

# From Cookies to Politics

Two documentarians speak about their projects that are on display at the 42nd Visual Communications Film Festival

By JORDAN IKEDA  
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From comedy and drama to documentaries and shorts, the 24th edition of Visual Communications Asian Pacific Film Festival began yesterday and will continue through Thursday, May 8. Participants from all over the world have come to display their films and share the stories of Asian Pacifics in America and abroad. For more info on the festival, visit [www.vconline.org](http://www.vconline.org).

The Rafu had the privilege of speaking with two directors about their films that will be featured at the festival.

Director Anne Kaneko takes a look at the Peruvian art scene and how it has and continues to help shape and at times influence the political mindset of the country in her documentary.

Director Derek Shimoda takes a smart and playful examination of the origins of a North American Chinese cuisine staple—the fortune cookie.

**Against The Grain: An Artist's Survival Guide to Peru**

Director: Anne Kaneko  
Sunday, May 4 at 4:30 p.m.  
Laemmele's Sunset Theaters in West Hollywood



An example of an "Art Action" as artists demonstrate in front of the President's Palace in Lima, Peru.

Photos courtesy of ANNE KANEKO

**RAFU:** First off, what do you think about the VC film festival?

**Anne Kaneko:** In terms of the festival, it is really important in terms of fostering and supporting this community. I can't imagine not having this festival, especially with the large Asian community here.

**R:** How did the idea for the movie come up?

**AK:** What peaked my interest were the "art actions"—the Lava Lavendera, the "Wall of Shame," a project called "Vaso de leche" (vase of milk). They were doing this all over plazas all throughout the country. I was very intrigued by that. How interesting how these projects that these artists were doing seemed to have some impact and was on people's consciousness.

Here, art is always very marginal in some way. But there, it really seemed to mobilize people. I don't know if it got people to do anything, but it was very symbolic for a lot of people.



Kaneko

what started me off.

**R:** Perhaps talk about the parallels between the US and Lima.



A controversial silk screen of Mao Zedong by artist Alfredo Marquez.

**AK:** I think Fujimori's penchant for being very controlling. He had this coo and he basically shut down congress. The press was very much controlled by him.

I don't see that happening here to that extent, but I think especially after 9/11 this fear that came from that experience, I think that there is this kind of self-censorship that happens. Because there is this threat now, I think there are people

who feel they can't do certain things.

**R:** Do you think that is what you want to get across in the movie? Or is it more about the artistic side?

**AK:** No, I'm not up on any soapbox. I feel that it's really just for people to think about. I'm not trying to persuade anyone of one thing or another. I think, if anything, art is essential. I think it is essential to any society. It has been part of all of civilization. Therefore, the issues about what one says, or how that dialogue occurs in a political or social sphere, is complicated. That's all I'm really interested in is looking into what that entails.

**R:** What future projects are you looking into doing?

**AK:** Oh god, I am so exhausted from this film [laughs]. I think I want to do some little stuff, some fun stuff.

**R:** What are your feelings on there being so many women filmmakers at this year's festival?

**AK:** I feel that there are a lot of women filmmakers out there, but the Industry is very much a boys game. You see a lot of women get to a certain point and then to just keep going it's hard. Just to be a director and a woman, it's hard. It is a big challenge.

**R:** What sort of advice would you give to people?

**AK:** Just do it. Have fun. And don't expect to make money. You kind of have to do some soul searching."

MICHAEL HIRANO CULROSS/Rafu Shimpo