

PRESS RELEASE

Monday 1 March 2021

World Premiere of *The Earth Asleep* to mark 10th anniversary of the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami



For immediate release

A new artist film by visual artist Clara Casian about one of the most powerful earthquake and tsunami ever recorded, with music by composer Robin Richards, will be released on March 11 to mark the 10th anniversary of the Great East Japan disaster.

The Earth Asleep is an artist film commissioned by Manchester arts centre HOME, and will be released on BFI Player. The haunting travelogue addresses the ways in which our exposure to extreme live-trauma in the form of rolling news and citizen reportage has resulted in an inability to process grief at a manageable, human scale.

The Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami in 2011 killed over 15,000 people and caused a nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant - the worst such incident since the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

HOME

In the film, Casian and Richards travelled to the village of Otsuchi in remote North-East Japan to document and observe the experiences of local residents, from an elderly man who lost his home but whose identity with place is deeply rooted, to the grandmother who raced to the local primary school as the waves surged towards shore, or the pilgrims who journey to a remote phone booth to speak to the silent spirits of those who have passed on.

The film will be available at <https://player.bfi.org.uk/rentals/film/watch-the-earth-asleep-2021-online-from-march-11>, as part of Rentals, BFI Player's transactional VOD service.

As well as the BFI Player release, the film will be screened at HOME with a live musical accompaniment later in the year.

The duo have previously collaborated on *Birdsong – Stories from Pripyat*, for which they visited Ukraine and the Chernobyl exclusion zone to create a unique exploration of impacted memory upon place.

The soundtrack to the film will also be released as an album later in the year, from which one track, *Haga*, is available now.

Haga was inspired by a meeting with Otsuchi resident Masahiko Haga, who runs the Kirikirikoku community group, working with young people and orphans in the town. He showed Casian and Richards his meditative process of dealing with his grief through his connection to fire.

Composer Robin Richards said: "We interviewed several people in the town who told us about their different spiritual methods of dealing with grief and loss following the disaster, and their stories form the narrative threads of the film. Masahiko Haga explained to us that the spirits return to heaven when the fire goes out.

"The evening spent with Haga was an extremely powerful and moving experience, and Clara and I knew instantly that it would be an integral part of the film and score. The xylophone melody heard in *Haga* is taken from the Otsuchi neighbourhood music - a melody played over the loudspeakers used for earthquake and tsunami warning, heard every few hours across the whole town."

Director Clara Casian said: "To go far with the tripod and the camera, with the plans of meticulous interviews, with the burning heart lit by the desire to discover distant realms, people and forgotten histories, it may seem a fearful or unusual thing. Mystical signs, symbols and incomprehensible rituals strike the memory of those who are no longer. The years pass and the events enter into a shadow account, and only those who have suffered bear the memory of their dear ones.

"From their tears, to the light of the ritual fire, to the strange murmur of temple prayers, from the strange picture of the telephone booth in Itaru's garden, from the blinking of footsteps in the mud and the contorted forms of the water-swept vegetation, we



recalled a time unprecedented, so that we never forget that the earth has delicate systems that must be taken care of, in order to prevent fatal climate change."

The Earth Asleep is a HOME Artist Film co-commission supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

Notes to editors

For more information, a review link to watch the film, images or interviews, please contact Kat Harrison-Dibbits, Head of Communications at HOME, on 07833 523295 or email kat.harrison-dibbits@homemcr.org.

About HOME

HOME is Manchester's centre for international contemporary culture. Since opening in 2015, HOME has welcomed over 2.9 million visitors to see thrilling theatre and dance shows, experience great independent films from across the world, dive into the new art in our galleries, relax in our café and browse our bookshop.

We work with international and UK artists to produce extraordinary experiences, creating an exciting mix of thought-provoking drama, dance, film and contemporary visual art with a strong focus on international work, new commissions and talent development. Our ambition is to push the boundaries of form and technology, to experiment, have fun and take risks. We want to explore what it means to be human today, and to share great new art with the widest possible audience.

HOME has welcomed the following artists and more since opening: AL and AL, Rachel Maclean, Phil Collins, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Larry Achiampong, Sophie Al-Maria, Noor Afsan Mirza & Brad Butler, John Walter & David Lynch. Upcoming exhibitions include the British Art Show (24 September 2020 until 10 January 2021).

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About Clara Casian

Clara Casian (director) is a visual artist and filmmaker, with a background in fine art and archival artistic research. As visual artist, and filmmaker, her work is situated at the intersection of moving image and fine art, drawing parallels between forgotten histories, and abandoned sites of memory. Her artistic work combines constructed archive fragments of historical significance, with hybrid mix of image, layered in a rhythmic montage. Themes include stringent issues of ecology, oral histories, deindustrialized sites, changes in habitats, nuclear culture and natural disasters.

Her previous film work draws parallels between sites, through the intersection between natural causes and the effects of post-industrialisation on people and their habitats. Her

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project on alternative publishing and censorship was developed as part of the Feature Expanded, an international programme between HOME Manchester and Lo Schermo Dell'Arte Florence. In 2017 she completed *House on the Borderland*, as part of the public exhibition 'LA MOVIDA' and *Intentional Community*, a feature length film. Clara Casian, as artist in residence at Art Gene and part of the "Extreme Views" project, created "Sediments-Barrow Islands" and a new body of work in association with The Islands and Bays of Barrow-In-Furness Coastal Team. Her work has been supported by funds from Arts Council England, HOME Artist Film, universities, public sector bodies and foundations.

About Robin Richards

Since studying under composer and conductor Joe Duddell (New Order, Elbow, and Richard Hawley collaborator), Richards has picked up a number of commissions – notably including composing a new score for famed Hungarian-born director Paul Fejos' silent comedy-drama *Lonesome*, as part of Manchester arts centre HOME's Film and Music Project in collaboration with the Royal Northern College of Music. He also collaborated with visual artist Clara Casian on *Birdsong - Stories from Pripjat*, a film and original live score project inspired by personal testimonies of those affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Most recently, Richards was commissioned to be music director and composer for *From The Crowd*, an event commemorating the 200 year anniversary of the Peterloo massacre in Manchester.

As composer, arranger and bassist with Dutch Uncles, he has released five LPs that were consistently championed by BBC Radio 6 Music (among others) and toured the world (with pleasingly incongruous support dates with Paramore and long-time friends Everything Everything). Now signed to PRAH Recordings and Domino Publishing, Richards has been honing his own separate identity – his exploration into neo-classicism and composers such as Arvo Pärt is far flung from the atypical rhythms and 80's inspired guitar pop of his bandmates, but crucially retains much of the playfulness and sense of wide-eyed exploration of his group compositions.

In 2019, Robin Richards released his debut solo EP *Castel* via PRAH Recordings.

About the BFI

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers



- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON BFI PLAYER

As well as being accessible to UK audiences through the BFI's own website, BFI Player is also available through a range of

video platforms, including Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV and to viewers in the USA on the Roku Channel.

A detailed BFI Player press pack, including highlights of the service, can be downloaded here:

<https://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-press-release-bfi-player-press-pack-march-2020-03-31-v1.pdf>

HOME is funded by:



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Supported using public funding by
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