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**TRAGEDIES OF YOUTH:
NOBUHIKO OBAYASHI'S WAR TRILOGY**

**Japan Society Partners with KimStim to Present the Online Premiere of
Acclaimed War Film Trilogy by *House* (1977) Director Nobuhiko Obayashi**

July 9–August 6



Hanagatami. © karatsu film partners/PSC2017.

New York, NY (June 25, 2021) – Japan Society announces ***Tragedies of Youth: Nobuhiko Obayashi's War Trilogy***, an online film series highlighting the late-career, war-themed trilogy of films by beloved Japanese director Nobuhiko Obayashi (1938-2020). Scheduled as a lead-up to the 76th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and a tribute to the late

filmmaker one year after his passing, Obayashi's monumental trilogy is presented together online for the first time. Presented in partnership with film distributors **KimStim**, all three films will stream nationwide through Japan Society's [virtual cinema](#) from **July 9-August 6**.

In the last decade of his long and prolific career, Nobuhiko Obayashi (1938-2020)—best-known in the U.S. as the filmmaker behind the cult hit ***House*** (1977)—wrote and directed a trio of deeply personal and formally audacious films that confronted Japan's imperial past, the devastation of the atomic bombings and the irreversible trauma of war. Made in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of March 2011 and informed by Obayashi's firsthand experience as a child born on the eve of World War II in Hiroshima Prefecture, the staggering films in this trilogy collectively consider the loss of innocence for an entire generation of Japanese youth raised in the shadow of war and national disaster.

Included in the series is ***Casting Blossoms to the Sky*** (2012), Obayashi's uplifting tribute to Nagaoka's wartime struggles and the resilience of human nature amid catastrophe; his emotionally profound follow-up ***Seven Weeks*** (2014), an exploration of a patriarch's hidden past; and ***Hanagatami*** (2017), Obayashi's 40-year passion project—made after Obayashi was diagnosed with stage four cancer and given months to live—and penultimate film.

Screeners available for all titles. Please send all press inquiries to:

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FULL LINEUP

Films listed chronologically by year of domestic theatrical release.

Casting Blossoms to the Sky

Dir. Nobuhiko Obayashi. 2012. 160 min.

In the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, journalist Reiko Endo (Yasuko Matsuyuki) travels to the city of Nagaoka in Niigata Prefecture as it prepares for an annual fireworks festival memorializing the fallen victims of war. Drawn to the city by an old flame who plans to put on a war-themed play written by a mysterious student, Reiko embarks on a journey of self-discovery as she learns the storied history of Nagaoka and the ghosts of its war-torn past. Nobuhiko Obayashi's imaginative first entry in his war trilogy is a deeply moving work of mourning, compassion and hope that ultimately celebrates the resilience of humankind in the wake of debilitating catastrophe. Drawing parallels between war and the existential threats of modern disasters, *Casting Blossoms to the Sky* is a film dedicated to "the children of the future from adults who lived the past."

Seven Weeks

Dir. Nobuhiko Obayashi. 2014. 171 min

In his follow-up to *Casting Blossoms to the Sky*, Nobuhiko Obayashi continues to explore themes of lost love, memory, war and art. At 2:46 PM on March 11, 2013 in Ashibetsu, Hokkaido Prefecture, Mitsuo Suzuki (Toru Shinagawa) takes his last breath at the ripe age of 92. As the patriarch's far-flung family gathers to make preparations for his passing, a mysterious and unknown woman (Takako Tokiwa) appears among them. Together, they

begin to unravel the secret history of Mitsuo's long life, including shocking tales of war in Sakhalin (an island in the Japanese archipelago that is now a part of Russia). Ruthlessly fragmenting scenes and setting a furious pace with one experimental technique following another, Obayashi's breathless film breaks down the barriers between past and present, reality and illusion, and even self and other, all in order to create an emotionally profound experience of loss and hope.

Hanagatami

Dir. Nobuhiko Obayashi. 2017. 169 min

After being diagnosed with stage four lung cancer at the age of 80 and given six months to live, Nobuhiko Obayashi set out to fulfill his filmmaking dream: an adaptation of a 1937 novella by Kazuo Dan that the director had originally hoped to make even before his legendary debut *House* in 1977. In the spring of 1941, wide-eyed 17-year-old Toshihiko Sakakiyama (Shunsuke Kubozuka) arrives in the coastal town of Karatsu in Saga Prefecture and befriends a group of teenage classmates who fall in love, quarrel and stumble through their remaining days of youth as war looms on the horizon. An extravagantly stylized epic that makes the most of green screens, elaborate lighting and dizzying editing, Obayashi's passion project and swan song is a grand culmination of the great director's dazzling visual style and a poignant reminder of the tragedy of war for this generation.

Rentals: \$10 / 20% off members

War Trilogy Bundle: \$24 / 20% off members

Films streaming July 9-August 6 at film.japansociety.org.

Nobuhiko Obayashi was born on January 9, 1938, in the city of Onomichi, Japan. His father, a doctor, was called to the battlefield during World War II, and so he was raised by his maternal grandparents. Obayashi followed many artistic pursuits through his childhood and adolescence, including drawing, writing, music, and even animation and film.

Following the war, Obayashi moved to Tokyo and began experimenting with eight-millimeter films, becoming a vital figure of the Japanese experimental scene in the 1960s. A producer from an advertising firm at one of his screenings offered Obayashi the chance to make short commercials. It led to a series of trippy ads, some featuring Western movie stars, including Charles Bronson. Obayashi's professional was beginning to take off.

However, international recognition would take a few more decades until the 2009 re-release in the US and UK of his 1977 horror film *House (Hausu)*. Through *House*, Western audiences become introduced to his distinct style of surreal filmmaking and anti-war themes. Especially his signature use of the green screen—over which he projected kitschy otherworldly realities and suggestive Japanese landscapes, as well as his exuberant use of color and playful visual tricks that make the experience of an Obayashi picture rarely short of sensational. *The Los Angeles Times* described *House* as “one of the most enduringly—and endearingly—weird cult movies of the last few decades.”

Obayashi's antiwar trilogy, *Casting Blossoms to the Sky* (2012), *Seven Weeks* (2014), and *Hanagatami* (2017), came late in his career. The most famous, *Hanagatami*, is based on a 1937 novella by Kazuo Dan and made following a terminal cancer diagnosis in 2016. *Hanagatami* depicts Japan's foolish militarism at the time of the Second World War while at the same time offering an elegy to the impermanence of youth.

Obayashi died at his home in Tokyo on April 10, 2020 at 82 due to lung cancer, first diagnosed in 2016.

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Japan Society Film offers a diverse selection of Japanese films, from classics to contemporary independent productions. Its aim is to entertain, educate and support activities in the Society's arts and culture programs. For more, visit japansociety.org/film.

About Japan Society

Japan Society is the premier organization connecting Japanese arts, culture, business, and society with audiences in New York and around the world. At Japan Society, we are inspired by the Japanese concept of *kizuna* (絆)—forging deep connections to bind people together. We are committed to telling the story of Japan while strengthening connections within New York City and building new bridges beyond. In over 100 years of work, we've inspired generations by establishing ourselves as pioneers in supporting international exchanges in arts and culture, business and policy, as well as education between Japan and the U.S. We strive to convene important conversations on topics that bind our two countries together, champion the next generation of innovative creators, promote mutual understanding, and serve as a trusted guide for people everywhere who seek to more fully appreciate the rich complexities and abundance of Japan. From our New York headquarters, a landmark building designed by architect Junzo Yoshimura that opened to the public in 1971, we look forward to the years ahead, which will be defined by our digital and ideational impact through the *kizuna* that we build. Our future can only be enhanced by learning from our peers and engaging with our audiences, both near and afar.

This year, Japan Society is celebrating our heritage through the 50th anniversary of our landmark building with the launch of a new distinct modern logo and visual identity. The "JS" monogram is created via overlapping, interconnected lines and shapes, reinforcing the idea of *kizuna* and that Japan Society acts as a platform that connects across, cultures, people, and time.

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