



NAKAHIRA Ko (YANG Shuxi) 中平康 (楊樹希) (1926–1978)

Director

Nakahira was born in Tokyo. His father was the well known western-style painter Takahashi Toranosuke and his mother was a violin teacher. After studying at a Roman Catholic secondary school ran by foreigners, Nakahira entered Tokyo University to study fine arts in 1948. He withdrew from the course half way through because he enrolled in the Ofuna Studio of the Shochiku Co Ltd to become an assistant director. There he worked with directors such as Kinoshita Keisuke, Kurosawa Akira and Shibuya Minori. In 1954, when Nikkatsu Corporation resumed production and began recruiting talents, Nakahira joined the studio along with his senior, Kawashima Yuzo and fellow assistant director, Imamura Shohei. In 1956, Nakahira directed *The Boy They Stared at* as an assistant director. However, *Fruit of Madness*, a 'taiyozoku' (sun tribe) work that he made a little later, was first released, and he was regarded as a 'genius director' since then. An adaptation of Ishihara Shintaro's novel of the same name, this classic was completed in only 17 days. While the film was severely attacked for its graphic depiction of sex and violence, its acute sense and fresh style won him the hearts of young audience. Some of Nakahira's representative works for Nikkatsu included *The Making of a Talented Woman* (1959), *He and I* (1961), *Trampled Innocence* (1963), *Only on Mondays* (1964), *The Hunter's Diary* (1964), *Plants from the Dunes* (1964) and *The Swarthy Gambling Master* (1965).

After the mid-1960s, Nakahira's position at Nikkatsu began to be precarious. Recommended by Chua Lam, who was a representative of Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Ltd in Japan, he came to work in Hong Kong. Adopting the Chinese pseudonym Yang Shuxi, he made *Interpol* (1967), *Trapeze Girl* (1967), *Summer Heat* (1968) and *Diary of a Lady-Killer* (1969). Apart from *Trapeze Girl*, the other three were adaptations of his earlier productions—*Outlaw Without a Country* (1965), *Fruit of Madness* and *The Hunter's Diary*. Nakahira's Japanese works, such as *Fruit of Madness*, *Only on Mondays*, *The Hunter's Diary* and *Plants from the Dune*, were screened in Hong Kong and they won unanimous praise from a new generation of Hong Kong film critics. He had the most incisive style among the Japanese directors who worked at Shaws at the time. Nakahira returned to Japan and continued to film after his contract with Shaws expired. His last film was *Variations* (1976).