



Director in Focus: Nobuhiko Obayashi

**32nd TIFF to Shine a Spotlight on Iconic Director,
from Early Films to His Latest Masterwork**



Labyrinth of Cinema

©2020 Labyrinth of Cinema Film Partners/ PSC



Nobuhiko Obayashi

©PSC

The Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) is pleased to announce that we will be highlighting the work of legendary director **Nobuhiko OBAYASHI** at the 32nd TIFF, running October 28 - November 5, 2019.

This year's Director in Focus in the Japan Now section will shine a spotlight on the iconic director, hosting a retrospective of his works from the classics to his latest masterwork, demonstrating his indelible contributions to the Japanese film industry. Obayashi has been dubbed a "cinematic magician" for his dreamlike visual expression, and he has continued to inspire other directors throughout his career, winning accolades from critics and aficionados alike.

His most well-known titles include *I Are You, You Am Me* (1982), *The Little Girl Who Conquered Time* (1983), and *Lonely Heart* (1985) known as the Onomichi Trilogy. *Casting Blossoms to the Sky* (2011), *Seven Weeks* (2014) and *Hanagatami* (2017) have been called the War Trilogy, which was completed even the director had been diagnosed with lung cancer in 2016. Obayashi's recent works have drawn attention from abroad, and TIFF is extremely honored to host the **world premiere of his latest film, *Labyrinth of Cinema***.

Nobuhiko Obayashi Comments

"Live freely. That's the mark of peace," said my father. He gave me an 8mm camera as if it were his memento when I moved to Tokyo at 18. I screened my first 8mm film in one corner of a Ginza art gallery, which earned international recognition and was acclaimed as the birth of a new film artist. Since then, I have been making personal films with funds earned by creating TV commercials for 60 years. Invited by the major studio Toho, despite being an outsider, I shot *House*, which allowed me to recognize that even an aesthetic literary work could be adapted to the commercial film genre. Although I had the experience of being a naively patriotic supporter of Japan during World War II, I have continued to create films in a variety of genres that imply an antiwar stance. It has been 61 years since my wife, Kyoko Obayashi, prepared herself to become "the wife of a struggling auteur." I have worked hard to create films even today with Kyoko, who has supported my films by connecting them with the world, saying "I'm your first audience." We have also had the support of our daughter Chigumi, who was one of the original writers of *House* at the age of 11, her husband and manga artist Takehito Moriizumi, and close friends from the older and newer generations. It was difficult to select the titles for this TIFF tribute, but I hope you will watch my rarely screened films. As the years roll by, there are many more personal films being made, as I always hoped. I hope the audience will enjoy both the signs of freedom and of restricted freedoms in my work. It would be fun if my true character is revealed.

32nd Tokyo International Film Festival: Oct. 28 – Nov. 5, 2019 tiff-jp.net

For further information or inquiries, please contact: TIFF Public Relations Division

Tel: +81-3-626-3012; Fax: +81-3-6226-3023; email: tiff-pr2019@tiff-jp.net

TIFF's Japan Now

Launched in 2015 to showcase outstanding Japanese films from recent and upcoming months, **Japan Now** displays the diversity of Japanese film and conveys unique aspects of Japanese culture, as well as providing a multifaceted look inside today's Japan. The first two iterations focused on directors Masato HARADA (*Climber's High, Chronicle of My Mother, Kakekomi, The Emperor in August*) and Shunji IWAI (*Fireworks, Should We See It from the Side or the Bottom?, Love Letter, Swallowtail Butterfly, A Bride for Rip Van Winkle*). Commemorating the 30th anniversary of the festival in 2017, Japan Now highlighted the achievements of four Muses of Japanese Cinema (in alphabetical order): Sakura ANDO, Yu AOI, Hikari MITSUSHIMA and Aoi MIYAZAKI, with screenings of their works as well as Q&A sessions and special talk events. In 2018, the Actor in Focus was Koji YAKUSHO, with screenings of masterpieces selected from his 40-year acting career. This year's TIFF will shine a spotlight on the legendary director **Nobuhiko Obayashi**.

The full Japan Now lineup will be announced at our press conference in late September 2019.

Director in Focus: Nobuhiko Obayashi (Japan Now Section)

Japanese auteur **Nobuhiko Obayashi** is a forerunner of today's independent film directors, a field he pioneered. His first commercial film, *House*, surprised audiences with unique touches not found in the work of studio directors. He was a leading light in Japanese films of the 70s and 80s with his fantastical and poetic works, including the Onomichi Trilogy, all of which came to be called Obayashi World. In recent years, once again deploying experimental and distinctive narratives, he has continued to create fresh films, pursuing themes around pacifism and humanism. Obayashi's films depict the shadows of loved ones, lost history, lost youth, memories and imaginary happy endings that people dream of, followed by the reality. In this year's Japan Now section, TIFF will showcase the masterpieces of legendary director Nobuhiko Obayashi, as well as hosting Q&A sessions and special talk events.

— **Kohei ANDO**, TIFF Programming Advisor

Nobuhiko Obayashi Profile

Born in Onomichi, Hiroshima Prefecture in 1938, Nobuhiko Obayashi started making films at the age of three, with a kinoscope he found in the family storage room. After moving to Tokyo, he screened his independent film *Émotion*, shot on 16mm, at art galleries, halls and universities, and received glowing reviews. *The Person Who Is Eaten (Tabeta Hito, 1963)* won the Jury Award at EXPRMNTL, an international competition of avant-garde films held in Belgium. He then became involved in the early days of TV commercials, and created over 3,000 commercials, often with foreign stars such as Charles Bronson, Sophia Loren, Catherine Deneuve and many more. His first feature, *House (1977)*, won the Blue Ribbon Award along with *Hitomi no Naka no Houmonsha (The Visitor in the Eye)*, released the same year. Obayashi also made *I Are You, You Am Me (1982)*, *The Little Girl Who Conquered Time (1983)* and *Lonely Heart (1985)* which were shot in his hometown and adored by fans, who called them the Onomichi Trilogy. Obayashi won numerous awards inside and outside of Japan: *The Discarnates (1988)* won the Mainichi Film Award for Best Director; *Beijing Watermelon (1989)* won Best Director at the Yamaji Fumiko Movie Awards; *Chizuko's Younger Sister (1991)* won the Saturn Award for Best Fantasy Film; *The Rocking Horseman (1992)* won Best Film at the ACA Film Awards; *Sada (1998)* won the FIPRESCI Prize at the Berlin International Film Festival; *The Reason (2004)* won Best Director at the Japan Movie Critics Award and Honorable Mention at the Fujimoto Prize; *Casting Blossoms to the Sky (2011)* won the Grand Prix at the Tama Cinema Forum; *Hanagatami (2017)* won Best Director at the Kinema Junpo Awards and top prize at Mainichi Film Awards, and more. Recent works include Japanese pop-idol group AKB48's music video *So long! The Movie (2013)*, a youth version of *Casting Blossoms to the Sky*, and *Seven Weeks (2014)*. Despite being diagnosed with lung cancer in 2016, Obayashi completed his War Trilogy, which includes *Casting Blossoms to the Sky (2011)*, *Seven Weeks (2014)* and *Hanagatami (2017)*.