



MAKING ANIMATION

INDEPENDENT VOICES FROM ASIA SYMPOSIUM 2025

9th September 2025, LASALLE College of the Arts

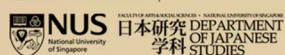
Keynote Speaker: Prof Koji Yamamura
Tokyo University of the Arts

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Convened by
Dr Gan Shevo Hui, LASALLE

Organised by



With support from

Mitsui NUS
Japanese Studies
in Southeast Asia
Endowment Fund

This symposium is jointly organised by LASALLE College of the Arts and the NUS Department of Japanese Studies, with support from the Mitsui NUS Japanese Studies in Southeast Asia Endowment Fund.

Making Animation 2025 looks to independent animation for inspiration in expression, craft, and storytelling that stay close to observation, imagination, and the touch of the hand. In today's fast-moving visual culture where cinema, streaming, and social media increasingly converge, the symposium asks what keeps stories meaningful, and which skills and sensibilities matter as habits and technologies change. These questions guide a focus on solo and small-team practices valued for self-expression, craft and reflective storytelling. Keynote speaker Yamamura Koji treats animation as giving shape to “invisible movements of light beyond reality,” favouring imagination and “thinking with the hands” over copying and algorithmic styling.

The morning frames the discussion. Gan Sheuo Hui (LASALLE) examines how anime-styled filters and AI shorts drive trend-led mimicry and asks where replication ends and expression begins. Lim Beng Choo (NUS) considers post-COVID experiments in *noh* and *kabuki* with VR and AI, keeping performers and embodied practice central. Akiho-Toyoda Noriko (Niigata University of Health and Welfare) presents an occupational therapy collaboration that uses animation to clarify the field's holistic approach and foreground storytelling as care. Usui Michiko (Kanto Gakuin University) revisits *Utsushi-e*, a magic-lantern theatre, to show how voice, music and timing turn technique into story.

The afternoon turns to practice. Yamamura Koji deepens his theme of “invisible movements of light,” from hand-drawn films to VR experiments, reflecting on materiality, timing and image-making beyond replication (Japanese with consecutive interpretation). Lefty Julian (Malaysia), a documentary comics creator, shares *Making George Town*, rooted in community stories and cultural memory. NOvia Shin (Malaysia), a multidisciplinary creator, presents *Let the Map Speak*, mapping overlooked everyday details through layered media and quiet storytelling (Mandarin with consecutive interpretation).

Together these voices show how independent practice shapes meaningful animation and connected practices today.

Convened by

Dr Gan Sheuo Hui

Puttnam School of Film & Animation, Faculty of Fine Arts, Media & Creative Industries, LASALLE College of the Arts

Singapore Standard Time	Tuesday 9 September 2025	Venue
10:30 - 11:00	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION DR GAN SHEUO HUI LASALLE College of the Arts ASSOC. PROF LIM BENG CHOO Head, Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore	F202
11:00 - 12:00	SESSION 1: RESEARCH SHARING Moderated by DR DU LIN NUS	F202
11:00	Anime-Styled Filters in Everyday Media: Replication vs Expression DR GAN SHEUO HUI LASALLE	
11:10	Coupling Noh and Animation the VR Way ASSOC PROF LIM BENG CHOO NUS	
11:20	From Utsushi-e to Japanese Anime: Contemporary Reinterpretations of Traditional Japanese Storytelling through Utsushi-e PROF USUI MICHIKO Kanto Gakuin University	
11:30	Beyond the Screen: Animating Social Purpose in an Interdisciplinary Collaboration ASSOC PROF AKIHO-TOYODA NORIKO Niigata University of Health and Welfare	
11:40	Q&A	
12:00	Lunch	
13:00 - 14:30	SESSION 2: KEYNOTE SPEECH BY YAMAMURA KOJI Moderated by DR GAN SHEUO HUI LASALLE Consecutive interpretation by TOMOKO SHIGA	F202
13:00	Giving Shape to Invisible Light PROF YAMAMURA KOJI Tokyo University of the Arts	
14:15	Q&A	
14:30	Break	
15:00 - 16:00	SESSION 3: INVITED ARTIST TALK BY LEFTY JULIAN Moderated by CHRIS SHAW LASALLE	F202
15:00	Documenting Our Fading Culture Through Art 以圖文紀錄消失中的文化 LEFTY JULIAN	
15:45	Q&A	

16:00 - 17:00	SESSION 4: INVITED ARTIST TALK BY NOVIA SHIN Moderated by YUEN SHU MIN NUS Consecutive interpretation by CHEN ZIJIA, LIN TIAN & QU LEMENG NUS	F202
16:00	Let the Map Speak: Fieldwork, Paper Layers & Framing a Moment 这个故事生锈了！副：让地图会说话：田野、纸层与定格的实践 NOVIA SHIN	
16:45	Q&A	
17:00	END OF SYMPOSIUM	

Anime-Styled Filters in Everyday Media: Replication vs Expression

GAN Sheuo Hui

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This talk presents observations on how anime-style filters circulate in everyday media. These filters, be it Ghibli-style portraits, anime face effects and AI caricature apps, let users copy a familiar look, but they are also part of a wider assemblage of digital expression. Some uses simply reproduce an “anime look,” turning selfies or street corners into stylised scenes. Others use the filters as tools for expression, layering humor, mood or commentary.

Cooking videos such as IssaGrill’s anime style reenactments and adjacent AI tools (e.g., SHIRO AI) mix stylisation with anime tropes creating playful clashes between food, character and story. Together, these practices show how anime’s visual grammar moves beyond the screen into small acts of self-storytelling. The talk focuses on the tension between replication and expression and keeps meaning open. Rather than fixing definitions, this presentation explores how people incorporate anime style elements into everyday digital storytelling, navigating between imitation, performance and personal expression.

Gan Sheuo Hui is a lecturer at LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore. Her recent publications include “Motion and Emotion in Anime” in *The Cambridge Companion to Manga and Anime* (2024), “Poetics of Selective Animation: Anime and the Concept of Limited Animation” in *La Qualité du Cinéma d’Animation en Question, Entre Économie et Esthétique: Full Animation vs. Limited Animation?* (2023), “The Sound of Kimetsu no Yaiba Anime: Exploring Soundscapes and Auditory Experiences” in *Global Anime Discourse: Body, Archive, and Transnationalism* (2022). She curated the exhibition *A World is Born: Emerging Arts and Designs in 1980s Japanese Animation* at DECK Singapore (2018). She is part of the development team for the UAS Common Curriculum, IN-depth module.

Coupling Noh and Animation the VR Way

LIM Beng Choo

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Since the COVID-19 pandemic, practitioners of traditional Japanese theatre such as noh and kabuki have been actively engaging with digital and computational technologies in their productions. Such engagement has significantly impacted audience's perception of the traditional theatrical forms, creating both tensions and new possibilities on the stage. One example is the production of a newly created noh play (shinsakunoh) *Ghost in the Shell* in 2020 in Tokyo. While not the first noh play adapted from a famous anime, this play was nevertheless the first noh play that used virtual reality in its production. The integration of VR in this play has, amongst other things, created a different kind of visual effect. While noh is famous for its stylised movements and minimalist stage presentation, the VR elements in these plays both interfere with and enhance these basic features. This presentation discusses some of these features and their significance.

Lim Beng Choo is Associate Professor and Head of Japanese Studies Department at the National University of Singapore. Her early trainings were in traditional Japanese theatre and literature, although her research interests include different fields of Japanese culture, both traditional and contemporary. She is the author of *Another Stage – Kanze Nobumitsu and the Late Muromachi Noh Theatre* (Cornell East Asia series, 2012) and several articles on Japanese theatre performance. She has planned and coordinated the production of video recordings of traditional Japanese performance including noh, kyogen and nihon buyo. She is currently working on two main projects: the relationship between traditional Japanese theatre and digital technologies, as well as karamono (Chinese-themed) noh plays.

From Utsushi-e to Japanese Anime: Contemporary Reinterpretations of Traditional Japanese Storytelling through Utsushi-e

USUI Michiko

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“Utsushi-e” was a Japanese-style magic lantern invented in the early 19th century. It is said that a textile-design painter from Edo, Kameya Kumakichi, created utsushi-e in 1803 by modeling it on imported Western magic lanterns. Utsushi-e was heavily influenced by Western magic lanterns, as seen in the mechanism of how it moves images, for example. On the other hand, what sets it apart from its Western counterpart is the way it was developed as a medium of storytelling. Utsushi-e’s moving images were accompanied by music and a storyteller’s narration. The materials were often taken from traditional katari-mono storytelling, as exemplified in such genres as religious ballads or war tales accompanied by biwa or shamisen, the joruri dramatic narratives of bunraku theater, and kodan, storytelling entertainment based on popular martial legends. The presentation will explore the characteristics of utsushi-e as a medium of narration or storytelling, and the similarities between utsushi-e and Japanese anime.

Usui Michiko is Professor in the College of Intercultural Studies at Kanto Gakuin University. Her essays on “utsushi-e” are “What is “Utsushi-e”? : a study of its narrative expression”(2008) and “Utsushi-e and its audience”(2011).

Beyond the Screen: Animating Social Purpose in an Interdisciplinary Collaboration

AKIHO-TOYODA Noriko

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This talk will present a case study of a unique interdisciplinary collaboration that bridged the worlds of healthcare and animation. Our four-minute animated film was created not only for entertainment, but as a powerful tool to address the widespread unfamiliarity with occupational therapy (OT)—a discipline often confused with physical therapy.

I will discuss the creative process behind illustrating OT's holistic approach, moving beyond the clinic to show how a professional might assess a patient's entire environment, for their ADL or activities of daily life, in both mental and physical health.

This project was a deep dive into the question of meaningful storytelling within a rapidly evolving media landscape. I will share how this collaboration enriched both sets of students: the OT students gained a mastery of their subject by teaching animators the nuances of their holistic approach, while the animation students discovered how their craft could go beyond traditional festival circuits to serve a vital social purpose. The film's warm reception at NIAFF2025 and its success in significantly increasing our university's OT student enrollment highlight animation's enduring power as a platform for independent voices and community engagement. This presentation will demonstrate how a purpose-driven, interdisciplinary approach can thrive in today's media landscape and fundamentally enrich both creative and educational practice.

Noriko Akiho-Toyoda is an Associate Professor at Niigata University of Health and Welfare, specialising in English and global communication for medical students, and lectures at Kaishi Professional University's Anime & Manga Department. A key member of the Niigata International Animation Film Festival, she authored *Hatsune Miku de Nihongo* and produces short animated films for medical education. Born in Tokyo and based in London for 15 years, her career spans ICT consultancy, UN advisory work, conference interpretation and supporting immigrant children. With a BA in Japanese Historical Linguistics, an MA in Applied Linguistics, and doctoral studies at UNICAF, her research focuses on second language acquisition, programming in language education, and animation in medical teaching.

Session Moderator

DU Lin

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Lin Du is currently an Assistant Professor jointly appointed in the Departments of Chinese Studies and Japanese Studies at the National University of Singapore. She completed her PhD at the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at UCLA, where her dissertation, “Chinese Photojournalism 1937–1952: Materiality and the Institutionalization of Culture via a Computer Vision Approach”, utilised advanced computer vision techniques to explore wartime visual media culture. Lin holds an MA from the Regional Studies East Asia Program at Harvard University and a BA in Chinese Language and Literature from Peking University. Her pioneering work in machine learning has been published in the *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* (JOCCH), and her contributions to humanities research are forthcoming in the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas and Asia Pacific Perspectives*.

Giving Shape to Invisible Light

YAMAMURA Koji

Yamamura Koji was born in Japan in 1964. His film *Mt. Head* (2002) won six Grand Prix, was nominated for an Oscar for Best Animated Short, and was selected for Annecy Festival's '100 Films for a Century of Animation'.

Yamamura's filmography, including *Franz Kafka's A Country Doctor* (2007) and *Dozens of Norths* (2021), has received more than 155 awards, including 21 Grand Prix for his directorial work. His most recent film *Extremely Short* (2024) was officially selected for Directors' Fortnight at Cannes Film Festival.

Yamamura is also an active picture book author with 100 titles published, including *Viva Vegetables!*, which has over 500,000 copies published, and *Parade*. He was awarded the Kawakita Prize and the Art Encouragement Prize in Japan, and received the Medal with Purple Ribbon in 2019.

A member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, he is visiting professor at Tokyo Zokei University, China Academy of Art and Aichi University of the Arts, and has been a professor at Tokyo University of the Arts since 2008.

Documenting Our Fading Culture Through Art 以圖文紀錄消失中的文化

Lefty Julian

Lefty Julian has more than 30 years of experience in the comics industry. His *Major Zombie* comic series has won the Best Series and the Best Independent Comics at PeKOMIK Malaysia Awards.

Born and bred in the island of Penang, Lefty has been working in various places between 1991 and 2020, including Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, USA and Shanghai. He was the editor-in-chief of Left Pocket Creatives (Shanghai) and The One Academy Penang's part-time lecturer and course planner.

Lefty has since returned to Penang, working in various heritage projects including the *Marking George Town* steel rod sculpture series, the *Pulau Tikus Community Stories* bus stop graphic art series, and the *Butterworth Heritage Interpretation* panel series. His main passion is in documentary comics. Lefty is also researching on the subject of the Malaysian multiracial community.

Session Moderator

Chris Shaw

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Chris SHAW is the Head of Puttnam School of Film & Animation at LASALLE College of the Arts. He started his animation career in 1987 with Walt Disney Animation on the film 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit'. Chris learned his craft on the job and experienced many different aspects of the animated film process across a variety of departments. In 1989, he started work in Steven Spielberg's 'American Tail II' in the Animation Department.

After contributing to several animated features, he continued his career as a freelance animator on a variety of TV commercials and clients including BBC News, Paul McCartney, IBM, Reuters News Agency, Lego, Halls, Rice Krispies, Ribena, Barclays Bank and MTV.

In 1996, he was invited to Singapore to co-establish a Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Computer Animation at Singapore Polytechnic. He has since been actively involved in a wide range of productions and educational incentives including Co-Chair of the Excellence in Education and Training Convention 2005, external moderation, organising and judging Singapore's National Software Competition and the Asian Festival of Children's Content (AFCC). In 2016, Chris was appointed the Head of the Puttnam School of Film & Animation which incorporates Film, Broadcast Media and Animation Programmes.

Chris is currently enrolled on the PhD programme at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, where his research is focused on the pedagogical development of imaginative thinking in animation education.

Let the Map Speak: Fieldwork, Paper Layers & Framing a Moment
这个故事生锈了！副：让地图会说话：田野、纸层与定格的实践

NOvia Shin

NOvia Shin is an illustrator based in Kuala Lumpur, NOvia Shin specializes in richly detailed illustrations and animations deeply rooted in community narratives and daily life experiences. Her notable works, such as the illustrated book *Pasar Karat*, the animation *The Secret Life of Durian Trees* are animated explorations sparked by everyday curiosity, reflecting social and environmental themes through engaging visual storytelling.

Session Moderator

YUEN Shu Min

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Yuen Shu Min is a Lecturer at the NUS Department of Japanese Studies. She is also Director of the Master of Arts (Coursework) in Japanese Visual Cultures program at NUS. Her academic expertise includes contemporary Japanese society, gender and sexuality studies, and popular culture in Japan and Korea. Shu Min has contributed articles to various academic journals, including *New Voices in Japanese Studies*, *Asian Anthropology*, and *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*.

Symposium credits

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Dr Gan Sheuo Hui

Advisors:

Associate Professor Lim Beng Choo, Head, Department of Japanese Studies, NUS
Chris Shaw, Head, Puttnam School of Film & Animation, LASALLE

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