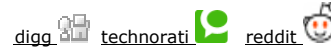




Arts



To Do List

Main Event: *Cincinnati World Cinema*

BY [Staff](#) | [Posted 11/20/2007](#)

Year-end films seek to do so much more than simply entertain. They want to compel and preach about the state of the world, especially this year, when it seems as if Iraq War fallout lands in the multiplexes every weekend in one form or another.

But **CINCINNATI WORLD CINEMA** has found in *The Cats of Mirikitani* a film and subject that accomplish an even more complex mission. As filmmaker Linda Hattendorf, a Cincinnati native who now lives in New York City, has discussed in interviews, "I want people to *feel* history. Not just think about these issues intellectually in terms of statistics and dates, but to really feel their context with the heart -- to understand emotionally the lingering trauma of war and discrimination, and also the healing power of community and art."



Photo: Hiroko Masuike

Yet the feelings and the sense of history have added effect because the film is laced with issues of race, homelessness, wartime atrocities, health care and an assortment of other concerns. When she first met Jimmy Mirikitani, he was living on the streets of New York City in January 2001, creating art, which he would sell to support himself rather than simply taking money from strangers. As they bonded, Hattendorf discovered that Mirikitani was a Japanese American who had survived internment during World War II here in the U.S., and eventually lost much of his family as a result of the atomic blast that hit Hiroshima. The only thing that kept him going was his dedication to his art, and it is his work and its impression on Hattendorf that compelled her to help him re-claim a space and community for himself, while also re-connecting with a long-lost older sister and other survivors from the internment camp.

Our city streets teem unnecessarily with homeless men, women and children with stories that deserve to be heard and lives in need of reclamation.

So often we avoid making eye contact with the people we pass everyday, but Hattendorf got engaged in this case. And her film documents not just Mirikitani's history, but also her own role as someone who did more than stand by and watch from a distance.

Mirikitani's struggles are the struggles of our society. How do we assist the elderly now that we are able to live longer? How do we deal with the displaced, the dissenters and the artists living on the fringes?

The Cats of Mirikitani screens 7 p.m. Nov. 27-29 at the Cincinnati Art Museum's Fath Auditorium. Director Linda Hattendorf will be on hand for post-film discussions after each screening. \$9, \$7 for CAM members and students. For more information and tickets, go to www.cincyworldcinema.org or call 859-781-8151. (See Events.) -- TT STERN-ENZI