FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, February 10, 1967

Thirteen feature films by the Japanese director Kon Ichikawa will be presented by the Department of Film of The Museum of Modern Art from February 12 through February 27. The films range from Ichikawa's satirical comedies of the early '50's to the more recent tragedies attempting to show the "pain of our age." All of the films are in Japanese with English subtitles.

Describing his work, Ichikawa says, "I try to visualize everything...I'm the kind of person who has to see something -- even in my own imagination -- before I understand it. I started as a painter and I think like one. That is why the camera is so important to me. I plan all the set-ups and I always check the framing, and I usually try to work with (a cameraman) I know....I design the sets too, usually...and I'd probably do the music too if I could."

Film critic Donald Richie describes the resulting "Ichikawa look": "The angular pattern is usually bold, the balance is almost always asymmetrical, the framing is precise, and yet the composition rarely calls attention to itself."

At 18 after graduation from an Osaka commercial school Ichikawa began studying animation and in 1946 completed a puppet-film based on a famous Kabuki dance. (The Occupation authorities, concerned with discovering "feudal remnants," seized the negative and it has never been found.) After that, Ichikawa joined Toho Production Company and began making satirical comedies until 1955 when he switched to more serious subject matter with The Burmese Harp. He says, "I had become aware that men are unhappy. You can even say that they are in anguish and so the only way to show a real man is to show an unhappy one. Oh, I look around for some kind of humanism but I never seem to find it. People are always complaining; the ending of the Olympic film (Tokyo Olympiad) is an example -- why show all that strain and pain, they say. And they want happy endings too. But doesn't this desire for a happy ending show how unhappy they really are?"

Now 50, Ichikawa still considers himself a cartoonist and believes that the greatest influence on his films, besides Chaplin, is Disney. He says, "There is a lot of Disney in me -- it's just that my subjects are different."

The program for THE FILMS OF KON ICHIKAWA is attached.
Screenings are daily, except Wednesdays, at 2 and 5:30 p.m., Thursdays again at 8 p.m., and Saturdays at 11:30 a.m., 3 and 5:30 p.m. in the Museum Auditorium. Program notes, stills and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Linda Gordon, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. Circle 5-8900.

THE FILMS OF KON ICHIKAWA


