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PFA Oshima Retrospective

"Boy"

少年

BOY (1969 color)

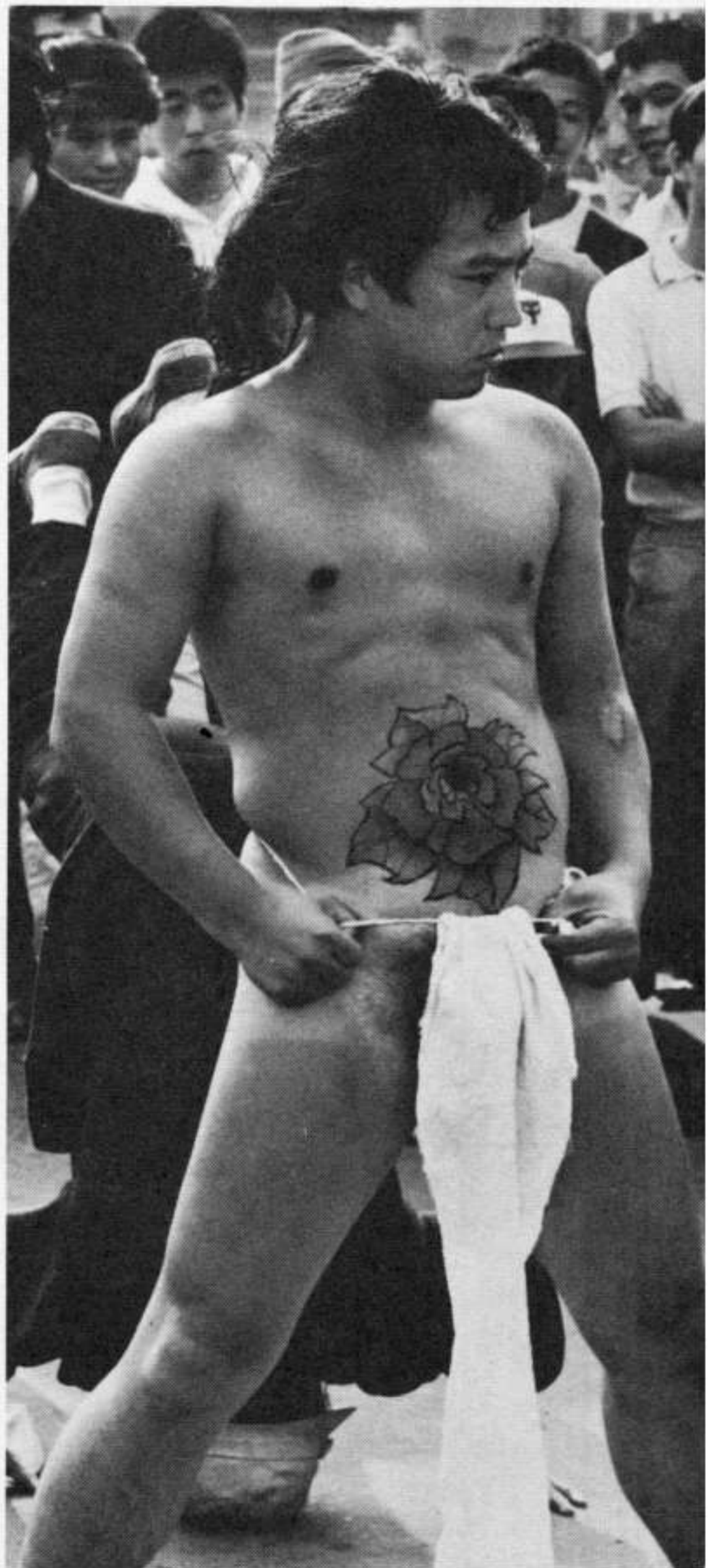
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"A ten-year-old boy is taught by his irresponsible parents to make money for them by running into moving cars so that they can demand money from the innocent, victimized drivers. They travel all over Japan; they are caught. That is the story of Nagisa Oshima's new picture. That is all there is, but in it he has created a film of such depth and texture that this story, which really happened a few years ago in Japan, grows into an extraordinary experience, one in which the plight of the child becomes the plight of us all.

That Oshima can do this, particularly given the nature of his material, that much-used fable of the mistreated child, indicates his resources as a director. Rather than following its, and our, inclinations, however, Oshima continually and purposely works against the grain, refusing himself any emotional, let alone sentimental, gestures. The little boy is matter-of-fact, the way little boys are; his incredible situation is accepted in the way that children accept enormities. Further, Oshima refuses to avail himself of the symmetry which fables, as such, seem to demand. The form, rather, is organic, that demanded by character rather than plot. Open-ended sequences, visual non-sequiturs, and lapses in continuity – all carefully judged – create the air of believability which this film so exudes.

For a film to be this believable it must also be this alive. From the very beginning – a completely unsentimental scene of the boy playing hide-and-seek with himself – the sense of reality is brilliantly presented. This is one of the rare films where you forget the



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"Boy"

camera, forget the director, forget the actors – and believe what you see. It is Oshima's finest film to date."

–Donald Richie

"BOY is based on an incident which actually took place in Japan in 1966. It made the headlines in magazines and newspapers for one week, and then was completely forgotten. This is probably due to the small scale of the crime and the peculiar fact that the couple forced their own child to participate.

However, this incident was extremely shocking to me. I felt it was a subject I should write about. I thought I should have been able to create such a story in my own imagination, but the facts carry the situation further than anything I could have ever imagined.

I was reading the clippings I had collected when Fumio Watanabe rushed into my office and announced that he had a great idea for a new film – he had been moved by the same story. To my great surprise, when I called Tsutomu Tamura, my usually stubborn collaborator, to explain the idea, he agreed without a single objection. The three of us spent the following week in a series of long, deep discussions.

Five days after this, Tamura came to me with the completed scenario saying, "Watanabe has been a great help. He was right beside my desk the whole time." Thus the scenario was prepared. It was published in a film magazine, and received a special prize from the Scenario Writers' Association, but it wasn't until two years later that we were able to start the shooting.

Now that the film is completed, though I tried to take as objective a view as possible of the "boy," his "little brother," their "mother," and "father," they still haunt me and follow me about. They have become a sort of obsession.

Though I have taken an objective view, I have also made the film as a prayer, as is the boy's tear in the final scene, for all human beings who find it necessary to live in a like manner. In a sense, the group in BOY have come to represent for me the holy family."

–Nagisa Oshima

Original Japanese Title: SHONEN 97 minutes.
Produced by Masayuki Nakajima, Takuji Yamaguchi (Sozsha). Distributed by Art Theatre Guild. Screenplay by Tsutomu Tamura. Photographed in 'scope, colour and black and white by Yasuhiro Yoshioka, Seizo Sengen. Art Direction by Jusho Toda. Edited by Sueko Shiraishi. Music by Hikaru Hayashi.
With: Fumio Watanabe (father), Akiko Koyama (mother), Tetsuo Abe (boy), Tsuyoshi Kinoshita (little brother)

