

THE MASTER OF THE MACBRE; JUNJI ITO



# “I’M A HORROR MANIAC THAT PEFERS TO STAY AT HOME”.

— JUNJI ITO

Acclaimed manga artist Junji Ito has carved out a place for himself in the hearts of horror fans both at home and abroad, based not only on the merits of his manga but also because his works, such as “Uzumaki” and “Tomie,” have inspired live-action films and anime (Junji Ito Collection) and have been translated into English as well as other languages.

As we reported earlier this year, Junji Ito is now celebrating 30 years since he made his debut with his first-ever published collection of illustrations in a handsome volume called *Igyō Sekai* (Grotesque World).

We had the fortunate opportunity to interview Junji Ito and his editor-in-charge, Makiko Hara, at the offices of Asahi Shimbun Publications which published the art book. When I was young I took an interest in the horror

manga of Kazuo Umezu and horror movies from all over the world, and that interest stayed with me as I grew. The things I’m familiar with from my youth help me find my footing now that I’m grown. Horror tends to stimulate an interest in the extremes of existence, like curiosity, fear, and the grotesque. I think that’s why I’ve been interested in it for so long. Another part is how, when it incorporates something fantastical like supernatural phenomena, it allows for the expression of really unique ideas. That element of it really helps nurture the creative impulse. I think *Uzumaki* is the most complete demonstration of my artistic ability and imagination. The contrast of the black and white art really leaves a vivid impression, and I wonder if that’s what makes other creators curious about trying to adapt it. A few months before the 1994 adaptation of *Frankenstein* by

Kenneth Branagh debuted in Japanese theaters, Asahi Sonorama’s editorial department caught wind of it and proposed a manga adaptation to be published in time for the premiere. I was only familiar with the character from the old Universal movies, and after reading the original novel, I was shocked by the serious themes it had, and decided I wanted my adaptation to reflect the original work.

That said, there are a few differences. In the novel, Victor Frankenstein is asked by the monster to create a companion for him, but he stops partway through the process (even though he finds the perfect body parts to create her form, in the story!). Since I wasn’t satisfied with that, I did what I thought most horror fans would want, and had the doctor finish work on the companion. And when I saw Kenneth Branagh’s movie adaptation after I