b&w, 8mm (shown on 16mm). No dialogue. Music: Takamine Eiko, Takamine Mitsu. The title means "beloved photographs" in the Okinawan language... The film recreates the feelings you get when looking at photographs that commemorate special occasions. By this I mean looking at family records after some time has passed and being drawn to the afterimage of faint memories. That was the mood of this 8mm film. It's a record of the memory of records. Looking back on it now, the 8mm film itself has become something like an old commemorative photo. The scratches and lint clinging to the film make this feeling even stronger.
- Takamine Go

PARADISE VIEW

1985, 113 minutes, color, 35mm (shown on video). In Okinawan and Japanese with English subtitles.

Takamine's first (and main) crossover 'hit' is a charmingly clunky, radically political and coolly detached narrative feature. It includes performances and music by Haruomi Hosono of Yellow Magic Orchestra, and 80s pop star Jun Togawa. The film has the most distinctive sensibility; a uniquely surreal encounter between 80s pop chic and country-bumpkin coarseness.

In PARADISE VIEW I wanted to see if I could film a feature film on Okinawan mabui . . . something like a spiritual core, not a spiritual concept of Okinawa arising out of its historical experience, but connecting with the unsettled things in people's hearts. So, I took mabui as my keyword...but it's not like I was dictating it to the audience. Nor is it a song of praise for Nature. Nor is it a song of praise for the Okinawan landscape that has that kind of mabui. Setting aside good and bad, I wanted to see if I could shoot a film of the region of mystery inside human existence as it is immersed in the Okinawan landscape.-
Takamine Go

THURSDAY MARCH 30 AT 7:00

TSURU-HENRY / MUGEN RYUKYU: TSURU HENRI
1998, 90 minutes, color, video. In Okinawan, Japanese, English and Taiwanese with English subtitles.

Tsuru (folk-blues singer Oshiro) is a roving broadcaster and collector of singing-and-dancing DNA samples, kept in her lunchbox. One day she finds an abandoned script (its penniless author has fled to Taiwan in search of a woman - Chen, from A CONFUCIAN CONFUSION and THE RIVER) and so she moves into the writer's house and sets about staging it as a play. But her son Henry (high-school karate champ Miyagi) over-identifies with his role as a US official, goes crazy and is taken as a prophet... Takamine is still the poet laureate of everything bizarre and musical in Okinawa and this ramshackle mix of separatist politics and

conceptual sexuality answers every question about the islands - including the ones nobody's thought of yet. -
TIME OUT FILM GUIDE

KADEKARU RINSHO: SONGS AND STORIES / KADEKARU RINSHO:
UTA TO KATARI
1994, 59 minutes, color, video. In Okinawan and
Japanese with no subtitles.

A documentary composed of interviews with, and songs by, the late Okinawan singer Kadekaru Rinsho. Fourteen songs from "Times are Changing" to "Shinobi nakafu" were recorded outdoors in Taketomi Island and the Koza area. Against the backdrop of this landscape each song describes the conditions in Okinawa and resonates with the life and times of Kadekaru Rinsho. The many anecdotes created through his artful storytelling were part and parcel of Kadekaru's lifestyle. Charming dialogue with the eccentric singer who lived and sang like the wind.

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Hama Haruka
Anthology Film Archives