

" Bing Bang Zing Zang Art Class "

Winner of Agency for Cultural Affairs' Excellent
Cultural Documentary Film Award, 2004



Bing Bang Zing Zang Art Class
is the magical hour when children's spirits truly shine.
~Matsui Masashi,
"Plain living & High thinking" The chief editor



Pieces of junk, be it wood, paper, clay or metal,
Can create a universe
When touched by children's small hands
A universe full of light and hope.

~Kakuta Mitsuyo , writer

The Japanese today are so obsessed with eliminating "useless" moments.
This film reminds us that "useless" moments are sometimes the most
important moments in life.Excellent work!

~Akira Sakata , musician

Sensitivity is cultivated during childhood.

[Children who have spent a Full childhood can always resort to what they have saved during that period.]

It will help them come up with unique and original ideas, and help them see with their heart what their eyes cannot.
Such abilities will help the child live creatively and happily.

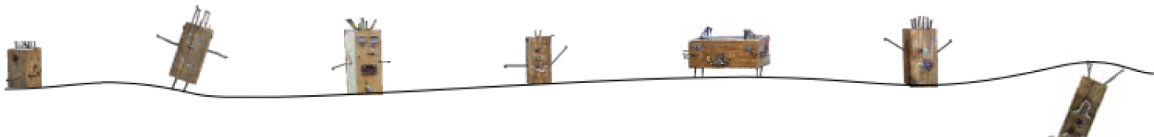
The most creative hours in school would probably be art class and recess.

The Japanese education system is making a big mistake in reducing these precious hours.

"Bing Bang Zing Zang Art Class" is being praised by many teachers in Japan.

I sincerely hope that this film would help children receive a richer education.

~Chen ChangXuan, not submitted to the master violin craftsman



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How "Bing Bang Zing Zang Art Class" came to be.

Nonaka Mariko, director, writer, editor & producer

The production of my first documentary film, "Children's Time" , started when I had my first child in 1995.

I had never felt affection towards small children prior to that, but all had changed. I was determined to produce a documentary about small children. I moved with my family from the urban area of Tokyo to the countryside, and filmed the children of Inaho Nursery School for 5 years.

The title "Children's Time" refers to the fact that in reality, adults control most of children's time. The children are not allowed to live according to their own sense of the world.

When I was single, I had all the time in the world to myself. I was working on making documentaries for television 24 hours a day. Ironically, the experience of raising my children and having to deal with their chaotic "children's time" forced me to mature and grow.

"Children's Time" created quite a sensation. More than 100,000 people came to see the film and I received stacks of mail. The letters told me how they were surprised and deeply moved by the liveliness and the energy of the children in the film.

The letters, however, also confronted me with a heavy truth. Japanese children are deprived of their precious time; the time they need in order to discover the joys of life. It was the winter of 2001. Everyday, the news was about war, child abuse and juvenile delinquency.

I felt it necessary to create a film to encourage not only myself but others whose hearts were deeply bleeding and could only be cured by hope.

When I shoot documentaries, it is not the dramatic life of a special person with extraordinary abilities that excites me, but the miraculous moments created by ordinary people. And by witnessing such miracles, I become more humble and pure; I also find courage and hope inside myself.

In April 2002, when I first observed the art class featured in this documentary, I was convinced that these ordinary public elementary school kids in Tokyo would transform into great artists by deeply absorbing themselves in their interests. I knew that miracles were about to happen.

We visited the school more than 20 times before starting our shoot in order to let the children get used to us. We did not use any lighting. There were only 4 of us at the most. The interviews were carried out after we had established a close relationship with the children. We let the children take their time in answering the questions. Their words exceeded our expectations in many ways. We were surprised at how each child had a mind so pure and independent.

Mr. Uchino, the art teacher, teaches everything from watercolor to pottery but I found woodcraft to be the most attractive. Working with wood is much more difficult than working with paper or clay.

It can also be dangerous. The children are now surrounded by convenient machinery at home so they find it very hard to create something out of wood. Mr. Uchino only helps them sometimes, so every child has to figure out which tools to use and in which order to proceed with their work.

When the children complete their work after repeated trial and error, they are rewarded with great self-confidence. The important thing is not to finish a nice looking product but to think with their own minds. The Japanese education system expects the children to always come up with the correct answers through "short time & straight course" thinking, not "long time & winding road" thinking.

We adults must find ways to change this, for it will surely deprive the children of their will to live.

Story



In this second film following her debut hit, "Children's Time", director Nonaka Mariko goes to the art class of the public elementary school.

Today, Mr. Uchino, the art teacher, dramatically presents to his class of children a bucketful of old nails. At the sight of these unglamorous nails, some quite rusty and bent, children raise their voices in complaint, "They are so old!"

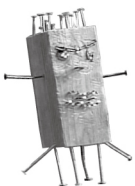
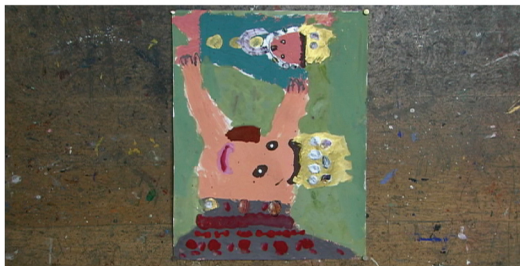
Quite undisturbed, Mr. Uchino goes on to show them how to use a hammer.

Clonk, clonk, clonk! Bang, bang, bang! A hammer and nails can be extremely dangerous to work with, especially when combined with a saw, but not in Mr. Uchino's art class where every face is radiant with the sheer joy of creation.

They are not specially-gifted art school children. But after an hour of happy hammering and sawing, every child comes up with a nail man, nail woman or nail animal that can keep them company.

The extraordinary concentration and spontaneity with which the children work are pleasant to watch. It is the hour of bliss and miracle.

This film indeed teaches us a few things about life that we may have left in the schoolyard.



The Problems Regarding Art Class in Japanese Elementary Schools

by Hiroyuki Suzuishi, president,
Committee of Citizen for Artistic Activities

Starting from the school year of 2002, the art classes in most schools outside of large cities like Tokyo, Yokohama or Kobe, are not taught by professional art teachers. Some other teacher just sits in and teaches art. They know that they are not up to the task but they just have to. Naturally, there is a big difference between children who have had a professional art teacher and children who have not. Mr. Uchino who appears in this film is a wonderful art teacher. He brings out the best in every child. Everyone is excited to come to art class, very positive about creating his/her work. So, naturally, their creations are incredibly beautiful. At Daisan Hino Elementary School where Mr. Uchino teaches, they have converted some of the other classes to art classes in order to make up for the officially reduced hours. Very few schools have taken such bold measures. I hope that other schools would soon discover that the ability to express oneself creatively is one of the most important things in life.





Children's Time

Mariko Nonako's first documentary film " Children's Time" was shown at BOX Higashi Nakano in Tokyo from 2001 to 2002. It became an unprecedented hit and has been shown in more than 450 theatres throughout Japan to more than 100,000 people since.

The stars of this film are children of Inaho Nursery School in Okegaya City, Saitama Prefecture.

This particular nursery school has farms and forests on its premises.

The children are expected to play, eat, or sleep in their own rhythm.

They learn to live in harmony with nature.

For example, in winter, the children gather around an enormous bonfire where they not only warm themselves but cook fish and potatoes. In summer, they learn to swim in a hand-made swimming pool that their parents have constructed. Here, the adults do not simply teach children the dos and don'ts.

The adults wait and observe patiently until the children discover things on their own. Nonaka moved to Okegawa City with her family and continued to film at Inaho Nursery School for 5 years.

Her daughter still goes to Inaho Nursery School.

2001/Japan/16mm/80min

Director, Writer, Editor: Mariko Nonaka

Director of Cinematographer: Natsuumi Kozo

Sound Design: Yoneyama Kiyoshi

Narrator: Issay Ogata



Bing Bang Zing Zang Art Class

Staff



Director, Writer, Editor & Producer

Director of Cinematography

Sound Design

Narrator

Title Animation

Music Coordinator

Original Music

Musicians

Singer

English Transation

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Natsuumi Kozo

Yoneyama Kiyoshi

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Araya Shoko

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Andy Bevan

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Brett Iimura

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Thank you to everyone at Daisan Hino Elementary School, Tokyo, Japan

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