

# A tender story of family relations

**M**aison de Himiko is a story of turbulent relationship between an estranged gay father and his daughter. When the father is diagnosed with terminal cancer, his daughter visits him in the old-age home for gay

elders and their relationship begins to take a positive turn. The film, which was produced by Asmik Ace Entertainment and IMJ Entertainment, explores themes of loneliness and isolation. Principal photography was from late September to November 2004 and cinematographer Takahiro Tsutai, JSC points out with pride that considering two typhoons interrupted filming it was miraculous that the production finished only one week behind schedule. The original screenplay for **Maison de Himiko** was written by Aya Watanabe whose previous collaborations with Director Isshin Inudou include **Josee, The Tiger and The Fish**.

To capture the emotional subtleties of the home for gay elders, in which much of the film's action takes place, Tsutai used a combination of Kodak's VISION2 Expression 500T 5229 and VISION2 200T 5217 35mm stocks. The cinematographer felt that the softness of the 5229 perfectly suited the aesthetics and themes of **Maison de Himiko**. "It's a story that deals with fragile human emotions and many of the characters are quite old, so there's a sense of tenderness that permeates the film. I felt it would be the wrong choice to use a stock that was saturated in its color rendition and with strong contrast. I used the 5217 pulled half a stop for all the day exteriors, and the 5217 and the 5229 with a normal exposure for interiors, then the 5229 for night scenes," explains Tsutai. "When I checked the dailies, the 5217 with a half stop pull and the 5229

with a normal exposure matched very well, but I felt that the 5217 with normal exposure was a little too hard, with a bit too much contrast for my tastes. I remember thinking that maybe I should have shot the entire film with the 5229! My favorite

scenes are the one lit by tungsten sources and captured with the 5229, these are amazingly beautiful, with fantastic tonal gradation and color reproduction. I think that the 5229 is a soft, flexible, clean film and I especially like the way it falls off in the shadow part of the curve." **Maison de Himiko** was printed on Kodak Vision Premier color print film.

Tsutai shot the film with an ARRiflex 535, with a full complement of Zeiss prime lenses; 18mm, 25mm, 35mm, 40mm, 50mm, 85mm, 100mm, 135mm and an Angenieux 10x HR Zoom. The production achieved an average of thirty shots a day, a total of six hundred and fifty. **Maison de Himiko** was released in early autumn 2005.

Takahiro Tsutai, JSC graduated from the faculty of film of the Art Academy of Tama, working as a camera assistant under cinematographers Koichi Kawakami and Tatsuhiko Kobayashi. He earned his first Director of Photography credit in Youichi Higashi's **The Crossing** (2000). ■



**Inset:** Cinematographer  
Takahiro Tsutai, JSC.

