

## Document Citation

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ABOVE: *Kwaidan*, November 26

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JANUS FILMS: A 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION:

SUN NOV 26 2006  
3:00 **Kwaidan**  
Masaki Kobayashi (Japan, 1964)

Breathtakingly photographed on handpainted sets, *Kwaidan* is at once a Japanese woodcut writ large, and an abstract wash of luminescent colors that seem to come from another world. An electronic soundtrack by avant-garde composer Toru Takemitsu plays hauntingly with natural sounds—crickets, rain, the cracking of wood, the loud silence of snow. Yet the stories—four of Lafcadio Hearn's ghostly tales—strangely contradict this plastic splendor in their simple, aching humanity. All are tales of mortals caught by forces beyond their comprehension when the supernatural world intervenes in their lives. One of the most memorable of these is "Hoichi, the Earless," in which a blind young monk is compelled by the ghosts of a famous battle to retell their story over and over again. In "The Snow Maiden," the most eerily atmospheric of the tales, a woodcutter marries a woman whose true calling is to wander, enveloped in swirling snowflakes, bringing death to mortals.

—Judy Bloch

- Written by Yoko Mizuki, from tales by Lafcadio Hearn. Photographed by Yoshio Miyajima. With Keiko Kishi, Tatsuya Nakadai, Katsuo Nakamura, Rentaro Mikuni. (161 mins, In Japanese with English subtitles, Color, 35mm, From Janus/Criterion Collection)