

Kasamayaki Film Screening



Shigeko Kokubo (Left) Director Yuki Kokubo (Right)

On Saturday, September 26, 2015, UTSA's East Asia Institute hosted the "Kasamayaki (Made in Kasama)" public movie screening. This event was supported by Japan-America Society of San Antonio and National Association of Japan America Societies. More than 70 people attended the event, including the director of the film, Yuki Kokubo. The screening began at 2:30pm with a Q&A session following and a reception preceding it at 2:00pm.

The film, *Kasamayaki*, is an intimate portrait of two potters, Katsuji and Shigeko Kokubo, filmed by their daughter Yuki. Shaken by the Japanese earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters of 2011, a young woman returns to Kasama to make sense of her family's troubled past. Meditative moments at the pottery wheel punctuated by tense conversation, sudden earthquakes, and radiation level readings, *Kasamayaki* exposes the bittersweet process of coming to terms

with an imperfect life, and the healing power of creativity.

After the event there was a Q&A with the director, Yuki Kokubo. The audience was very interested in learning Kokubo's inspiration for the film. Kokubo explained that she hoped that what the audience would get out of the film is that "as long as you're alive, there is always time to make connections and live fully. Even with people who have...caused your life to be difficult."

Kokubo revealed that the current storyline for the film was not her original idea when she started filming. Her original idea was to make a film about the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami disaster. She believed that being Japanese and through her parents she could get a different perspective. She claims, "While I was interviewing my parents, all these questions kept coming out, that had nothing to do with the disaster. It was uncontrollable for me. I just wanted to know who my parents

were so badly that I used the camera as an excuse." She then adds that while at a filmmaker's dinner, she confessed to a friend that she had so many hours of emotional content filmed, but very short segments about the disaster. He claimed that it was "a no brainer; I've seen so many things about the tsunami disasters. Now I don't want to see anymore. You should make something that is more personal." With this in mind, Kokubo took another 3 months to decide to change the concept.

Many guests were curious to what her parents thought about the film, or if they had seen it. Kokubo responded, "Yes, for a while they were really resistant. As you can imagine after they reflected on what they let me capture in the camera." She continued to share that last Christmas her father called and told her to send them a DVD. Kokubo was worried about what they were going to think. "They called me the next day, and the first thing that they said was that they were really sorry about what we had to put you through.



Pre-movie reception (above)

But most of what they had to say was how proud they were of me as an artist." Kokubo shared that this was very validating to her because they had overcome what was on the screen and thought of her as a person now.

Altogether, the film was an inspiration to the audience. Before the film, there was a small reception where many people talked to Kokubo, asked questions about the film and took pictures with her. It was wonderful to have the director of the film at the event so that not only were people able to engage in conversation with her, but they were also able to learn something about Japanese culture from a different perspective. Michelle Hernandez, a participant at the event said, "It was a beautiful movie, and I was strongly touched by the story behind the film."

The UTSA East Asia Institute's mission is to promote appreciation and understanding of East Asian societies and cultures both on campus and in the community through research, outreach, networking, education, student/faculty exchange, and business development and cooperation. The East Asia Institute organizes seminars, workshops, lectures, conferences, film festivals, visual art exhibitions as well as bringing in performing art groups from China, Japan, Korea, and other Asian nations. It also encourages faculty research collaborations both within UTSA and with participating East Asian university researchers. All events are free and open to the public.