

Film Frontier Global Networking Program: First batch of selected applicants announced

Emerging directors Ota Shingo, Kawawada Emma, Nakanishi Mai, and Hasei Kohki have been selected to receive support for international projects over the course of 18 months.



Hasei, Kawawada, Jeune, Saitoh, and Ichiyama appeared at the announcement event on November 1.
Venue: LEXUS MEETS...

The Japan Arts Council has established the Young Creator Development Funds under the subsidiary aid of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan, to support the development of live-action and animation projects, mainly for overseas activities. The new program of the Japan Arts Council is called the Creator Development Program, and comprises three programs that will be implemented under the name Film Frontier in the field of feature filmmaking (live-action/animation). Four emerging directors have been selected for the first phase of the Global Networking Program.

The program will focus on supporting the planning and development activities of the young filmmakers, and will support them in realizing their feature film projects while receiving guidance from mentors with a global perspective, allowing them to take on challenges overseas.

At the announcement of the selected applicants held on November 1 during the 37th Tokyo International Film Festival, Ichiyama Shozo, the supervisor for the Film Frontier Global Networking program and one of the selection committee members, announced the four creators.

"We received more than 40 applications, which was more than we expected," he told a large audience of film industry representatives and media, "and it was hard to make a decision while-reading through the application documents, including each proposal and budget. There were many excellent projects, and the four people selected were evaluated not only for the excellence of their proposals, but also for their high possibility of completion and high potential for overseas success," he commented.

Guest speaker Christian Jeune (Director of the Film Department and Deputy General Delegate, Cannes Film Festival) commented that the prominence of Japanese films at the Cannes Film Festival has recently been attracting attention once again, and he has high hopes for the four filmmakers' success. Actor and director Saitoh Takumi, commenting based on his experience participating in the Marché du Film in Cannes this year, delivered a heartfelt message of encouragement, saying that traveling abroad will be a chance for filmmakers to further deepen their understanding of film.

■ The selected creators



Ota Shingo (Film director and actor)

Born in Nagano Prefecture, Ota majored in philosophy and narrative theory while attending Waseda University. His graduation project, *Graduation*, won the Excellence Award and Audience Award at the Image Forum Festival 2010. The feature-length documentary *The End of the Special Time We Were Allowed*, which he made after the suicide of his friend, was released at the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival 2013 and has since been released in 12 countries around the world.

Ota's recent works include *Fragile*, which was screened at the Tokyo International Film Festival and received a Japanese theatrical release; and *At Kinosaki*, which won the Excellence in Arts Award at the Yubari International Fantastic Film Festival 2022. His feature-length documentary *The Numakage Public Swimming Pool*, which is currently in production, won the First Cut+ Works in Progress Award at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024, the first time a Japanese project has won the award. The film is scheduled to be released in theaters after its premiere at the festival.



Kawawada Emma (Film director)

After joining Bunbuku in 2014, Kawawada served as assistant director on films by director Kore-eda Hirokazu. She won the ARTE International Prize at the 23rd Busan International Film Festival's Asian Project Market (APM) in 2018. She made her commercial feature film debut with *My Small Land* (2022). This work was invited to the Generation category at the Berlin International Film Festival, among many other festivals. She also received a special commendation for it at the Amnesty International Film Awards.



Nakanishi Mai (Writer & Director)

Born in Tokyo and raised abroad, Nakanishi gained experience in film production while working full-time, contributing to various international projects as a producer, assistant director, and art assistant, before shifting her focus to screenwriting and directing. Her directorial short films include *HANA* (2018), shot in Korea; *SWALLOW* (2021), shot in Taiwan; and *BORDER* (2023), shot in Korea. She's currently in post-production on her newest short film while working on co-productions with countries across Asia. Nakanishi is an alumna of BIFF Asian Film Academy, Talents Tokyo and Sundance/NHK Scriptlab.



Hasei Kohki (Film director and scriptwriter)

After releasing the short film *Godog*, which depicts people living among the garbage dumps and cemeteries of the Philippines, he made his directorial debut with the feature film *Blanka*. This film, which depicts a street child running around trying to buy a mother, won the Magic Lantern Award and the Sorriso Diverso Award, awarded by journalists, at the 2015 Venice International Film Festival. In Japan, Hasei won the Shindo Kaneto Award Gold Prize.

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