

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Pressroom for more information and/or downloadable images:

<http://www.itvs.org/pressroom/>

Program companion website: <http://www.pbs.org/catsofmirikitani>

***Independent Lens: THE CATS OF MIRIKITANI***  
**TO HAVE ITS TELEVISION PREMIERE ON PBS,**  
**TUESDAY, MAY 8 AT 10:30 PM (Check Local Listings)**

*“THE CATS OF MIRIKITANI is, quite simply, breathtaking — one of the most surprising and unshakable documentaries I can recall.” — New York Sun*

(San Francisco, CA) — “Make art not war” is Jimmy Mirikitani's motto. The 80-year-old artist was born in Sacramento, California, raised in Hiroshima, Japan, traveled to the U.S. and even cooked for artist Jackson Pollock. But by 2001, Mirikitani was homeless, living on the streets of New York City. As tourists and shoppers hurried past, Mirikitani sat alone on a windy corner in New York's SoHo, drawing pictures of whimsical cats, bleak internment camps and the angry red flames of the atomic bomb. When local filmmaker Linda Hattendorf stopped to ask about his art, a friendship—detailed in **THE CATS OF MIRIKITANI**—began that changed both their lives. **THE CATS OF MIRIKITANI** will have its television premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, May 8 at 10:30 PM (check local listings).

In sunshine, rain and snow, Hattendorf returned to document Mirikitani's drawings, trying to decipher the stories behind them. The tales spilled out in a jumble. Childhood picnics in Hiroshima, lost citizenship, Pearl Harbor, thousands of Americans imprisoned in WWII desert camps, a boy who loved cats. As winter warmed to spring and summer, Hattendorf started to piece together the puzzle of Mirikitani's past. One thing was clear from his prolific sidewalk displays: he had survived terrible traumas and was determined to make his history visible through his art.

September 11, 2001 threw Mirikitani once again into a world at war and challenged Hattendorf to move from the role of witness to advocate. During the chaos following the collapse of the World Trade Center, she found herself unable to passively photograph this elderly man coughing in the toxic smoke, and offered him shelter in her small apartment. In this uncharted landscape, the two unlikely roommates navigated the maze of the social welfare system, sought out lost family members and researched the artist's painful past, finding eerie parallels to events unfolding around them in the present.

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Blending beauty and humor with tragedy and loss, **THE CATS OF MIRIKITANI** is a deeply-felt affirmation of humanity that will appeal to all lovers of peace, art — and cats. **THE CATS OF MIRIKITANI** companion website ([www.pbs.org/catsofmirikitani](http://www.pbs.org/catsofmirikitani)) features detailed information on the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, and links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

**THE CATS OF MIRIKITANI** is a co-presentation with the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM). CAAM is a non-profit organization dedicated to presenting stories that convey the richness and diversity of Asian American experiences to the broadest audience possible. CAAM funds, produces, distributes and exhibits works in film, television and digital media. For more information visit, [www.asianamericanmedia.org](http://www.asianamericanmedia.org).

### **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**Producer/Director** Linda Hattendorf has been working in the New York documentary community for more than a decade. Her editing work has aired on PBS, A&E, The Metro Channel, and The Sundance Channel as well as in theatrical venues and many festivals. She edited *7th Street*, directed by Josh Pais; Julia Pimsleur's *Brother Born Again*; Nancy Recant's *Jin Shin Jyutsu*; and Christina Lundberg's *On the Road Home: A Spiritual Journey Guided by Remarkable Women*. She was the Associate Editor on Barbara Kopple's *Bearing Witness* and Helen Whitney's *The Choice '96*, which won a Peabody. She was Contributing Editor on Lisette Flanary's *American Aloha: Hula Beyond Hawaii*, which aired on POV. She did camera work for William Greaves' *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm Take 2*, which screened at Sundance and Tribeca, and did research for the Ken Burns series *The West*. She was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and has degrees in Literature, Art History, and Media Studies. This is her directorial debut.

**Producer Masa Yoshikawa** is a New York based producer, writer, producer's representative, and U.S.-Japan coordinator with extensive film and television experience in the US and Japan. He has worked for American and Japanese feature films in various capacities such as Production Supervisor and Production Coordinator (including "Lost in Translation") as well as for many TV productions for Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS) and NHK among others.

### **About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS. Hosted this season by Terrence Howard, the acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at [www.pbs.org/independentlens](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens). *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

### **About ITVS**

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy® Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting **[www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org)**. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

### **About PBS**

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 354 public noncommercial television stations and reaches almost 90 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of educational materials for K-12 teachers and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS' premier kids' TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online (**[www.pbskids.org](http://www.pbskids.org)**), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at **[www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)**, one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

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