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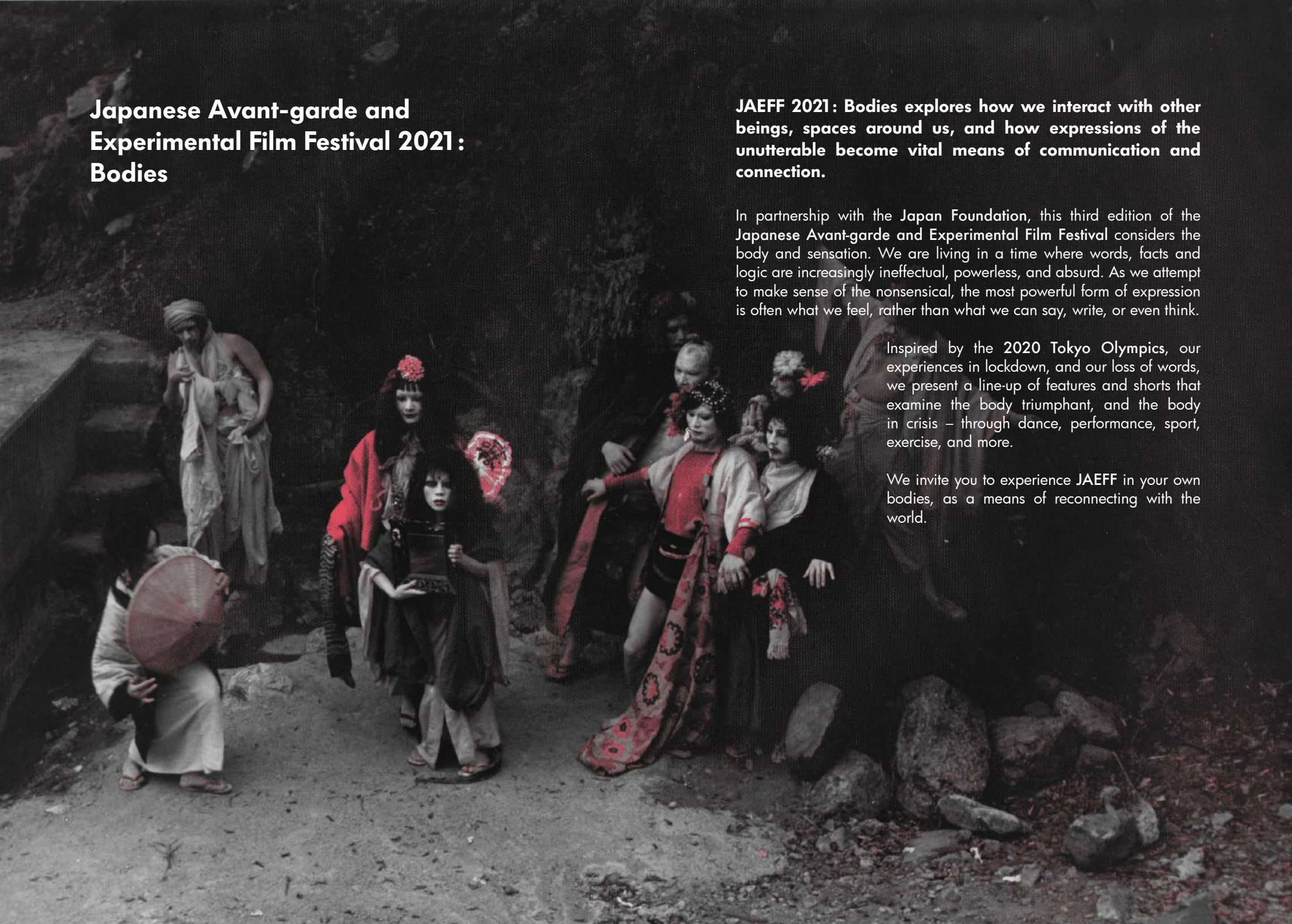
Japanese Avant-garde and Experimental Film Festival 2021: Bodies

JAEFF 2021: Bodies explores how we interact with other beings, spaces around us, and how expressions of the unutterable become vital means of communication and connection.

In partnership with the Japan Foundation, this third edition of the Japanese Avant-garde and Experimental Film Festival considers the body and sensation. We are living in a time where words, facts and logic are increasingly ineffectual, powerless, and absurd. As we attempt to make sense of the nonsensical, the most powerful form of expression is often what we feel, rather than what we can say, write, or even think.

Inspired by the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, our experiences in lockdown, and our loss of words, we present a line-up of features and shorts that examine the body triumphant, and the body in crisis – through dance, performance, sport, exercise, and more.

We invite you to experience **JAEFF** in your own bodies, as a means of reconnecting with the world.



A very warm welcome to the third edition of the Japanese Avant-garde and Experimental Film Festival – **JAEFF 2021: Bodies**.

I am excited to finally share with you this celebration of movement, gesture, and performance. In the wake of the Tokyo Olympics, and as we rediscover our bodies in public space, we are reminded of the importance of shared experience and collective effort.

Speaking of which, George and I can't really believe what we've achieved with JAEFF over the last five years. Starting with an auspicious coffee meeting in Bloomsbury, and culminating in our longest programme to date featuring live and online screenings, rare films never-before-seen outside of Japan, and, of course, our illuminating panel discussion. We are eternally grateful for the hard work and support of team JAEFF. Let the games begin!

Joshua J A Smith, Festival Director

Over the course of the winter lockdown in the UK, I returned repeatedly to Shinkichi Noda and Toshio Matsumoto's *Nippon Express Carries the Olympics to Tokyo*. Screening at the Barbican on Sunday 19 September, this documentary was commissioned by the titular transportation giant as a promotional film designed to showcase its role in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Initially selected for JAEFF on the strength of its poetic imagery, I am now comforted by the cheerful corporate narrative of taking pride in overcoming immense logistical challenges.

And this has been a time to persevere. I am enormously grateful for the endurance of festival director Joshua Smith, and the stamina of marketing manager Jordan Brooks. My eternal thanks to all the funders, partners, distributors, and filmmakers who helped get us over the line, and to anyone who offered us alternate paths after the pandemic shut so many doors.

George Crosthwait, Festival Producer



Thu 16 Sept, 6:00pm

Barbican, Cinema 1

Nanami: The Inferno of First Love + A.I. Mama^{18*}

An extremely rare 16mm screening of new wave master Susumu Hani's endlessly inventive web of young love and seedy underworld forces.

JAEFF 2021: *Bodies* begins with a bang. Working from a script penned by avant-garde god Shuji Terayama, *Nanami: The Inferno of First Love* is arguably Hani's masterpiece. Ostensibly a tale of boy meets girl, young goldsmith Shun falls for nude model Nanami. But Hani's film spirals ever deeper into a hallucinatory howl against a society that neglects, exploits, and abuses young bodies. A seamless mesh of Hani's vérité style with Terayama's experimental exuberance, expect to be stunned, troubled, and scorched by the inferno.

Nanami: The Inferno of First Love is paired with Asuka Lin's post-cyberpunk Super 8 film, *A.I. Mama*, featuring a young, non-binary programmer who attempts to reconnect with their lost mother.

With thanks to Mr and Mrs Hani.
With an introduction by Jennifer Coates.

Japan 1968 Dir Susumu Hani 108 min 16mm

USA 2020 Dir Asuka Lin 5 min

* = recommended classification



Fri 17 Sept, 6:00pm and On Demand

Barbican, Cinema 1

Portrait of Mr O + Anma + Rose Color Dance + In Passing^{15*}

The first of our two screenings celebrating butoh co-founders Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno through wildly inventive and highly surreal cinematic works.

Our bodies are in crisis! This programme brings together Chiaki Nagano and Takahiko Iimura's collaborations with butoh pioneers Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno. JAEFF attempts to define a dance style which defies definition. Beginning with the first entry in Nagano's *Mr O* trilogy, viewers will be plunged headfirst into the grotesque absurdities of a form which seeks to "resist fixity". The unforgettable imagery of *Portrait of Mr O* is complemented by Iimura's "cinedance" recordings of Hijikata's early 1960s performances. Both *Anma* and *Rose Color Dance* are efforts to film choreography and to choreograph film.

Connecting these works to present-day conceptions of movement, society, and technology is Anne Verheij's *In Passing*.

With a video introduction by Michael Sakamoto.

Japan 1969 Dir Chiaki Nagano 65 min

Japan 1963 Dir Takahiko Iimura 20 min

Japan 1965 Dir Takahiko Iimura 13 min

UK 2019 Dir Anne Verheij 5 min

** = recommended classification*

Fri 17 Sept, 8:30pm

Barbican, Cinema 3

Lovers are Wet^{18*}

Smut or art? Join us to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Nikkatsu's Roman Porno series of pink films with Tatsumi Kumashiro's existential shag-a-thon, *Lovers are Wet*.

It's Friday evening, and after a long week at work, it's time to surreptitiously purchase your ticket, slipping unobserved into our erotic movie palace.

We've opted to mark this 50th anniversary of *Nikkatsu Roman Porno* with a somewhat subversive selection. Not out of place with the "angry young man" films by Nagisa Oshima and Shuji Terayama, *Lovers are Wet* depicts the return of a particularly nihilistic native to his seaside village. Working in a local softcore cinema, Katsu refuses to acknowledge his connection to the town, and begins a mission of cruel seduction. Kumashiro's bleak and windswept vision is punctured by humour and depravity and serves as an angry broadside against censorship in Japan.

With an introduction by Jasper Sharp.

Japan 1973 Dir Tatsumi Kumashiro 76 min

** = recommended classification*



Sat 18 Sept, 3:00pm and On Demand

Barbican, Cinema 1

Mr O's Book of the Dead + Navel and A-Bomb + Dual Enframe^{15*}

Chiaki Nagano and Kazuo Ohno's trilogy reaches its bewildering and exhilarating conclusion in part two of JAEFF's butoh screenings.

We conclude our irresistible yet unclassifiable stumble through the world of butoh with two more masterpieces showcasing the talents of Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno. Hijikata reflects of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Eikoh Hosoe's *Navel and A-Bomb*, whilst Ohno steps into riotous colour in the concluding chapter of Nagano's *Mr O* trilogy.

Mr O's Book of the Dead is a stunning work of surrealism and choreography that evades written summary. Indeed, according to Ohno: "It is not important to understand what I am doing; perhaps it is better if they don't understand, but just respond to the dance."

These classic dance films are complemented by Kioto Aoki's *Dual Enframe*, which plays with different iterations of "the framing device," using the camera, the body, the mirror, and a window space.

With a video introduction by Michael Sakamoto.

Japan 1973 Dir Chiaki Nagano 90 min

Japan 1960 Dir Eikoh Hosoe 15 min

Japan 2018 Dir Kioto Aoki 3 min

* = recommended classification



Sat 18 Sept, 5:50pm and On Demand

Barbican, Cinema 1

Boxer + Transparent, the world is.^{15*}

Collapsing the line between mainstream sports drama and formal invention, avant-garde hero Shuji Terayama's *Boxer* is arguably the greatest boxing film ever made.

Welcome to Saturday night JAEFF Fight Night! A real underdog story! Dripping with surrealist style! Let's get ready to rumble!

Former champ Hayato is washed up and disillusioned. His shot at redemption arrives in the form of young boxer Henma seeking tutelage. While *Boxer* contains all the training montages required by the genre, Terayama's focus is always on the fluidity, punishment, and dedication of the fighting body.

Boxer is preceded by Yuri Muraoka's kaleidoscopic portrait of the filmmaker and her daughters, *Transparent, the world is*. A short film depicting the relationship between being and society.

With an introduction by Julian Ross.

Japan 1977 Dir Shuji Terayama 94 min

Japan 2019 Dir Yuri Muraoka 7 min

* = recommended classification



Sun 19 Sept, 11:10am

Barbican, Cinema 3

Panel Discussion: Japan's Cinematic Body

This panel discussion event brings together historians and academics to contextualise and explore the films and themes of the festival.

Join JAEFF producer and panel chair **George Crosthwait**, film theorist and anthropologist **Lola Martinez**, Senior Lecturer in Japanese Studies **Jennifer Coates**, author and filmmaker **Jasper Sharp**, and others,, as we discuss the legacy of the 1964 Olympics, the relationship between sport and the Japanese avant-garde, and physical gesture as a tool for cinematic expression.

Entry is free, but registration is essential.

Sun 19 Sept, 1:20pm and On Demand

Barbican, Cinema 1

Nippon Express Carries the Olympics to Tokyo + Record of a Marathon Runner + Tokyo Story^{15*}

The logistical efforts of putting on the 1964 Olympics are pitted against the Sisyphean loneliness of a long-distance runner.

Our afternoon of Olympic themed screenings begins with an early documentary from Japanese counterculture legend Toshio Matsumoto (*Funeral Parade of Roses*). In collaboration with the Museum of Logistics, we present the UK premiere of *Nippon Express Carries the Olympics to Tokyo*. A showcase of the behind-the-scenes detail and

labour required to host a mass sporting spectacle, Shinkichi Noda and Matsumoto's poetic imagery is undercut by the upbeat promotional narration. In another UK first, we are delighted to screen *Record of a Marathon Runner*. Kazuo Kuroki documents the Olympic preparations of young athlete Kimihara Kenji, capturing the monotonous rhythms of training whilst pushing cinematic form into abstraction.

Nippon Express and *Record of a Marathon Runner* are paired with Hal Torii's surrealist short: *Tokyo Story*.

Japan 1964 Dir Shinkichi Noda and Toshio Matsumoto 41 min

Japan 1963 Dir Kazuo Kuroki 62 min

Japan 2019 Dir Hal Torii 2 min

** = recommended classification*





Sun 19 Sept, 4:00pm

Barbican, Cinema 1

Tokyo Olympiad^{U*}

Kon Ichikawa tears up the documentary playbook for this thrilling cinematic record of the 1964 Summer Olympics.

JAEFF 2021: *Bodies* concludes with the spectacular 4K restoration of *Tokyo Olympiad*. Ichikawa's masterpiece is a leap forward in both technical innovation and artistic experimentation. This is filmmaking on a grand scale; a paean to the notion of global connection and the pursuit of sporting excellence that values humanity over results. Fittingly, JAEFF's day of Olympic themed programming ends with the greatest sports film ever made.

Ichikawa's elegant and impressionistic wide-screen poetry will be fused into your mind. And it might just remind you why you love cinema and what a body (and a soul) can achieve.

With thanks to the IOC for their support and assistance with this screening.

With an introduction by Lola Martinez.

Japan 1964 Dir Kon Ichikawa 169 min

** = recommended classification*

Only Connect: Shorts at JAEFF 2021

By George Crosthwait

Kioto Aoki's camera and performer negotiate their way precisely through a living space; emerging from a knot of tubes and wiring, the young programmer of *A.I. Mama* caresses a monitor; streams of pedestrians and traffic course around the static dancer in Anne Verheij's *In Passing*; Yuri Muraoka sits regally as her daughters Nemu and Hana tangle a cat's cradle at her feet; and the bodies of *Tokyo Story* are as fragile and formless as their ever trembling and dissolving animated outlines.

Across cyberpunk, dance-film, surreal animation, and avant-garde assemblage, the contemporary short works exhibited at JAEFF 2021: Bodies intersect with an urgent call for connectivity. These connections are forged between human bodies, but also between the bodies of objects and technology, and the environment as a site of embodiment. Whilst these works predate the pandemic, they evoke desires for community and communication that have become even more painfully felt over the past eighteen months.

Making her second appearance at JAEFF, Kioto Aoki's *Dual Enframe* anticipates lockdown existence as dancer Mitsu Salmon finds herself in a mundane entrapment. Using her body, she parcels off various segments of room, whilst she herself is captured by doorways, windows, and the camera, in a mutual exchange of framing. Miku Tsuchiya channels Merce Cunningham in *In Passing* to perform a mesmerising dance of stillness. Her exaggerated (non)movements allow hyperreal natural environments and quotidian man-made structures to flow around her, forming their own dances to their own secret rhythms.

Asuka Lin deals in dichotomies with *A.I. Mama*: the dystopian world shot on nostalgia-inducing super 8, the gender fluid programmer working with binary absolutes, and the human figure desiring care from the incomprehensible machine. Yet the ultimate power of the film is to undermine and disassemble these oppositional forces. And by its climax, the boundaries between human and machine have collapsed into something indescribably hopeful. Hal Torii's *Tokyo Story* is, on the other hand, a humorous yet spikey critique of the lack of connection in a modern Tokyo driven by apathy. Torii's film shares more than a musical citation of the homonymous classic from 1953: capitalist society has accelerated to the stage where we all feel as unneeded and bewildered as Ozu's elderly couple lost in the metropolis.

Evocative of Věra Chytilová and Sergei Parajanov, Yuri Muraoka's *Transparent, the world is* displays the filmmaker and her daughters in striking tableaux. Through stop-motion effects, the film stock appears to disintegrate and fold in on itself. A Mobius strip which oscillates between interior and exterior states. In the closing moments a curious archival montage emerges of handshakes at political treaty signings and meetings: the Oslo I Accords, the Good Friday Agreement, Obama and Raul Castro, and more. What's in a handshake? It's hard not to be sceptical of the smiling encounters shown here (with all respect to hindsight). But can gesture ever be devoid of political meaning and ulterior motive? Can we understand an embodied encounter on its own merits and appreciate its particular physical poetry?

Hani Susumu's Leap into the Depths

By Jennifer Coates

"We are now living between two worlds of morality. In consequence, we live in frustration, afraid to leap into the depths of ourselves. In this film, I wanted to look squarely, even fearlessly, into this depth, into that part of a human being which is most personally his" (Hani Susumu, quoted in Golden Eagle Films Press Information, 1969).

With a background in producing PR and education films for publishing house Iwanami, Hani Susumu's independent films include the *vérité*-style *Furyō shōnen* (*Bad Boys*, 1960) and *She and He* (*Kanojo to kare*, 1963). The work of the filmmakers who emerged from the Iwanami PR unit is characterised by a documentary style that includes non-professional actors and minimal scripts. In this work, Hani brings Terayama Shuji's script to life using experimental camera angles, overexposure, extreme close-ups and long shots, and montages of still photographs to create an impressionistic mood.

Nanami: The Inferno of First Love addresses confrontational issues such as child abuse and sexual violence with a serious tone and a constant reminder of the humanity of its subjects. Metalworker Shun (Takahashi Akio) suffers from impotence related to sexual abuse by his foster father. Aspiring model Nanami (Ishii Kuniko) is the target of exploitation by older men seeking sexualised entertainment. The film begins with the two 17 year olds sharing an intimate moment, as their attempts at sexual intercourse fail and they use their time together to tell one another about

themselves instead. Emerging back into daily life, both become the focus of adult judgements, desires, and coercion that ultimately prevent their next meeting.

Nanami was shown at Nichigeki, Shinjuku Bunka, and Yokohama Sotetsu Bunka art theatres in 1968, suggesting that it was received in Japan as art cinema. Anglophone critics struggled to determine the genre and meaning however, with critic Donald Richie calling the film a "modern fairytale" (1968) and Andrea Silver of the *Springfield Herald* suggesting that this "story of youthful innocence versus the corruption of society" could be understood as the "*Oriental Graduate*" (1969).

While the film was nominated for a number of awards, including the Best Film award at Berlin Film Festival in 1968, programmers and critics have struggled with the explicit content. The S&M scenes were cut for the screening at Cannes, and much has been written about the difficulties of showing a key scene with Shun and his young friend Momi which features child nudity. Writing in *Eiga Geijutsu (Film Art)* in July 1968, Hani argued that "most people experience sexual feelings and thoughts from their childhood onwards, and translate them into sexual behaviour and emotions. If this phenomenon were not accompanied by feelings of guilt, it would be most inconvenient for our rulers." In this way, the filmmaker connects sexual expression with "political oppression," suggesting that the message of the film lies in how the adult characters read and manipulate the expressions and desires of the young protagonists.



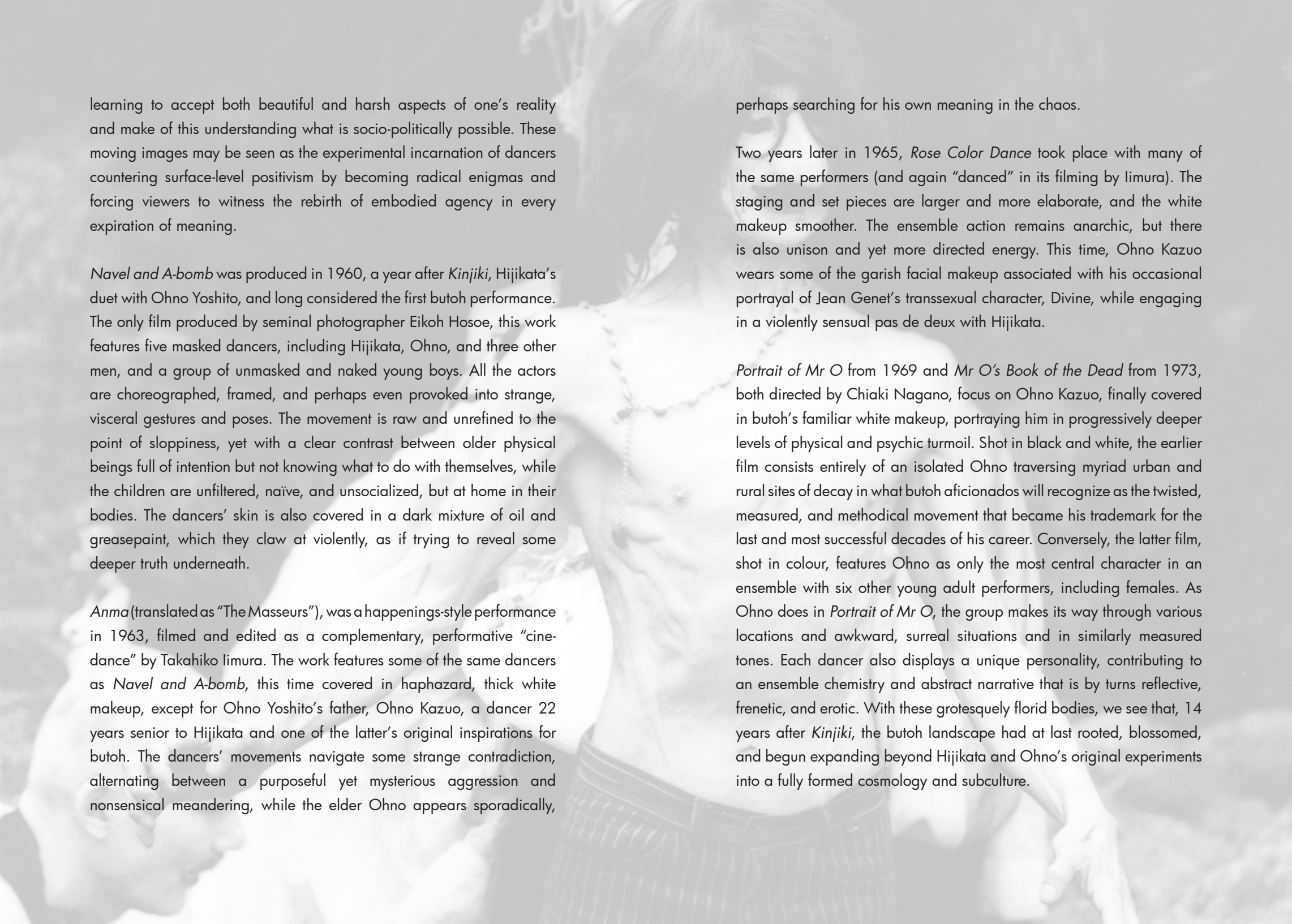
Becoming the Body in Crisis: Early Butoh Films at JAEFF 2021

By Michael Sakamoto

Viewed together, these five films chart much of the development and etymology of the *butoh* dancing body in its earliest years, coming of age within an avant-garde community that questioned postwar Japan's economic and cultural production moulded under the American Occupation and the West. Hijikata Tatsumi, the founder of the *butoh* performance movement, fashioned an alternative dance form that he labeled *ankoku butoh* (dance of utter darkness), and later shortened in familiar usage to simply *butoh*. Employing deconstruction, absurdity, and darkness to portray a tragic psyche, he choreographed the nightmare image of a foreign and inhumane modernism overpowering his native culture into a "body in crisis," at war against itself. This rooted *butoh* in contradiction and a schizophrenic sense of self: Japanese/Western, primal/socialized, light/dark, life/death.

Hijikata propagated the idea that the body possesses inherent knowledge of its own psycho-physiological needs and innate mechanisms for escaping and reimagining adverse conditions in daily life. Like many artists of his generation, he explored the ambivalence of Japanese postwar identity, at first through a late capitalist, Westernized body lost in the oppressive chaos of a rebuilt Tokyo, and later via a premodern Japanese body dancing through folk mythologies of his home Tohoku region in northern Japan.

In these films, produced in the years between those two projections, we glimpse much of the maturation of *butoh's* body in crisis, as if the performers are stumbling headlong into a new expressive mode,



learning to accept both beautiful and harsh aspects of one's reality and make of this understanding what is socio-politically possible. These moving images may be seen as the experimental incarnation of dancers countering surface-level positivism by becoming radical enigmas and forcing viewers to witness the rebirth of embodied agency in every expiration of meaning.

Navel and A-bomb was produced in 1960, a year after *Kinjiki*, Hijikata's duet with Ohno Yoshito, and long considered the first butoh performance. The only film produced by seminal photographer Eikoh Hosoe, this work features five masked dancers, including Hijikata, Ohno, and three other men, and a group of unmasked and naked young boys. All the actors are choreographed, framed, and perhaps even provoked into strange, visceral gestures and poses. The movement is raw and unrefined to the point of sloppiness, yet with a clear contrast between older physical beings full of intention but not knowing what to do with themselves, while the children are unfiltered, naïve, and unsocialized, but at home in their bodies. The dancers' skin is also covered in a dark mixture of oil and greasepaint, which they claw at violently, as if trying to reveal some deeper truth underneath.

Anma (translated as "The Masseurs"), was a happenings-style performance in 1963, filmed and edited as a complementary, performative "cin-dance" by Takahiko Imura. The work features some of the same dancers as *Navel and A-bomb*, this time covered in haphazard, thick white makeup, except for Ohno Yoshito's father, Ohno Kazuo, a dancer 22 years senior to Hijikata and one of the latter's original inspirations for butoh. The dancers' movements navigate some strange contradiction, alternating between a purposeful yet mysterious aggression and nonsensical meandering, while the elder Ohno appears sporadically,

perhaps searching for his own meaning in the chaos.

Two years later in 1965, *Rose Color Dance* took place with many of the same performers (and again "danced" in its filming by Imura). The staging and set pieces are larger and more elaborate, and the white makeup smoother. The ensemble action remains anarchic, but there is also unison and yet more directed energy. This time, Ohno Kazuo wears some of the garish facial makeup associated with his occasional portrayal of Jean Genet's transsexual character, Divine, while engaging in a violently sensual pas de deux with Hijikata.

Portrait of Mr O from 1969 and *Mr O's Book of the Dead* from 1973, both directed by Chiaki Nagano, focus on Ohno Kazuo, finally covered in butoh's familiar white makeup, portraying him in progressively deeper levels of physical and psychic turmoil. Shot in black and white, the earlier film consists entirely of an isolated Ohno traversing myriad urban and rural sites of decay in what butoh aficionados will recognize as the twisted, measured, and methodical movement that became his trademark for the last and most successful decades of his career. Conversely, the latter film, shot in colour, features Ohno as only the most central character in an ensemble with six other young adult performers, including females. As Ohno does in *Portrait of Mr O*, the group makes its way through various locations and awkward, surreal situations and in similarly measured tones. Each dancer also displays a unique personality, contributing to an ensemble chemistry and abstract narrative that is by turns reflective, frenetic, and erotic. With these grotesquely florid bodies, we see that, 14 years after *Kinjiki*, the butoh landscape had at last rooted, blossomed, and begun expanding beyond Hijikata and Ohno's original experiments into a fully formed cosmology and subculture.

Love's Twisting Path

By Jasper Sharp

When Nikkatsu studios launched its ground-breaking Roman Porno erotic line on 20 November 1971 with a double bill of Isao Hayashi's *Castle Orgies* and Shogoro Nishimura's *Apartment Wife: Afternoon Affair*, it effectively signalled a complete reset from the company's output of youth-oriented action crime and action dramas of the 1960s.

Tatsumi Kumashiro (1927-1995) was among a handful of the new wave of directors specialising for this new market who were picked out by Japanese critics as ones to watch, making just shy of 20 such films for the company between 1972 and 1988. And yet watching *Lovers are Wet*, known also by the alternate English language title of *Twisted Path of Love*, reveals the complexities of dismissing Roman Porno merely in terms of studio-produced soft-core sex films. It seems to withhold many of the pleasures one might expect from a title released under such branding; its style detached, its tone bleak and its meaning cryptic.

A young drifter (Tetsu Ōe) with an unclear past rocks up in a remote seaside town where he begins work delivering film canisters to the kind of rundown provincial fleapit where one might expect to find Roman

Porno titles playing. The locals seem to recognise him as Katsu, a former resident in this coastal smalltown, but he shrugs off their acknowledgements, refusing to divulge any form of information about his past or present identity. Emboldened by a sense of anonymity, he sets about on a course of actions that are a deliberate affront to any sense of community spirit, embarking on a torrid affair with his employer's wife (Moeko Ezawa) while insinuating himself into the lives of local lovers Yoko (Rie Nakagawa) and Mitsuo (Koichi Hori) in a manner that becomes increasingly shocking and violent.

Kumashiro's focus on his inscrutably amoral protagonist is just one of the many ways in which he interrogates the form and function of a genre that purports to simultaneously represent and pander to the sexual appetite. Produced in the wake of its studio's prosecution for public obscenity shortly after the Roman Porno line's commencement, like a number of Kumashiro's other films of the period (*Woods are Wet* [1973]; *World of Geisha* [1973]), *Lovers are Wet* intentionally draws attention to the hand of the censor in governing the way that such narratives are consumed. Resulting in a work that explores existential notions of sexual liberation in a manner that is sure to provoke much debate about intention and affect.

The Advent of Terayama


By Nikodem Karolak

It would be difficult to find another Japanese artist like Terayama Shūji (1935-1983). Nearly four decades since his passing, recollections of him nevertheless become more and more alive every year, and his art continues to evoke incredible emotions. Having begun his artistic career under the motto of *misemono no fukken* (restoration of the spectacles), Terayama went on to become one of the most important innovators in avant-garde theatre and cinema. Remembered as an unsurpassed intellectual, a non-conformist, and unyielding workaholic with a reputation for subversion and an affinity with scandal; an *enfant terrible* who re-envisioned Japanese tradition in an emphatic way. Primarily known internationally as the founder of the alternative theatre ensemble Tenjō Sajiki, he gradually knocked down the barrier between stage and audience.

His theatrical style was both admired and loathed. While Senda Akihiko – a prolific and influential theatre critic – praised his plays as an example of original meta-art, Roland H. Wiegenstein from Germany complained that Japanese thugs and their powerful karate punches foiled his attempt to escape the venue. Wiegenstein was blunt in his condemnation of Terayama, giving him a bashing in *Der Spiegel* titled “Hitler was better”. Today, such stories are hard to believe. How can one explain the enigmatic disappearance of Hans Burma, a spectator who “dissolved into thin air” during a performance at the Mickery Theater? Just what did the actors do that landed them in court after their performances of *Mōjin Shokan* (Letter on the Blind) in Poland in 1973? Would it possible these days to put on a performance in the streets where potential spectators are packed into wooden boxes and then transported into the unknown?

Japan in the 60s/70s, when Terayama founded Tenjō Sajiki, was an era of post-war trauma and great upheaval. The ratification of the asymmetrical Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security with the United States caused perpetual student protests at the University of Tokyo and contributed to a rich counterculture. Although it would be a misleading to compare Terayama to American Beatniks, it should be noted that his vagabond lifestyle, anti-establishment artistic work, incitement to sexual revolution, and manifestations of street art together with a team of actors, runaways, street musicians, transvestites, and dissenters meant that Terayama was no less important to the Japanese counterculture than Ellen Stewart, Judith Malina, Julian Beck, Jonas Mekas and Andy Warhol were to the counterculture in the United States.

Terayama’s major theatrical masterpieces include: *The Hunchback of Aomori* (1967), *The Mink Marie* (1967), *Inugami* (1969), *Heretics* (1971), *Directions to Servants* (1978), *Shintokumar* (1978), *The Lemmings* (1979), *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1981), among others. Finally, his semi-autobiographical poetic films, such as *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets* (1971), *Pastoral Hide and Seek* (1974), *Boxer* (1977), *The Grass Labyrinth* (1979), and *Farewell to the Ark* (1984) were recognized at international festivals. A metamorphosing alchemist dissolving barriers between reality and fiction, he presented his works at the most prestigious venues and festivals such as The Mickery Theater in Amsterdam, La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, The Shiraz-Persepolis Festival, Le Festival Mondial de Théâtre in Nancy, and the Cannes Festival. The result of which led him to be compared to such prominent figures as Peter Brook, Robert Wilson, and Tadeusz Kantor.



Boxer, until recently considered a minor Terayama, is a distillation of his portrayals of the weak turning over a new leaf, the fulfilled dream of the feeble boy from the slums portrayed in *Throw Away Your Books*, *Rally in the Streets*. Terayama's ethical debate that views boxing in opposition to political power was primarily initiated in his screenplay *The nineteen-year-old blues*, then continued in *Ah, wilderness* (serialized during 1965 and 1966). Here, the juxtaposition of stuttering Barikan and haughty Shinjuku Shinji, along with a performative funeral of manga boxer character Tōru Rikiishi in 1970, and Terayama's friendship with Harada Masahiko (renowned as "Fighting" Harada who would later become a boxing world champion), finally found its culmination in the only Terayama film produced by Toei. In *Boxer*, an ex-champion Hayato, living alone with his mangy dog, decides to take on training a young apprentice fighter who has accidentally killed his younger brother. The fighting scenes and the shabby apartment are contrasted with the colourful, misemono koya-esque atmosphere of the theatre embodied by Tenjō Sajiki actors who took an active part in the production.

Terayama Morisaki Henrikku (Terayama's original collaborator and adopted step brother) comments on the production:

"Although permission was obtained to revise the original script by Ishimori Fumio, Terayama Shūji seemed to have been very reluctant and careful because Ishimori was a major scriptwriter at Toei. I think that the reason why Yōichi Higashi's *Third* (1978) – which Terayama wrote in parallel – was concluded in a tremendously free scenario, was to dispel the dissatisfaction with *Boxer*. Almost all of J. A. Seazer's music was recorded beforehand, and Tatsuo Suzuki did the shooting while playing the music on a cassette tape recorder. The timing of the pan speed and zoom is synchronized with the music, which gives an interesting result. All Toei staff were amazingly experienced. For instance, each time Suzuki Tatsuo and Terayama wanted a concrete location, they provided everything. Thus, they were able to work under surprisingly good conditions and even shoot the accident scene from the top of the highway under construction".

Mysteriously, as the 40th anniversary of Terayama's death approaches, one can notice a worldwide Terayama boom. Starting with the Terayama Shūji film retrospective at the New Horizons International Film Festival, and continuing with stage productions of *Nuhikun – Directions to Servants* stage productions by Laboratory of Theatre, the play *Ban'yū Inryoku* (directed by J. A. Seazer) at the InlanDimensions International Festival in Poland in October 2019 – later presented at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre during the turbulent political upheaval induced by the Hong Kong national security law – yet another film retrospective in Taiwan amidst the pandemic, and now the significant screening of *Boxer* at JAEFF 2021. One could venture to say that Terayama pieces – like Shakespeare's plays – act as sponges which absorb the issues of our time.

1964 and the Culture of Speed

By William Andrews

Any edition of the Olympic Games has a narrative, spun by the host city about itself and disseminated across various media. In 1964, it was a tale of post-war recovery and rehabilitation: here was Tokyo leading the way as the first Olympics to be held in Asia and, following the 1960 Games in Rome, demonstrating that Japan was another former Axis power who had come back into the fold.

The 1964 Olympics are remembered almost without question as a success story. In the official report on the Games published after they closed, Avery Brundage, the then president of the International Olympic Committee, extolled of their “unsurpassed precision and distinction” and how “all the people of Japan” came together for a “common interest”. This is the myth of 1964: a happy nation united in the cause of improvement and achievement.


Behind this gushing portrayal lay hard toil. In his recent memoir of living in the city, *Tokyo Junkie*, veteran journalist Robert Whiting remembers how Tokyo was “tearing itself apart and putting itself back together” for the Games. The newly built venues like the Yoyogi National Gymnasium and Budokan are celebrated examples of 1964’s concrete legacy, but it was the investment in infrastructure that truly transformed the city (and consumed the budget): the new subway lines, the monorail, the raised highway and – the crowning achievement – the Shinkansen bullet train, running from Tokyo to Osaka and opening just days before the Games.

Unlike in 2021, the Games were experienced by huge crowds in the venues. But predominantly, the events were experienced via the TV sets

that the nation was now buying to watch epoch-defining moments like the Japanese volleyball team winning a gold medal. Through the means by which they were mediated and consumed en masse, such exploits created folk heroes and myths of plucky underdogs.

But all narratives have counter-narratives and the 1964 imaginary certainly has its dark underside. The idea that 1964 brought the whole nation together to celebrate post-war peace and progress ignores the turmoil that preceded 1964: the immense street protests against the US-Japan security treaty that left a young female demonstrator dead outside the parliament building. After the Games closed and Brundage went home, the second half of the decade saw violent unrest at campuses and on the streets of cities across the country. Tokyo’s infrastructural changes were certainly remarkable yet not enjoyed equally by everyone, with the western side of the city benefitting far more than the older, poorer districts in the east. The construction work was overseen by gangsters, who exploited labourers and cut corners. The raised highway, impressive as it still is, turned historically steeped places like Nihonbashi into eyesores. It also displaced residents and devastated local fishing communities. With the damage done to the rivers and docks, Tokyo as a city of waterways effectively ceased to exist.

Before the Olympics, Tokyo had still resembled its post-war self with prostitutes, spivs, vagrants, and gangsters everywhere. These disappeared in time for the Games, presumably persuaded to leave by the gangs who were reaping the benefits of the construction bonanza. Alongside modernizing the sewage system, the authorities launched a “clean up Tokyo” campaign, encouraging everyone to contribute to making the city presentable to the international guests. In October 1964, while the

An aerial photograph of a city street, likely in Japan, showing a yellow car and a sign with Japanese characters. The image is used as a background for the text.

Games were taking place, the art collective Hi-Red Center performed a Situationist prank on the streets of the high-end shopping district Ginza, dressed in lab coats and face masks and engaged in a futile attempt to mop and sweep the pavement. “Be Clean!” declared a sign they erected. It was a jape, one of many such performance art practices in the decade, but its intent was serious: to expose the charade that the city was trying to pull off for the cameras.

Even when the Games closed, things didn’t stop; far from it, they sped up. Japan’s economic miracle was accelerating as the nation entered a sustained period of incredible growth. This generated jobs, wealth, and a conviction that to succeed was to build. The Olympic motto – *Citius, Altius, Fortius* (Faster, Higher, Stronger) – exemplified this mindset of speed and perfection. A commitment to logistics and organisation, so quietly honoured in *Nippon Express Carries the Olympics to Tokyo*, became the benchmark. Highways begot more highways. Mountains were tunnelled and Shinkansen lines extended further. The city expanded: outward into the bay on artificial islands and giant bridges; westward to the new commuter towns; downward to increasing numbers of subway lines; and upward in the form of ever-taller skyscrapers. And through it all, the humble *salaryman* slaved at his desk, pressured to put in hours of overtime each night, followed by drinks with colleagues and clients.

The corollary of this culture was close behind. After taking bronze in 1964, marathon runner Kokichi Tsuburaya was determined not to let the nation down again in Mexico City in 1968. But the demand to go

faster, to endure longer, proved too much. He took his own life before the Games, leaving a note to his family that said: “Your Kokichi is exhausted and cannot run anymore.” Given Tsuburaya’s fate, we might detect under the surface of *Record of a Marathon Runner* something disturbing in its portrait of Olympic hopeful Kenji Kimihara’s ceaseless training regime.

The direct cause of the 2005 Amagasaki derailment, in which over a hundred people died, was driver error, but it was also the result of a culture of precision and speed. The driver was accelerating far beyond safe levels to make up time, fearful of penalization by his employer. More generally, so many people have died in Japan from excessive work hours that it engendered its own term, *karoshi*. These are admittedly extreme examples. Far more common is redundancy: convenience and speed for its own sake. Given the vertiginous costs and effort, do we really need a maglev train line in central Japan – set to open by 2045 – with its promise of shaving a few more minutes off the Shinkansen trip between Tokyo and Nagoya?

An economy founded on cycles of construction and redevelopment never has downtime, even when the population is shrinking and national debt is climbing exponentially. The most recent iteration is the 2020 Olympics, a desperate, blinkered attempt to recapture the feel-good factor of 1964 as well as its success and speed, in spite of widespread public anxiety over the pandemic and years of opposition by activists. The National Stadium, which was demolished and rebuilt with an expanded design at a staggering cost, stood empty, hosting a spectacle without spectators.



Manifesto

for Kashiko and Nagamasa Kawakita

1. Avant-garde art is fuelled by socio-political uncertainty.
2. The presence of an avant-garde art scene indicates socio-political turmoil (there is no smoke without fire).
3. Just as contemporary societies evolve from and reflect history, contemporary artistic movements evolve from and reflect historical art movements (nothing exists in a vacuum – a fire needs oxygen).
4. JAEFF historicises contemporary Japanese experimental filmmaking.
5. JAEFF makes classic Japanese avant-garde cinema relevant and urgent.
6. JAEFF believes that Japanese avant-garde and experimental cinema is intellectual, conceptual, and academic.
7. JAEFF also believes that Japanese avant-garde and experimental cinema is non-intellectual, non-conceptual, and anti-academic.
8. JAEFF aims to make Japanese avant-garde and experimental cinema accessible to practical, theoretical, and popular audiences. There is no hierarchy amongst these three spheres.
9. JAEFF insists that these three audiences be given equal platforms, and encourages them to share these platforms.
10. JAEFF looks forward and backward, making the present out of the future and the past.
11. In this sense JAEFF is Janus – the two headed Roman god of gateways. JAEFF is a gateway through which new audiences can be introduced to creative and political Japanese cinema, and through which old audiences can be reinvigorated by new acolytes and ideas.
12. JAEFF respects traditions, and those who flaunt traditions.
13. JAEFF does not believe in a fixed canon.
14. JAEFF supports work that (like itself) is born of frustration, but quests for hope.

About JAEFF

The **Japanese Avant-garde and Experimental Film Festival (JAEFF)** was founded in 2017 by Joshua Smith and George Crosthwait.

JAEFF draws connections between classic Japanese avant-garde cinema and contemporary experimental film. We are committed to nurturing new talent from Japan and the diaspora. We harness subversive energy, demystify it, and circulate it amongst popular audiences here in the UK.

We encourage inclusivity and propose to foster co-operative discourses between the practical/artistic, scholarly and fan communities; bursting these bubbles and unlocking the echo chamber.

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Michael Sakamoto is a butoh dance theatre artist, photographer, media artist, curator, educator, and scholar whose works have been presented in 15 countries worldwide. His book, *An Empty Room: Imagining Butoh and the Social Body in Crisis*, is forthcoming from Wesleyan University Press in spring 2022, and his current duet work-in-progress, *George/Michael*, unpacks race and gender through personal narrative in collaboration with former American Ballet Theatre soloist and film and Broadway performer, George de la Peña.

Jasper Sharp is an author, filmmaker, curator, and independent scholar known for his work on Asian cinema and was the co-founder of the Japanese film website *Midnight Eye*. He is the co-director, with Tim Grabham, of *The Creeping Garden* (2014), a documentary about plasmodial slime moulds.

