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## Wisconsin Film Festival: Toyoda takes audience on carousel ride

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A pair of old-school slide projectors powered the screening of 'Nazuna' at the UW Cinematheque Saturday night at the Wisconsin Film Festival. - Rob Thomas/The Capital Times

Last week, a few members of the Wisconsin Film Festival crew went down to Chicago to get some rented high-definition video projection equipment to use in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Union Theater.

I'm guessing they didn't have to go that far to find the twin slide projectors that powered Saturday night's screening of "Nazuna" at the UW Cinematheque. Any junior high AV Club storage room would suffice.

New York artist Hitoshi Toyoda presented what had to be one of the oddest programs in the 11 years the festival has existed, a completely silent, 90-minute, 580-picture slide show of his photographs. Before the lights went down, Toyoda told the crowd that he liked the slide-show format because of its impermanence; a photo comes up on screen and you have a few seconds to digest it. Then the carousel turns and it's gone forever.

Calling them his "photo diaries," the photos ranged from beautifully composed shots that should be hung in a museum, to tossed-off candid shots of mundane things (his parents having dinner, a brick of tofu thawing in a pan of water) that most people would delete off their Flickr site.

The show began with shots Toyoda had taken on and after Sept. 11. Iconic images of burning towers gave way to street images of tattered fliers and worried New Yorkers. But the bulk of the series came from a trip Toyoda took home to Japan, capturing images of a remote Buddhist monastery where the head monk had just died in a freak accident, or a middle-aged security guard who still pursues dreams of being a prize fighter.

The photos were intriguing, but what really made "Nazuna" memorable was the presentation. Toyoda stood back by the slide projectors, feeding the carousel shot by shot, painstakingly fiddling to get every shot in focus. The rhythmic click of the turning carousel and the whir of the projector's cooling fan had an almost meditative effect after a while, and the sounds conjured up old memories of nature slide shows shown in elementary science class, or your grandpa showing you photos of his trip to the old country.

"Nazuna" was as much performance art as film; Toyoda was literally showing us his work, photo by photo. It just wouldn't have been the same as a digital slide show or in a coffee-table photo book. Toyoda showed us some deeply personal photos about his family and his life. And then, when it was over, he packed up his Kodak carousel slides and took them with him.