

Tsukamoto inspired by Japan's masters, acting under Scorsese

By Yuri Kageyama
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese filmmaker Shinya Tsukamoto turned to his country's masters for inspiration for his latest work, *Killing*, his first samurai movie. But he also emulated the way Martin Scorsese gave free rein to his actors, a technique Tsukamoto learned when he was cast in *Silence* as a Christian martyr.

Killing, a poetic but brutal story about the horrors of violence, premiered at the Venice Film Festival earlier this year and opened in Japan on November 24. Overseas release dates have not been announced.

"This film is the total antithesis to the heroism depicted in usual samurai films," Tsukamoto, who wrote, directed, and edited *Killing*, said at a recent preview screening at the Foreign Correspondents' Club in Tokyo.

He said he was an admirer of the samurai films he grew up on, including the classics by Akira Kurosawa and Kon Ichikawa. But he wanted to do something different.

A samurai film has signature elements such as choreographed fight scenes. Juxtaposing what's unexpected makes people think, raising questions, Tsukamoto said.



"I wanted to cast doubt," he said, pointing to the assumption that the samurai is a hero. "Is he really the good guy?"

The Scorsese technique of being positive while giving freedom to the actors appeared to work in *Killing*.

Yu Aoi, who plays a young farmer in love with the main character, found herself taking a different approach to her acting.

She usually likes to create her character clearly and not sway from it throughout the work. But in *Killing*, she allowed

herself to go where the film took her, transforming from childlike carefreeness into wanting revenge, and then descending into psychological devastation.

Her love interest is portrayed by Sosuke Ikematsu, 28, who was in *The Last Samurai* as a child. In *Killing*, he starts out innocently enough, pursuing the art of sword-fighting like an athlete seeking perfection.

As he becomes recruited for more serious samurai business by an older samurai, played by Tsukamoto himself, the film

SAMURAI STORY. Japanese director Shinya Tsukamoto speaks to reporters about his latest film, *Killing*, during a press conference in Tokyo. He said he turned to the Japanese masters for inspiration but also emulated the way Martin Scorsese gave free rein to his actors, a technique he learned when he was cast in *Silence* to play a Christian martyr. *Killing*, a poetic but brutal story about the horrors of violence, premiered at the Venice Film Festival earlier this year and opened in Japan on November 24. (AP Photo/Yuri Kageyama)

gradually takes on a gruesome reality, showing the duels for the bloody slicing up of body parts that they are.

Killing is in one sense a genre switch from the satirical cyberpunk works like *Tetsuo* that have won Tsukamoto an international cult following since the late 1980s.

But the eerie energy, the dizzying camerawork, the almost painful sensitivity to sound, and the purity of his message are trademark Tsukamoto.

The work does not glorify the gore, although the scenes are sensual and mesmerizing. The love story is truncated and pathetic, never descending into sentimentality.

Killing is what Tsukamoto called "a scream" — a wake-up call about where the world could be delusively headed.

"Without real images, people can more easily go to war," he said.

Gene-edited baby claim by Chinese scientist sparks outrage

By Marilyn Marchione
AP Chief Medical Writer

HONG KONG — Scientists and bioethics experts reacted with shock, anger, and alarm to a Chinese researcher's claim that he helped make the world's first genetically edited babies.

He Jiankui of Southern University of Science and Technology of China said he altered the DNA of twin girls born in November to try to help them resist possible future infection with the AIDS virus — a dubious goal, ethically and scientifically.

There is no independent confirmation of what He says he did, and it has not been published in a journal where other experts could review it. He revealed it in Hong Kong where a gene-editing conference was getting underway, and previously in exclusive interviews with The Associated Press.

Reaction to the claim was swift and harsh.

More than 100 scientists signed a petition calling for greater oversight on gene-editing experiments.

The university where He is based said it will hire experts to investigate, saying the work "seriously violated academic ethics and standards."

A spokesman for He said he has been on leave from teaching since early this year but remains on the faculty and has a lab at the university.

Authorities in Shenzhen, the city where He's lab is situated, also launched an investigation.

And Rice University in the United States said it will investigate the involvement of physics professor Michael Deem. This sort of gene editing is banned in the U.S., though Deem said he worked with He on the project in China.

"Regardless of where it was conducted, this work as described in press reports violates scientific conduct guidelines and is inconsistent with ethical norms of the scientific community and Rice University," the school said in a statement.

Gene editing is a way to rewrite DNA, the code of life, to try to supply a missing gene that is needed or disable one that is causing problems. It has only recently been tried in

adults to treat serious diseases.

Editing eggs, sperm, or embryos is different, because it makes permanent changes that can pass to future generations. Its risks are unknown, and leading scientists have called for a moratorium on its use except in lab studies until more is learned.

They include Feng Zhang and Jennifer Doudna, inventors of a powerful but simple new tool called CRISPR-cas9 that reportedly was used on the Chinese babies during fertility treatments when they were conceived.

"Not only do I see this as risky, but I am also deeply concerned about the lack of transparency" around the work, Zhang, a scientist at MIT's Broad Institute, said in a statement. Medical advances need to be openly discussed with patients, doctors, scientists, and society, he wrote.

Doudna, a scientist at the University of California, Berkeley and one of the Hong Kong conference organizers, said that He met with her to tell her of his work.

"None of the reported work has gone through the peer review process," and the conference is aimed at hashing

Continued on page 11

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