

Wabi-Sabi

Logline

When an insecure woman goes on a date at a traditional Japanese tea house, her best friend's advice about white guys with Asian fetishes threatens to ruin her love life and her sanity.

Director's Statement and Film Synopsis

Wabi-Sabi is a Japanese philosophy which embraces the beauty of simplicity, flaws, and the effects of time and imperfections. The wabi-sabi approach to life is to accept what is, stay in the present, and appreciate the transient nature of life.

In this film, our characters are not there yet. The modern world is too often sadly focused on materialism, status comparison, and perfectionism. The perpetual lie we are told is that we are not good enough. It's no wonder that finding authentic connection and romantic love is so difficult when everyone seeks perfection in others and in themselves - even though perfection does not exist.

This is a story about people who want to connect and the thousand little cuts that get in the way.

A white guy, Peter, invites Reiko, a biracial white and Japanese American woman, to a teahouse for a first date. Her best friend, Nina, warns her that this is a red flag for a white guy with a Japanese fetish. Since Reiko is already insecure that she is not Japanese enough, Peter's erudite knowledge of Japanese culture and his connection with Keiko -- the tea ceremony artist from Japan -- magnifies Reiko's insecurity. What is supposed to be a simple first date gets painfully complicated, all leading to a shattered, broken mess.

The form of this film reflects the story. In an East meets West blend, and reflecting my own point of view as a third culture kid and homegrown American film nerd, this modern American rom com also gives homage to classical Japanese cinema. First dates are already awkward enough. Everyone tries so hard to hide their flaws and be the perfect version of themselves, all in a desperate search for love. But there is beauty in the embarrassment. There is beauty in mending broken objects.

Kintsugi, an ancient art form that stems from wabi-sabi, wherein you fix broken objects with gold fillings and give them “golden scars” reminds us that there is elegance in our imperfections because they tell a story.

Production Credits

Role	Name
Writer / Director / Producer	Josephine Green Zhang
Writer (Story) / Producer / Lead Actor	Rachel Michiko Whitney
Producer	Michael Fry
Producer / Editor / Script Supervisor	Jeff Mizushima
Co-Producer	Johnny Wei Zhang
Director of Photography	Auden Bui
Production Designer	Yu-Hsuan Chen
Lead Actors	Rachel Michiko Whitney
	Josh Caras
	Dana Donnelly
	Teruko Nakajima
	Haley Lohrli
	Hymnson Chan
	Daisuke Tsuji

List of Festivals and Awards Won

Marina del Rey Film Festival	Best Rom-Com Short
Santa Barbara Indie Film Fest	Best Short Film
San Pedro International Film Festival	Best Short Film
Japan Film Festival Los Angeles	Best Comedy
Malibu Film Festival	Narrative Short Audience Award

Film Trailer Link

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zn1zRNxpfno&t=1s>

Writer/Director Josephine Green Zhang



Josephine Green Zhang was raised in and around Pasadena, California, by her Taiwanese immigrant mother. She was also influenced by her white, Midwestern army vet turned hippie father, with whom she loved watching double features at the Academy Cinema. This weekend ritual sparked her lifelong passion for moviegoing and moviemaking.

Josephine is passionate about stories of duality that offer hope to underdogs, outsiders, and misfits while humorously critiquing them. A master of tone, she enjoys bending genres and crafting modern love stories that explore themes of friendship, community, romance, justice, and self-acceptance. An alumna of UCLA's Film Program, Film Independent's Project Fellowship, UCB's improv and sketch program, and the Universal Writers Lab. Josephine has written for Seasons 2 and 3 of *FIRST WIVES CLUB* on BET+ and Season 2 of *DOLLFACE* on Hulu. Additionally, she has developed projects for Netflix, Disney+, Bound Entertainment, and CJ Entertainment.

Josephine writes in Highland Park and lives with her husband, along with their adopted cat and dog, rescued from the Pasadena Humane Society.

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A tea ceremony is a lot for a first date.



A film by Josephine Green Zhang