

COMME DES CINEMAS, NAGOYA BROADCASTING NETWORK AND TWENTY TWENTY VISION



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
**UN CERTAIN REGARD**  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

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A FILM BY

NAOMI KAWASE



AN FILM PARTNERS, ZDF / ARTE, MAM, CNC, MEDIENBOARD BERLIN BRANDENBURG



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## SYNOPSIS

**Sentaro** runs a small bakery that serves dorayakis - pastries filled with sweet red bean paste (“an”). When an old lady, **Tokue**, offers to help in the kitchen he reluctantly accepts. But Tokue proves to have magic in her hands when it comes to making “an”. Thanks to her secret recipe, the little business soon flourishes...

And with time, Sentaro and Tokue will open their hearts to reveal old wounds.

113 minutes / Color / 2.35 / HD / 5.1 / 2015

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*Cherry trees in full bloom remind us of death. I do not know of any other tree whose flowers blossom in such a spectacular way, only to have their petals scatter just as suddenly. Is this the reason behind our fascination for blossoming cherry trees? Is this why we are compelled to see a reflection of our own lives in them?*

*Sentaro, Tokue and Wakana meet when the cherry trees are in full bloom. The trajectories of these three people are very different. And yet, their souls cross paths and meet one another in the same landscapes.*

*Our society is not always predisposed to letting our dreams become reality. Sometimes, it swallows up our hopes.*

*After learning that Tokue is infected with leprosy, the story pulls us into a quest for the very essence of what makes us human. As a director, I have the honour and pleasure of exploring different lives through cinema, as is the case with this film.*

*By unveiling the complex mechanics of this society, I hope to further an understanding of the very essence of existence.*

*AN is the meeting of two souls who unite in order to face life's obstacles. How many times must we be knocked down before we can reach paradise?*

*Sometimes an impenetrable silence engulfs us. And yet, the joy resulting from commitment and connection to the world allows us to better appreciate its changes and evolution. Through this film, I therefore wish to reveal and underline the joy we are able to feel at these precise moments.*

*Throughout our lives, there are times when we might find ourselves filled with regret and despair, and feel like giving in. Despite this - or maybe even because of this - we are nevertheless capable of holding onto our hopes and of continuing to have faith in the future.*

NAOMI KAWASE



# INTERVIEW WITH NAOMI KAWASE



**How did you get the idea to adapt the book “An” by Dorian Sukegawa, edited in 2013 in Japan?**

Actually, Dorian Sukegawa is in one of my films, *Hanezu* (2012), as an actor. We went to Cannes together when the film was selected for the Competition and, while we were there, he briefly talked about the story of *An*. Later he finished the book and sent it to me, and he asked me if I was interested in making a film based on it. So I read the book and I was drawn to how it carefully traced the presence of “what’s invisible” in life. Cinema is the medium in which we construct reality with what’s visible, but at the same time, I believe cinema can also create the presence of what’s invisible in life and present it for us as audience.

**How personal is this film? How did you adapt the story from the book to the script of the film?**

When I was writing the screenplay, I locked myself up in the library located inside the property of National Tama Zenshoen, which is the sanatorium in the outskirts of Tokyo for leprosy and ex-leprosy patients.

I also spent some time walking alone inside the forest of the sanatorium, feeling the actual light and winds of the place, and talking to some ex-patients who actually reside in the sanatorium, so that I could bring more reality into my script, as well as making the literal language into more of cinematic language.

As a personal stand point, I was especially seeing one of the main characters, Tokue, in the reflection of my own foster mother, who passed away three years ago.

**The three main characters of the film are lonely people who for various reasons do not belong in society. How do their situations change in the film? What do they come to understand?**

First, anyone cannot live alone. This is what I think of us as human beings. Also, most of us have experienced some kind of failures in life. Sometimes, such failures can



change one's life dramatically. Even so, every one of us can still possess the power to continue living one's life no matter what, and I believe it is inside us by nature. However, sometimes, our societies could confront such will and desire of someone, and in this film, we could see the main character Tokue being "robbed" of most of her lifetime, but at the same time, she had also learnt a lot of things from the particular situation she was put in. Being helped by or passed on by Tokue, who had lived and experienced much more, the two other main characters, Sentaro and Wakana, gain their own ways of believing in who they are and become able to make one small but very important step forward in their own life.

**Is society such an agent of exclusion? Or do you think people create their own barriers?**

In contemporary societies, it seems to me that sometimes people are creating their own barriers. As a consequence in a broader scale, such barriers might be leading us to re-create the notions and actions of trying to get rid of the "others". Sometimes, someone who looks so angry from afar can actually be crying if we get close enough to see the person. Such a person can simply be looking for the warmth of others.

**Even if this time the action merely takes place in the city, in opposition to your previous film *Still the Water*, nature still is superb too in *An*. What part does nature play in this film?**

As an essence, the role of the nature in this film is not any different than the one in my previous film or films. Nature is something that quietly watches over us, human beings. The cherry trees for instance don't speak any word but they understand and accept what and how we are. They bring flowers every coming season, no matter what, which I think is so lovely.

**How did you choose the main actors?**

As for Tokue, I discussed with Durian Sukegawa, the author, and we decided to ask the actress, Kiki Kirin. She read the original story and very happily accepted our offer immediately. For Sentaro, I had been dreaming to make a film with him for a long time, and he took my passion pleasantly. As for Wakana's role, it took awhile to finally decide on the actress, but at the end, we decided to go with her who is a real grand daughter of Kiki Kirin, who plays Tokue.

**Do you believe simple things as recipes can change people's lives?**

Yes, I believe so. To be honest, I really love eating and can't resist to delicious dishes. Eating good food makes my mind wondrous and happy. I also believe no one would be angry for eating delicious food.

# FILMOGRAPHY

## SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY (*feature films*)

**2015 AN**

*Cannes Film Festival, Un Certain Regard  
Opening Film*

**2014 STILL THE WATER**

*Cannes Film Festival, in Competition*

**2011 HANEZU**

*Cannes Film Festival, in Competition*

**2008 NANAYOMACHI**

**2007 THE MOURNING FOREST**

*Cannes Film Festival - Grand Prize*

**2003 SHARA**

*Cannes Film Festival, in Competition*

**2000 HOTARU**

*Locarno Film Festival - CICA Award  
& FIPRESCI Prize*

**1997 SUZAKU**

*Cannes Film Festival - Golden Camera*



# CAST

Tokue **KIRIN KIKI**  
Sentaro **MASATOSHI NAGASE**  
Wakana **KYARA UCHIDA**  
Dorayaki Shop Owner **MIYOKO ASADA**  
Yoshiko **ETSUKO ICHIHARA**

# CREW

Production **COMME DES CINÉMAS**  
**NAGOYA BROADCASTING NETWORK**  
**TWENTY TWENTY VISION**

Co-production **AEON ENTERTAINMENT**  
**KUMIE, POPLAR PUBLISHING**  
**HAKUHODO, ELEPHANT HOUSE**  
**THE ASAHI SHIMBUN COMPANY**  
**ZDF/ARTE, MAM**

With support from **CNC**  
**MEDIENBOARD BERLIN BRANDENBURG**  
**AGENCY FOR CULTURAL AFFAIRS, JAPAN**

Producer **MASA SAWADA, KOICHIRO FUKUSHIMA**  
**YOSHITO OYAMA**

Co-producer **THANASSIS KARATHANOS**

Screenplay **NAOMI KAWASE**

based on the novel **AN**  
by **DURIAN SUKEGAWA (POPLAR PUBLISHING)**

Directed by **NAOMI KAWASE**

Director of photography **SHIGEKI AKIYAMA**

Lighting **YASUHIRO OHTA**

Art Director **KYOKO HEYA**

Assistant Director **YUKI KONDO**

Editor **TINA BAZ**

Music **DAVID HADJADJ**

Sound **EIJI MORI**

Sound Designer **ROMAN DYMNY**

Sound Editor **BORIS CHAPELLE**

Sound Re-recording Mixer **OLIVIER GOINARD**



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