Interview with Nanako Tsukidate

By Lorena-Theodora Neacșu

As part of the Journalism Lab at the European Film Festival Scanorama, I had a chance to meet Nanako Tsukidate. She's a prominent film critic who has collaborated with major festivals and film magazines. Her career includes film journalism, programming and serving on juries at multiple international events. I wanted to learn more about her journey and what her roles actually entail.

What do you love most: writing, programming or being a part of a jury?

Programming. I have the freedom to choose whatever I like.

How did you become a programmer?

Someone at the Hiroshima International Film Festival told me they were looking for a programmer to introduce European films into the competitions. I love the French New Wave: I have a PhD in French cinema from the 1960s and 1970s from Sorbonne University. I have a soft spot for Spanish and Portuguese films, too. Since I've been based in France since 2010, I said yes. I started soon after. I stayed with them for a while and, after that, I started working for Cannes' Semaine de la Critique (Critics' Week).

That's unexpected. How did you get from Hiroshima to Cannes?

I just applied, actually. I sent my motivation letter and my CV, I did an interview and got the job. Then, I wanted to be a juror. A friend of mine told me to try the Venice Film Festival and for a year, I worked for both Cannes and Venice. It was very challenging because the selection processes for both festivals overlapped. I remember having 300 feature films and 1,200 short films on my computer at the same time – it was a lot. I stopped working for Semaine soon after that.

Do you miss that festival?

No, Cannes is too political. The Semaine de la Critique prize is supposed to be used to finance the director's next feature film. Therefore, we always have to consider which director already has a future film planned. Also, it's always French and European filmmakers who win. Asian and American filmmakers never receive any praise. I prefer Venice.

Is the selection process different, depending on the event?

In Cannes, we each picked our top three and then watched each other's top three. After that, we have to choose one film from South America, one from America and three European productions, three French films and finally one Asian and one Arab film.

How do you personally choose the films?

For me, it's about necessity. Who do I feel needs to win? I always look for motivation. The

story isn't that important in my process. What interests me is the *mise-en-scène*. Where do you put the camera? How do you direct the actors?
I look for amazing direction. It's really important to me because I am a cinephile. I watch many films from all over the world and of all genres. My criteria are as follows: Does the director know their film history?

Do you remember your most exciting find?

I discovered Vytautas Katkus' short film "Community Gardens" for Cannes in 2019. I was so happy because it was such a special film. It was something new. Again, I watch so many films: it's important to find something fresh.