

A Presentation on Nagisa Ōshima,
Student Movement, and Golden Age
Japanese Cinema

(大島 渚)

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Summary of his History

- Mar. 31, 1932 – Jan 15 2013
- Born in Kyoto
- Advocate and activist in leftwing activities at Kyoto University. Studied political history – Grad. 1954
- Took up work as a film critic for *Eiga Hihyo* (Film Criticism in Japanese) Magazine
- Later began his film career when working as an assistant director at Shochiku Studios
- Greatly inspired by the French “New Wave”
- Directing inspirations include Jean-Luc Godard

“New Wave” – “Nouvelle Vague”

- A 1950's French movement in art film, that challenged conventions and tradition in film media.
- Characterized by its iconoclasm, it tested and brought to light new forms of editing, visual style, as well as narrative. The movement was also huge for challenging social and political traditions.

Film History

- ◉ Ōshima's films tackled conventions and issues both in the realms of society and in politics.
- ◉ Admonished the political left's lack of unity at his time, and rejected the nationalist views of the political right (*Night and Fog in Japan*).
- ◉ Films challenged Japanese traditionalism as well as nationalism (*The Ceremony*).
- ◉ Many films had a focus on eroticism, with a message of advocacy for the sexual liberation movements of his time (*In the Realm of the Senses; Story of a Shinjuku Thief*).
- ◉ Films also tackled social issues such as racism in the cruel mistreatment of the Korean minority of Japan (*Death by Hanging*), as well as of African Americans (*The Catch*).

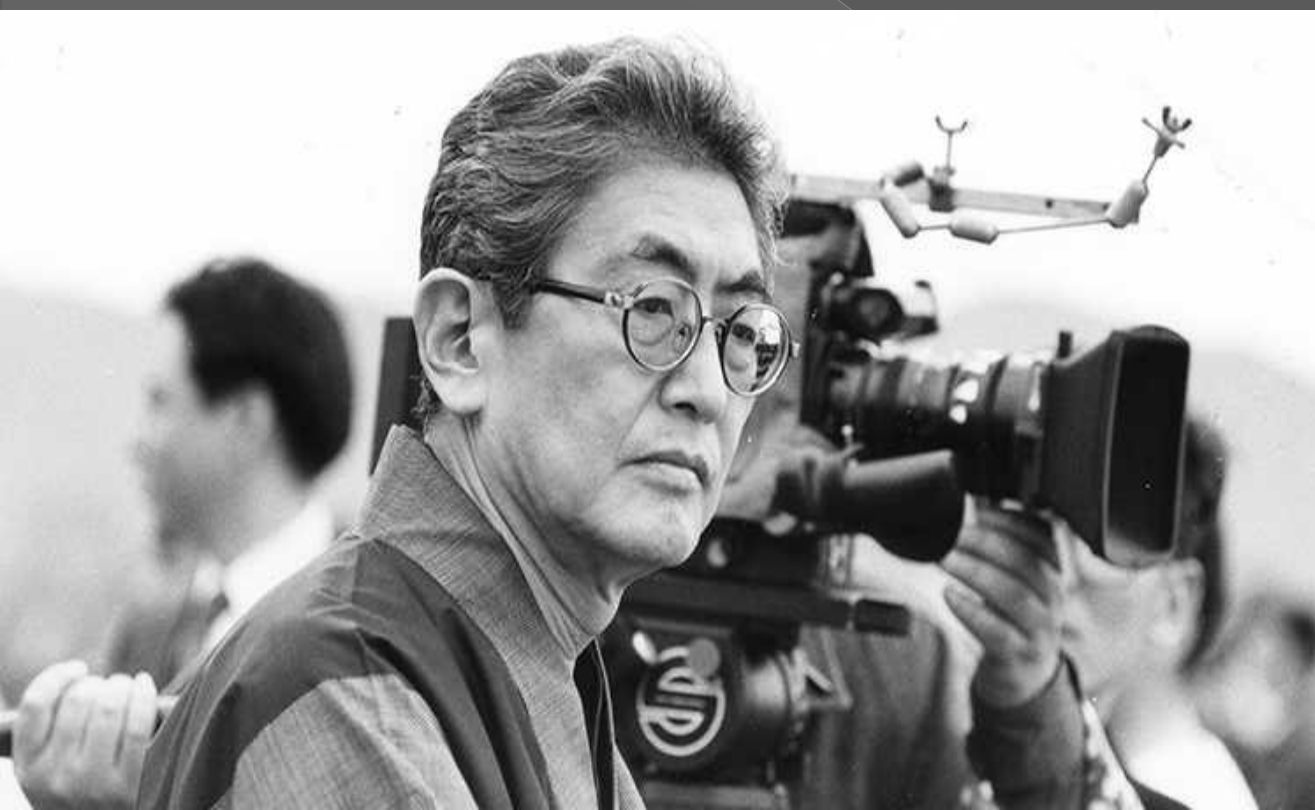
Film Techniques

- Most films ranged a period of 90-120 minutes, but notably his first film differed from this trend, with *Tomorrow's Sun* being a 7 minute long short.
- Utilized both long shots and fast-paced shots.
- Created films that were either in B/W or in color, but *Story of a Shinjuku Thief* uses both in the same movie in order to add to its themes.
- *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* was Ōshima's only film done in the English language.

Films History Timeline

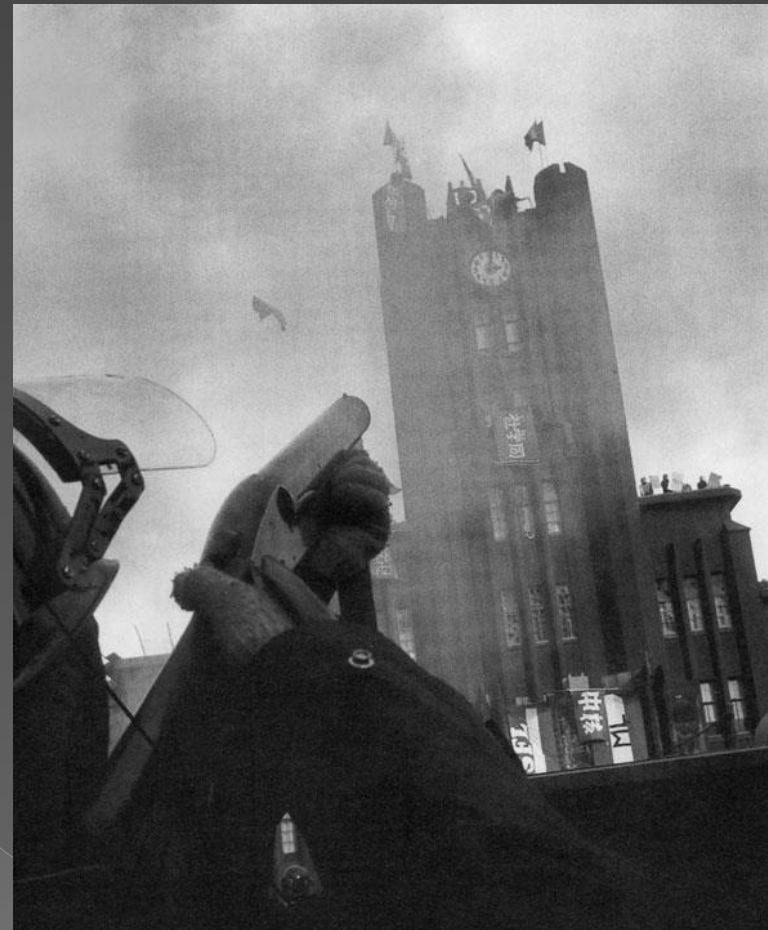
- *Tomorrow's Sun* – 1959
- *A Town of Love and Hope* – 1959
- *Night and Fog in Japan* – 1960
- *The Catch* - 1961
- *The Rebel* – 1962
- *The Pleasures of the Flesh* – 1965
- *Tales of the Ninja (Band of Ninja)* – 1967
- *Death by Hanging* – 1968
- *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* – 1969
- *Boy* – 1969
- *In the Realm of the Senses* – 1976
- *Empire of Passion* – 1978
- *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* – 1983
- *Taboo* - 1999





Zenkyōtō student movement

- ◉ 1968 student movement in response to the US-Japan Joint Security Treaty
- ◉ Rebelled against American ideas such as imperialism and capitalism (tuition, curriculum, etc.)
- ◉ First formed at the University of Tokyo
- ◉ 127 universities (just under 25% of all universities) and some high schools
- ◉ A new form of post-war rebellion



Major 6 of Golden Age of Japanese Cinema

The “Golden Age” of Japanese Cinema lasted from the 1950s to 1960s.

Nikkatsu- Tokyo
Drifter, Fighting
Elegy

Toei- Doggie March
(Miyazaki early
work)

Shochiku- Carmen
Comes Home,
Always in My Heart

Shintocho-Stray dog

Toho- Godzilla,
Sanjuro

Daiei- Zatoichi

Hit With Hard times

- ◉ Television and at home entertainment caused many of these studios to suffer: Shintohe and Daiei declared bankruptcy.
- ◉ In response, studios started to turn to television and other forms of media: Nikkatsu started making “soft core” porn.
- ◉ Many branched to television shows and home-release movies
- ◉ While many of these studios would survive, other studios like Walt Disney, Universal, Warner Bros. etc.

Works Cited

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