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## Glasgow International 2020: Digital Platform

With Scotland's premier contemporary art biennial postponed to 2021, a digital programme of often timely film and sound pieces marks the festival's original dates

[glasgowinternational.org](http://glasgowinternational.org)

23 April – 10 May 2020

by JOE LLOYD

Yuko Mohri's film *Everything Flows – Distance* (2020) opens on a monument, behind which a boat silently traverses a body of water. Then, we see a cluster of vernacular Japanese houses with ribbed roofs, aglow in the sun, and a pitch-black freight train passing through them. The third shot closes up on the train, giving us a better look at the houses in the process, before we zoom up to a single building on a hill. Then we are inside a house, with tatami floor mats and shoji room dividers. A shadow hovers over this interior, and then we see in quick succession the house's door, a shadowed alley, some smoke-belching chimneys, mingling traditional and modern.

### Yuko Mohri, *Everything Flows – Distance*, 2020.



Something is a little off in this sequence. These shots are all taken from *Tokyo Story*, director Yasujiro Ozu's 1953 masterpiece of humanist cinema. But – with the exception of a couple of boatmen in the first shot, and that passing shadow – we haven't seen people at all. Mohri has excised the scenes that feature characters, distilling eight minutes of (almost) entirely depopulated landscapes and domestic interiors from Ozu's conversation-heavy 136 minutes.

Empty cities, claustrophobic houses, the merest hints of interaction with others: the echoes with our present situation, of course, are easy to perceive. Mohri's choice of source material is also telling. *Tokyo Story* centres on an elderly couple whose adult children neglect them. Such intergenerational tensions, already sharp in the UK due to economic inequality and recent political events, have come into sharper relief during lockdown.



Mohri's piece is one of the best artistic responses to lockdown I have encountered. It was commissioned by Glasgow International for its digital platform, which is available for the festival's slated duration. This features several video works and audio pieces, all by artists who were going to appear in the festival, as well as a lecture by T. J. Clark and a roundtable. Four were newly created in the month since the festival announced its postponement until 2021, and several intentionally or accidentally reflect on the present situation (scarily, one of Georgina Starr's pushed back Gi2020 commissions was named Quarantine).

The rescheduling of an art festival is a minor annoyance in the scheme of things, but it is dispiriting to see so much creative and organisational effort fizzle out, even if much of the work will return in a year's time. There is a particular sadness to Gi2020's absence due to its distinct structure, in which a director's programme runs in parallel to a vast swathe of projects led by local institutions, many of which give a spotlight to the local scene. As well as bringing international practitioners to Glasgow, the festival grants the Clydeside metropole's artists the chance to appear on a global stage. Given the calamitous economic outlook for the years ahead, for some practitioners the missed chance might be crippling.