

The Museum of Modern Art

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FILM DIRECTOR ARRIVING FROM JAPAN TO PARTICIPATE IN RETROSPECTIVE

Ten films made since 1964 by the prominent Japanese director Masahiro Shinoda will be presented from April 26 through May 14 at The Museum of Modern Art. The 42-year-old filmmaker, well-known in his own country but only beginning to become familiar to filmgoers outside Japan, will come to New York for this city's first comprehensive survey of his work and will introduce a showing of "Assassination," one of his major pictures, on Thursday evening, April 26, at 8:00 pm.

Considered as a whole, Shinoda's films present a view of Japanese society at crucial points in its history, as well as a view of the individual human condition. "For Shinoda," writes Joan Mellen in an essay written for this series, "injustice appears endemic to the human condition." And Donald Richie, the Museum curator responsible for the Shinoda program, has written in his book Japanese Cinema: "The younger director [Shinoda] is interested in the patterns of men's lives and in the character of a man free enough and hopelessly doomed enough to be nihilistic in a rigidly repressive and obsessively codified world." Unlike Mizoguchi, who attempts to reconcile the disparity between duty and will, Shinoda adopts a pessimistic, fatalistic view of the conflict between the individual character and the constraints imposed on that character by tradition.

With respect to Japanese society, Shinoda frequently concentrates on moments of political and/or historical transition. "The Scandalous Adventures of Buraikan" and "Assassination," two of his finest works, are situated at distinct moments in the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate during the mid-nineteenth century. "Buraikan" presents the Shogunate's decadence as reflected by the irrelevant and ineffectual reforms of 1842 which the population would not accept; "Assassination"

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opens in 1853 with the arrival of Commodore Perry and the chaos following Premier Ti's decision to open Japan to the West. Another film, "Silence," portrays the impact of Spanish and Portuguese missionaries who tried, unsuccessfully, to introduce Christianity to Japan on a large scale in the 17th century. Two other pictures, "Clouds at Sunset" and "Punishment Island," are set in the late 1930s, and both capture the mood of frivolity, anxiety and repression of liberal opposition which prevailed in Japan prior to World War II.

In Shinoda's films, the fate of the individual and moments of historical crises are inextricably bound. "Silence," for example, is as much a study of the destiny of two priests in a hostile country as it is an examination of Japan's response to Christianity. According to Joan Mellen: "The extraordinary achievements of Shinoda consists in the complexity and power with which he evokes those chaotic moments of turmoil accompanying the close of one historical epoch and the birth of another.... In Shinoda...there is a sense that the turn of events will only confirm our helplessness."

The schedule of Shinoda films follows; all have English subtitles.

Pale Flower. 1964. 98 min. Courtesy Shochiku Ltd., Tokyo.

Thursday, April 26, 5:30; Monday, April 30, 5:30; Tuesday, May 1, 5:30

Assassination. 1964. 104 min. Courtesy Shochiku Ltd., Tokyo.

Thursday, April 26, 8:00; Friday, April 27, 2:00; Saturday, April 28, 5:30

Samurai Spy. 1965. 100 min. Courtesy Shochiku Ltd., Tokyo.

Saturday, April 28, 3:00; Sunday, April 29, 5:30; Monday, April 30, 2:00

With Beauty and Sorrow. 1965. 104 min. Courtesy Shochiku Ltd., Tokyo.

Thursday, May 3, 5:30; Saturday, May 5, 3:00; Sunday, May 6, 5:30

Punishment Island. 1966. 87 min. Courtesy MacMillan-Audio-Brandon Films.

Thursday, May 3, 8:00; Friday, May 4, 2:00

Clouds at Sunset. 1967. 107 min. Courtesy Shochiku Ltd., Tokyo.

Saturday, May 5, 5:30; Monday, May 7, 2:00

Double Suicide. 1969. 104 min. Courtesy Toho, Ltd., Tokyo.

Monday, May 7, 5:30; Thursday, May 10, 5:30

The Scandalous Adventures of Buraikan. 1970. 104 min. Courtesy Toho, Ltd., Tokyo.

Thursday, May 10, 8:00; Friday, May 11, 2:00; Saturday, May 12, 3:00; Monday, May 14, 2:00

Silence. 1971. 129 min. Courtesy Toho, Ltd., Tokyo.

Saturday, May 12, 5:30; Monday, May 14, 5:30

Sapporo Winter Olympics. 1972. 140 min. Courtesy Toho, Ltd., Tokyo.

Sunday, May 13, 5:30

Additional information available from Mark Segal, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., NY, NY 10019. Phone: (212)956-7296.