

And Protect, Protected (Tentative Title)

Japan

KAWASE Naomi



Genre: Documentary
Format: 16mm (35mm blow up)
Estimated Running Time: 90 min.

Budget:
US\$500,000
(HK\$3,880,000)

Producers:
NAITO Yuko

Writing Credits:
KAWASE Naomi

Production Company:
Kumie Inc.

HAF Goals:
Pre-sales

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INTRODUCTION

The YOSHIMURA Obstetric Clinic "House of Birth" is surrounded by trees, like the grove of a village shrine protected by the gods. In the inner garden of an old folks' dwelling, pregnant women split firewood, saw wood, and polish the wooden floor, glowing with the warmth of the Edo period. This is the house that Doctor YOSHIMURA Tadashi has built. He has protected pregnant women, who risk their lives to have a baby for almost half a century. For close to fifty years, all alone, he has protected that sacred moment when a woman becomes a "real woman", that happens any time of the day or night.

SYNOPSIS

Dr. YOSHIMURA started his clinic in 1961, and since then he has delivered more than 20,000 babies using natural birth with no medical intervention. In the 60's, during the Japanese economic boom, delivery in hospitals became popular instead of delivery by midwives at home and, at that time, even Dr. YOSHIMURA wanted to manage childbirth with cutting-edge medical devices, but he soon realized these devices could not produce a better quality delivery, and so instead he struggled to seek the truth at the heart of childbirth. He found that a life itself is very beautiful when it is delivered naturally with no assistance other than the force of the universe. He always takes snapshots of a mother and a child immediately after a natural birth, capturing the awe-inspiring expressions on their faces. Women who have various complications that make it difficult for them to deliver naturally come from all over Japan hoping he will help them have a natural childbirth. Meanwhile, the mass media and people in the field of obstetrics both inside and outside of Japan have become fascinated by his philosophy and are paying more and more attention to his work.

Childbirth is the last natural procedure left to humans, and the truth is here. Through making the film *Tarachime-birth/mother*, KAWASE Naomi found that life is not a story of one single life, but is like a chain of lives, unbroken since ancient times. She wants to find what Dr. YOSHIMURA aims to do, how the unbreakable bonds between mother and child are the real beginning of the child's connection to the cosmos, by focusing for about a year on a woman who is going to give birth at his "House of Birth", believing that there is something here that people today need to remember, and also believing that this is the solution to save the world.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Conceiving, giving birth and bringing up a life are essential parts of every human life. However, it appears to be collapsing. Why? Have we forgotten the importance of fulfilling our roles as humans? Modern society is working hard to make a system in which people don't need to know about such things. Thinking about birth is also an opportunity to think about the meaning of wealth. Safety, relief, simplicity, speed: these are the eye-catching words that many advertisements like to use, as if they are treasures that everyone wants. Yet humans do not get real joy without the power of their own experiences,

which often are not safe, simple or fast.

I was born in 1969, and I thought that it was natural for a baby to be born in a hospital, then put in an incubator immediately afterwards. The baby drinks milk from a baby bottle. The mother of a newborn baby sleeps alone in the hospital bed, holds her baby in her arms and thanks the doctor when she leaves the hospital. This has become the reality of childbirth, performed routinely, and it passes for normal. Now I would like to show such women who give birth on a routine basis at a hospital what is the real reality of "conceiving a life." It is the process in which a woman becomes a "real woman." It is the moment you truly know the magnificence of life. It is also a process in which you risk your own life. I believe the tears shed at such a moment can change the world.

DIRECTOR

KAWASE Naomi was born in 1969 and graduated from the Osaka School of Photography (currently the School of Visual Arts Osaka) in 1989 and has been making films on 16mm and 8mm since her college days. Her work attracted attention both domestically and abroad and almost all of them have been selected for the Hong Kong International Film Festival ever since her early documentary *Embracing*, was screened there in 1997.

In 1997, KAWASE became the youngest winner of the Camera d'Or in the history of Cannes Film Festival for her first feature *Suzaku*. In 2000, she won both the FIPRESCI Prize and the CICAIE Prize at the Locarno International Film Festival for her film *Hotaru*. Since then, KAWASE's work has been featured in many retrospectives across Europe.

KAWASE is highly recognized for her accomplishments in documentary filmmaking. Her recent works include *KyaKaRaBaA*, a co-production with the French TV station Arte, and *Tarachime-birth/mother*, a documentary that charts her process of giving birth. The film has picked up numerous awards at international film festivals such as Locarno, Taiwan, Copenhagen and Yamagata.

In 2007, KAWASE won the Grand Prix of the Cannes Film Festival for *The Mourning Forest*. To welcome the 1300th anniversary of her hometown, Nara, the ancient capital of Japan, KAWASE is now devoted to organizing the Nara International Film Festival.

PRODUCER

NAITO Yuko was born in 1962. She worked in film distribution and promotion before taking part in establishing KAWASE Naomi's film production company in 1997. NAITO produced a number of KAWASE's recent films including *KyaKaRaBaA* (2001), *Letter From a Yellow Cherry Blossom* (2002), *Tarachime-birth/mother* and *Koma*, which is one of the works in the omnibus *Jeonju Digital Project 2009*.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

In 1997, KAWASE Naomi set up her production company Sent Inc, which was renamed Kumie Inc. in 2003. The company focuses on film production, distribution, video production and publication. Since its establishment, the company has produced *Embracing*, *Katatsumori*, *Manguekyo* and *Letter From a Yellow Cherry Blossom*, and has co-produced *KyaKaRaBaA* and *Tarachime-birth/mother* with La Sept Arte in France. In 2007, the company produced and distributed KAWASE's Grand Prix-winning film *The Mourning Forest*, a Japan-France co-production. The company is currently involved in the planning and operation of the Nara International Film Festival, which is to be launched in 2010.