

The Spirit of Asia Award by The Japan Foundation Asia Center for Tokyo International Film Festival 2017 goes to Mr. Akio Fujimoto

The Japan Foundation Asia Center (JFAC) and the Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) have been expanding our scope of cultural exchange into the field of films and moving images through the joint initiative Film Culture Exchange Projects.

We are pleased to announce the winner of the Spirit of Asia Award for the 30th Tokyo International Film Festival held from October 25 to November 3, 2017. The winner was chosen from the directors of the Asian Future section, which is considered to be a gateway to success for promising Asian directors.

■ The Spirit of Asia Award by The Japan Foundation Asia Center

The winner: Akio Fujimoto

Born in 1988 in Osaka. After graduating from college he studied filmmaking at Visual Arts Osaka. In 2012 he made his first short film based on his own experience called *Psychedelic Family* about a family's destruction, which was screened at Dubai, Nara, and other international film festivals. After graduating he moved to Tokyo, and in 2014 filmed his first feature film *Passage of Life*.

■ The directorial film presented at TIFF:

Passage of Life (2017 Japan/Myanmar)

A Burmese family of 4 is living in Japan. One day they get a letter that will change their lives forever... Based on a true story, this is a tale of love that across the borders.



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Messages from the winner and the jury of The Spirit of Asia Award

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff, the cast, and everyone involved in the realization of this film. I am very fortunate to have worked with them all. I think we all came together to best portray the family's lives, going beyond mere filmmaking in Japan and Myanmar, and I am humbly grateful that our efforts have been recognized. Thank you for such a wonderful award.



Passage of Life (2017) © E.x.N K.K.

- Akio Fujimoto (Director)

The thin line between reality and fiction in *The Passage of Life*, a Japanese/Burmese film directed by Akio Fujimoto, brings out a delicate balance which allows the director to reveal a segment of Asian life that is filled with challenge and difficulties as it is with compassion and hope. Fujimoto's film gives deeper meaning to the Spirit of Asia award by taking a path where a young Asian filmmaker can look beyond the narrow confines of his nationality to discover a region where his fellow Asians share a common human condition that struggles for a humane world to live in.

- Nick Deocampo (Associate Professor at the University of the Philippines Film Institute)

The Spirit of Asia Award by The Japan Foundation Asia Center

The Spirit of Asia Award, established in the Asian Future section in 2014, is awarded to promising directors who are expected to be internationally active beyond cultural barriers. The Winner is to be decided by two commissioners: Masamichi Matsumoto (Director, Cinematheque) and Nick Deocampo (Associate Professor, University of the Philippines Film Institute). The winner will receive a trophy and a short trip to Japan (or to Asia, in case of Japanese director). For information on the other awards at the TIFF, please refer to the official website indicated below.

The Japan Foundation Asia Center <http://www.jfac.jp>

The Japan Foundation is Japan's principal independent administrative institution dedicated to carrying out cultural exchange initiatives throughout the world.

The Asia Center, established in April 2014, is a division within the Foundation that conducts and supports collaborative initiatives with its Asian—primarily ASEAN—counterparts. Through interacting and working together in Japanese-language education, arts and culture, sports, and grassroots and intellectual exchange, the Asia Center pursues to develop the sense of kinship and coexistence as neighboring inhabitants of Asia.

Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) <http://2017.tiff-jp.net/en/>

TIFF, which marks its 30th anniversary, is the only international film festival in Japan accredited by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations.* Starting in 1985, as the first large-scaled film festival of the country, it has made a significant mark on the film and entertainment industry of Japan and Asia and has grown to Asia's largest film festival. The festival provides opportunities for people in the film industry and film enthusiasts to encounter great films from all over the world shown in Asia's film capital, Tokyo.

*** The International Federation of Film Producers Associations is an international organization which improves or reviews issues of the world's film industry and international film festivals.**