

# Shani



Japan | Nao Yoshigai | 2021 | color | DCP | 1:1.85 | 5.1ch | 62'49" | Japanese



**OFFICIAL  
SELECTION**

INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
ROTTERDAM

2022

## Synopsis



A shepherd who bakes, a married couple who hunt deer, a fisherman who picks up trash from the sea, the owner of a Hall of Hidden Treasures, and a person who observes flying squirrels that live in her yard. These people live on the Shiretoko Peninsula, a special place located at the tip of the north part of Japan where rare, wild animals coexist with humans and drift ice reaches its coast touching the Sea of Okhotsk in winter. But for some reason, there is very little snow in the winter of 2020. The drift ice hasn't appeared yet, either.

As strange events continue to occur in the town of Shari, "The Red Thing" suddenly appears. With the pulsating energy of a throbbing blood clot, it bursts into a lively children's sumo tournament! "Let's try sumo wrestling!" This is the true story of a mysterious happening in Shari, where nature, animals, and humans live at odds with each other.





## Director's Statement



The project began when photographer Naoki Ishikawa invited me to make a film with him in Shari, Shiretoko Peninsula. For the past six years, Ishikawa has been working with local photography enthusiasts while cultivating a deep trust with them. Thanks to Ishikawa, I stayed in Shari in the summer of 2019, climbed Mt. Shari, ate wild venison and rode on a fishing boat, which gave me a rare glimpse into the lives of people that I wouldn't have been able to access through a simple sightseeing.

In January 2020, we started filming in the town, but it was a record-breaking year of light snowfall. Our hopes of filming in a pure white snow-covered world were quickly dashed. Everyone I met in Shari said "This year is an anomaly." I was convinced that their earnest reactions were not irrelevant to my own life in Tokyo, and that I should film the truth of what was happening — the reality unreducible to a fiction.

Taking on the role of "The Red Thing," a creature somewhere between man and beast, I experienced Shari with my whole body and wandered as one being in the vortex of all life, between the various thresholds that divide people and nature, myself and others, explicable and inexplicable, or dreams and reality. This way my first feature film was created. I hope that the sights and sounds documented in this film connect with the present moment for people around the world.



## Director



Born in 1987 in Japan, Nao Yoshigai is a filmmaker, dancer and choreographer. Her film is "dancing." She choreographs images, sound and text as a motion picture for a time to focus on "experience," based on physical sense and phenomena which are unique to living things. 'Grand Bouquet' is selected to the Directors' Fortnight 2019.

2019 Wheel Music

2018 Grand Bouquet

2018 The Pear and the Fang | Prize of the Young Jury at Brive Film Festival

2018 Across the Water

2018 Stories floating on the wind | Best Experimental Film at Motif Film Festival

2017 Breathing House

2015 hottamaru • days | New Face Award at Japan Media Arts Festival

2014 I want to go out

2013 Bicycle girl

2013 Grooming | Award at YCAM Film by MUSIC

# Crew



Director and Leading Actress | Nao Yoshigai

Production | WHITE LEOTARDS

Producer | Nao Yoshigai

Associate Producer | Shunta Saito

Cast | People of Shari, Sea, Mountain, Ice, The Red Thing

Director of Photography | Naoki Ishikawa

Recording Engineer and Composer | Kazuya Matsumoto

Assistant Director | Naoki Watanabe

Sound Designer | Masaya Kitada

Animator | Yuki Yoko

Graphic Designer | Yurie Hata

Supported by SIGMA Corporation, Kankyo Daizen, Masayoshi Ito,  
Shunta Saito, Shiretoko Shari Association, and Shari Town

## Contact

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