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27—28
June 2020

International Digital Conference
LiveStreaming
On the Museum's YouTube Channel

DESIRED IDENTITIES
New Technology-based Metamorphosis in Japan

Organizers
Elena Giannoulis
Agnès Giard
Berthold Frommann

Desired Identities
New Technology-based Metamorphosis in Japan

Digital International Conference organized as a **Live Streaming Event**, on the YouTube channel
of musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, by the ERC-Funded Research Project
"Emotional Machines: The Technological Transformation of Intimacy in Japan" (EMTECH) in cooperation
with the Department of Research and Higher Education of the musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac

SATURDAY: 12:00–17:20 CEST | June 27, 2020
Live on YouTube: https://tinyurl.com/ydgwtg2k

12:00-12:10 | **Philippe CHARLIER**
Director of the Department of Research and Higher Education of musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, France
Welcome Speech – "How to Make Love with a Ghost?"

12:10–12:20 | **Liudmila BREDIKHINA & Agnès GIARD**
Can't Stop "Me" Anymore (short film, 2020)

12:20–12:30 | **Superflux (Anab JAIN & Jon ARDERN)**
Trigger Warning (short film, 2018)

12:30–13:10 | **Dominique BOULLIER - Keynote**
Professor, Sciences Po, CEE, France
Extension of the Domain of Fake

13:10–13:30 | **Chat Meeting** (20 mn) - https://tinyurl.com/y7pbql33

13:30–14:00 | Lunch Break (30 mn)

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14:00–14:30 | **Akihiko SHIRAI**
Director of GREE VR Studio Lab, Japan
Research and Development for Avatar-Driven Virtual Society in VR4.0 Era

14:30–15:00 | **Patrick W. GALBRAITH**
Lecturer, Senshū University, Japan
Character, Culture, Platform: Locating Emotional Technology in Contemporary Japan

15:00–15:20 | **Chat Meeting** (20 mn) - https://tinyurl.com/yckgjj37

15:20–16:00 | Coffee Break (40 mn)

ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ PANEL: *Avatars and Self-Presentation* ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ

16:00–16:30 | **Alain DELLA NEGRA & Kaori KINOSHITA**
Spotting "Tsuma" (short film, 2020)

16:30–17:00 | **Agnès GIARD**
Postdoctoral Researcher, Freie Universität Berlin, EMTECH, Germany
Becoming an Avatar in a Japanese Love Game: Female Identity and Desired Alienation

17:00–17:20 | **Chat Meeting** (20 mn) - https://tinyurl.com/ydaokl8x

SUNDAY: 12:00–17:20 CEST | June 28, 2020
Live on YouTube: https://tinyurl.com/ydgwtg2

°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°° PANEL: *Kyara-ka and Embodiment* °°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°

12:00–12:30 | **Shunsuke NOZAWA**
Assistant Professor, Hokkaido University, Japan
The Seiyūesque*: the Layering of Agency and the Labor of Characterization*

12:30–13:00 | **Debra J. OCCHI**
Professor, Miyazaki International College, Japan
Kyara-ka *Characterizations, Technologies, and Tensions of Embodiment for Local* Tokusatsu *Action Heroes in Miyazaki's* Himukaizer *Media Mix*

13:00–13:20 | **Chat Meeting** (20 mn) - https://tinyurl.com/ycyfcg26

13:20–14:00 | Lunch Break (40 mn)

°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°° PANEL: *VirtualTubers and Visual Transgendering* °°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°

14:00–14:30 | **Edmond ERNEST DIT ALBAN**
Course Lecturer, McGill University, Canada
Kyara-ka *as a Queering Process? From Queer Animation to Online VTubers Personas*

14:30–14:45 | **Lou RAMBERT PREISS**
Les Zumains / DOLLER (short film, 2017)

14:45–15:15 | **HOLOGRAPHIC**
VTubers, graduates from Tōkyō University & Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences (IAMAS), Japan
The Babiniku *Phenomenon in Japan: when Men Metamorphose into* Bishōjo *Characters*

15:15–15:35 | **Chat Meeting** (20 mn) - https://tinyurl.com/y7wydjj5

15:35–16:00 | Coffee Break (25 mn)

°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°° PANEL: *Hatsune Miku and Vocaloid Metamorphoses* °°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°

16:00–16:30 | **Rafal ZABOROWSKI**
Lecturer, King's College London, United Kingdom
Virtually Authentic: Co-creating Hatsune Miku

16:30–17:00 | **Cody POULTON**
Professor, University of Victoria, Canada
Performative Metamorphoses: Hatsune Miku and 3.5 Dimension Culture

17:00–17:20 | **Chat Meeting** (20 mn) - https://tinyurl.com/ydfle87z

Conference Organized by:
Elena Giannoulis
Agnès Giard
Berthold Frommann

Freie Universität Berlin

European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY
JACQUES CHIRAC

12:00-12:15 | **Philippe CHARLIER**
(Director of Department of Research and Higher Education of musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris, France)
Welcome Speech - "How to Make Love with a Ghost?"

12:10–12:20 | *Can't Stop "Me" Anymore* **(short film)**
Liudmila BREDIKHINA & Agnès GIARD
Switzerland, 10', 2020.
A synthetic parade of people (and even robots) who changed into characters – made from videos on YouTube and Twitter – reflecting the aspirations and creativity of those involved in the social networks.

12:20–12:30 | *Trigger Warning* **(short film)**
Superflux (Anab JAIN & Jon ARDERN)
United Kingdom, 7:43', 2018.
Trigger Warning *is the fast-paced journey through an imaginary city full of "memes" (internet phenome- nons), a fragmented reality full of fictional characters behind masks and avatars. The algorithmically mediated networks which amplify opinions, manipulate biases and shape beliefs have caused wide- spread civic unrest. People emerge from behind memes and screens to bear arms for their beliefs.*

© Superflux

°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°° Keynote°°

12:30–13:10 | **Dominique BOULLIER**
(Professor, Sciences Po, CEE, Paris, France)
Extension of the Domain of Fake
Transforming oneself into a character, the *kyara-ka* phenomenon, publicly visible and highly advertised, should not be considered as an extreme experience for teenagers since it is fueled by a more general trend: "Fakeism" is everywhere and is becoming a key factor for economic and cultural life. It now becomes a learning process that is shared by individuals as well as large economic or institutional agents, brands, and consumers together, traders and investors, politicians and voters, media and audience, since everybody has to become media. Everyone learns how to trigger attention by sending the right signals, how to cheat on identities, how to seduce or to convince by manipulating pictures and hashtags, data and concepts, how to fool people as much as "deep fake" are able to do it in digital systems. The attention shock created by the "weird" behavior of people online or on-site is enough to deliver a bonus to the most original and surprising signal, as it has been demonstrated by "fake news". All scoring systems are rewarding the most "engaging" messages. When face recognition systems are supposed to become standard even in public places, the only reasonable behavior in order to protect oneself against this general surveillance policy is to learn how to cheat and fool the algorithm. Make-up, tattoos, jewels, hair design, umbrellas, all that is part of *kyara-ka* will be a critical resource as well as a field of controversy for the implementation of these policies.

13:10–13:30 | **Chat Meeting 1** - https://tinyurl.com/y7pbql33

13:30–14:00 | Lunch Break (30 mn) °°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°

14:00–14:30 | **Akihiko SHIRAI**
(Director of GREE VR Studio Lab, Tōkyō, Japan)
Research and Development for Avatar-Driven Virtual Society in VR4.0 Era
This talk will present recent R&D experiences and state of the art of social VR platforms in Japan that have been motivated by VTubers and VRChat since 2018.

Wright Flyer Live Entertainment (WFLE) and GREE VR Studio Laboratory is working for R&D and R2D (Research and Development) in the VTuber industry, which is real-time live entertainment by animated character and social broadcasting platform "REALITY". The past VR history and XR entertainment can be explained as VR3.0 with some reincarnation. Virtual Beings and VRSNS will bring us a singularity of human beings.

"Virtual Voice Incarnation" (*Tensei Koe-uranai*) https://vr.gree.net/lab/vc/ is an experimental character-driven voice changer service. An exaggerated facial detection and expression system is developed with deep learning for professional VTubers' facial expressions and manga style effects.

Akihiko Shirai © GREE VR Studio Lab.

The lab is also working to organize VRSionUp events, which are hybrid workshops in both physical locations and VR for development opportunities for young talent. As a presence of research, Director Akihiko SHIRAI (Ph.D in Engineering, Tokyo Tech) performed dances and games by his avatar play in ACM SIGGRAPH Real-Time Live! with VTuber actors who linked by remote haptics between Japan and Australia simultaneously. The session is aimed at various audiences with an entertainment sense.

14:30–15:00 | **Patrick W. GALBRAITH**
(Lecturer, Senshū University, Tōkyō, Japan)
Character, Culture, Platform: Locating Emotional Technology in Contemporary Japan
In the recent television anime *Beatless* (2018), a humanoid robot is described as engaged in "analog hacking." Appearing as a beautiful woman, the robot "hacks" human emotions and responses to move them to action, if not also to form relationships. We later see the same humanoid robot this to the young male protagonist. Recognizing this for what it is, the young male protagonist realizes that it nonetheless works; he responds to the humanoid robot, or rather to "her," as she performs as his big sister and drastically alters the intimacy between them. Perhaps most fascinating about this key scene – written by Hase Satoshi, a science-fiction novelist and member of the Ethics Committee of the Japanese Society for Artificial Intelligence – is that it is not so far from present-day reality. Cutting-edge robots such as Lovot are praised precisely because of their design to "hack your emotions."

© Diomedéa

Focusing on the case of Gatebox and its "virtual home robot," this paper argues that understanding emotional technology in contemporary Japan requires consideration of character culture and the character as technology and platform.

More specifically, I argue that a number of humans today are fully aware that they are being "analog hacked" and do not resist this, because they desire a relationship with the character or nonhuman other. This desire, now supported by technological innovations, can be traced back to the media and material culture of cartoon fans in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

15:00–15:20 | **Chat Meeting 2** - https://tinyurl.com/yckgjj37

15:20–16:00 | Coffee Break (40 mn) °°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°

PANEL: *Avatars and Self-Presentation*

16:00–16:30 | *Spotting "Tsuma"* (short film)
Alain DELLA NEGRA & Kaori KINOSHITA

France, 28', HD Video, 2020.

In Japan, there is a lack of available women and men have to find ways to fill this void. Some disguise themselves with masks, costumes and wigs. Others sculpt and mold female shapes in silicone. There are also men who program virtual girlfriends like tamagotchi or holograms.

© Della Negra / Kinoshita

16:30–17:00 | **Agnès GIARD**
(Postdoctoral Researcher, Freie Universität Berlin, EMTECH, Germany)
Becoming an Avatar in a Japanese Love Game: Female Identity and Desired Alienation

Wolf Toxic © Arithmetic

Japan is the leading producer of Love Simulation Games for women, called *otome games*, designed to provide "heart-throbbing" (*mune kyun*) excitement to female players. The goal of these games is to develop a romantic relationship between the female protagonist and one selected character. But the most popular of these games – called *soshage* ("social games") – include some extra options such as the possibility to send "sweet looks" to other female players and to communicate with them through avatars. These avatars are crafted to look like cute characters, inducing the player to identify with these doll-like figures.

What is the point with incorporating Social Networking Services (SNS) in a love game? The easiest answer may be, of course, that this social feature of the game mechanism is a great way to hook players and to make them pay, more and more, for fancy accessories. Women are often viewed as vulnerable persons who can easily get addicted to shopping, especially if the game features a ranking system. But such an analysis would fail to acknowledge the players' agency (what is their point of view on avatars?) as well as the hidden logic underlying the combination of SNS and romance (what is the consistency between networking and love?). Trying to understand how players customize their avatars, why they turn themselves into a character and how it helps them go deeper into the simulated love relationship, I would like to build on this case study to propose a research hypothesis concerning the concept of love in contemporary Japan.

17:00–17:20 | **Chat Meeting 3** - https://tinyurl.com/ydaokl8x

PANEL: *Kyara-ka and Embodiment*

12:00–12:30 | **Shunsuke NOZAWA**
(Assistant Professor, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan)
The* Seiyūesque*: The Layering of Agency and the Labor of Characterization

Drawing on the analysis of Japanese voice actors (*seiyū*), I propose the *seiyūesque* as a generalized analytic concept referring to states, processes, and qualities pertaining to the layering of semiotic agency and attachment. Just as in voice acting, where fan attachment and professional skills get generated, negotiated, and evaluated in the gap (espacement) between characters and *seiyū*, the *seiyūesque* applies when the locus of agency and attachment is constitutively displaced or distributed among multiple actants, or when such displacement itself becomes a site of pleasure and labor. After briefly reviewing the structure of layering in voice acting in the Japanese context and the idiom of "person inside" (*naka no hito*) as the conceptual emblem of the *seiyūesque*, I examine such *seiyūesque* topology in several concrete phenomena, including so-called "manual Vocaloids" and related practices of phono-sonic manipulation. Then I look to the modality of characterization in the recent proliferation of "Virtual YouTubers" in the Japanese-language virtual communicative landscape. Rather than seeing them as representing one single social phenomenon, or following mass media narratives that often treat them as media spectacles, I focus on the everyday life of specific communities of VTubers. In particular, I identify *seiyūesque* topology in texts of multi-player gameplay, now an exemplary genre of VTuber culture, by revealing its complex structure of participant frameworks and citational practices. The paper closes with an observation regarding the nature of desire in the contemporary condition of sociotechnical metamorphosis, arguing that the *seiyūesque* topology of agency and attachment found in the practices and phenomena discussed here should lead us to a critique of the compensatory model of desire. Meanwhile, this discussion should also prompt us to examine how *seiyūesque* layering and displacement point to emergent alibis for the division of affective labor in postindustrial society.

12:30–13:00 | **Debra J. OCCHI**
(Professor, Miyazaki International College, Miyazaki, Japan)
Kyara-ka *Characterizations, Technologies, and Tensions of Embodiment for Local* Tokusatsu *Action Heroes in Miyazaki's* Himukaizer *Media Mix*

Himukaizer © Impact Works Corp.

This paper examines the technologies and tensions of *Tenson Koorin Himukaizer*, a Japanese character-driven *tokusatsu* 'special effects action hero' narrative based in Miyazaki. This media mix franchise uses *kyara-ka* effacement of actors into full-body costumed action style characters, reminiscent of the colorful *sūpā sentai* 'superhero team' productions.

Participant observation reveals the resulting tensions between character and actor identities in various contexts of practice. *Himukaizer* is constructed across a wide range of technologies ranging from the handmade to the virtual. While the actors are professional and do most of the production in-house, participation by fans may include not only spectatorship but also learning the stage fighting techniques in action school. Rather than cosplay the characters, some students have appeared in stage shows and in a crowdfunded, filmed episode. The narratives of these local heroes connect to the *Kojiki* book of origin stories and to their locations in Miyazaki; the main heroes are even said to have descended from heaven. Their work in and out of costume, in close proximity and even involvement with fans, provides potential for identity leakage between the costumed narrative performance on stage and post-performance interactions by some of the actors. Social media exposure of *Himukaizer* can contribute to fame and even scandal; maintaining the secrecy of actor identity necessitates fan collaboration.

13:00–13:20 | **Chat Meeting 4** - https://tinyurl.com/ycyfcg26

13:20–14:00 | Lunch Break (40 mn) °°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°

PANEL: *VirtualTubers and Visual Transgendering*

14:00–14:30 | **Edmond ERNEST DIT ALBAN**
(Course Lecturer, McGill University, Canada)
Kyara-ka *as a Queering Process? From Queer Animation to Online VTubers Personas*
This paper explores the notion of *kyara* from the media specificities of anime characters. As Itō (2005) noticed, the mobile images of characters always oscillate in between *kyara* and *kyarakutā*, immobility and mobility, stereotypical and psychological tendencies, as well as a position in between objectification and subjectification. I will draw inspiration from the pioneering work of Ishida (2008), Azuma S. (2015) and Mori (2010) to demonstrate how queer techniques of mobiles images pushed the reconciliation in between bodily images with subjective representations of inner monologues, psychological dives and sexual drives. As such, I will compare the montage techniques of queer manga and anime with the digital animation techniques used nowadays by VTubers online. In doing so, my goal is to frame *kyara-ka* (transformation into a character) as a potentially queer practice, with the insight of the recent testimony of the self-identifying "cross-dresser" VTuber Todoki Uka. I will conclude that the transformation of Japan's subcultures into *kyara*-based contents uses the power of characters as moving images to queer identities and deviate from a proper "subject".

© Lou Rambert Preiss

14:30–14:45 | *Les Zumains / DOLLER* **(short film)**
Lou RAMBERT PREISS
ECAL Goodseed Prod., Switzerland, 13', 2017.
Jonathan, a lonely teenager, is used to dress up like his favorite virtual singer. Finding a fellow on the internet lets him dream of a date and hope for a bit of humanity…

14:45–15:15 | **HOLOGRAPHIC**
(VTubers, graduates from Tōkyō University & Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences, Japan)
The* Babiniku *Phenomenon in Japan: when Men Metamorphose into* Bishōjo *Characters

© Holographic

In Japan, avatars are defined as "another side of a person or the other identity of the person". People who wear avatars are freed from stereotypes caused by their real body identity. This phenomenon emerged from the anonymous online culture. Often people choose and wear an avatar body according to their preferences: we can find many *bishōjo* (cute/beautiful young girl that is very similar to manga or anime characters) avatars, animal avatars, machine avatars or so on. When a male wears a female avatar, it is called *babiniku*. People who use *babiniku* appear to long for freedom from the societal pressures put upon their real identities. Such can be achieved by wearing and becoming a character that has the opposite role compared to themselves. In Japanese culture, a male is expected to be patient and strong, but when inhabiting a *babiniku* avatar they feel freed from societal expectations. Being regarded as *kawaii* gives people pleasure, some permission and motivation to live, while some of them suffer from a dependence on others' compliments. During our research we have also discovered that some women enjoy avatars as they allow them to talk differently than in real life. By wearing an avatar they avoid being discriminated against based on their appearance, which seems to be the case for women in Japanese culture. We propose several important keywords to understanding avatar phenomena: gender, a desire for recognition from others, and self-esteem.

15:15–15:35 | **Chat Meeting 5** - https://tinyurl.com/y7wydjj5

15:35–16:00 | Coffee Break (25 mn) °°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°

PANEL: *Hatsune Miku and Vocaloid Metamorphoses*

16:00–16:30 | **Rafal ZABOROWSKI**
(Lecturer, King's College London, London, United Kingdom)
Virtually Authentic: Co-creating Hatsune Miku

© Crypton Future Media

Hatsune Miku is the world's most popular virtual idol, and the most successful of the Japanese vocaloid software line. But what does that mean, exactly? A vocaloid idol is neither a person (as it is not human, but essentially a software package) nor a character (as it goes beyond the narrative boundaries), and not exactly a persona, at least in the sense of mediating a real person (for the fans, Hatsune Miku does not stand for "her" voice actor, Saki Fujita).

In this paper I suggest we can understand Miku as a coevolutionary product of virtual collaboration by creators and fans on message boards and online music/video platforms. To do that, I discuss ethnographic data from Japan, drawing critical comparisons between vocaloid enthusiasts and pop idol fans. First, I argue that comprehensive understanding of vocaloid cultures challenges established concepts of authenticity and reception. Due to the complexity of production, circulation and participation processes involved, Miku's authenticity is dynamically negotiated and not easily defined. Second, remaining attentive to socio-economic and generational contexts, I argue that said participation is enhanced by changes in media and technology. For vocaloid fans (and music listeners more broadly), digitalization and datafication transform music as the object of cultural practice from text to a meta-system of platforms, streams and formats.

16:30–17:00 | **Cody POULTON**
(Professor, Department of Pacific and Asian Studies, University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada)
Performative Metamorphoses: Hatsune Miku and 3.5 Dimension Culture
The past decade has witnessed a significant revolution in live concerts and theatre productions featuring characters from manga, anime, and the gaming worlds. This phenomenon, whereby two-dimensional characters from the page or screen emerge into three-dimensional corporeality on stage while still maintaining the iconic superficiality of the *kyara*, has been called "2.5 Dimension Culture." Productions of this nature have increased exponentially, from as few as thirty-one shows in 2011 to over a hundred in 2015, with overall attendance in the millions annually. Even kabuki has got onto the bandwagon, with productions like *NARUTO*, *One Piece*, and the "ultra-kabuki" show *Hanakurabe Senbonzakura*, featuring Vocaloid idol Hatsune Miku. My paper will focus on Miku's stage and concert performances. I will examine the nature of the liveness of a spectral figure, conjuring a virtual reality that may even be called "3.5 dimension culture." Hatsune Miku's transformation is similar to the "2.5 dimension" characters, because her *kyara* is a mangafied embodiment of an artificial voice, which is then rendered as a kind of holographic puppet. "She" appears on stage with human actors, who themselves are performing *kyara*. Here, real, fictional, and virtual identities are superimposed, literally so in the case of Miku, whose ghostly image flickers over or behind or beside the human performers playing to her. I will probe the nature of liveness in a virtual reality and the unique "participation mystique" of characters like these for audiences who attend these live productions.

17:00–17:20 | **Chat Meeting 6** - https://tinyurl.com/ydfle87z

Desired Identities
New Technology-based Metamorphosis in Japan
GOES ONLINE

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the "Desired Identities" conference (scheduled to be held in Paris on April 29-30) will be hosted as a **LiveStreaming Event** on the YouTube Channel of musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac on **Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 of June 2020**.

A LIVE STREAMING EVENT
Saturday 27 and Sunday 28, starting at 12:00 p.m. (noon) Paris time (CEST time), pre-recorded videos of each presentation in English (and with subtitles in English) will be streamed online, one after another, following the schedule, in order to foster the excitement of a real-time event. Connect here to attend the event: YouTube Desired Identities (https://tinyurl.com/ydgwtg2k). Or on the museum website: http://www.quaibranly.fr

ONLINE MEETINGS IN PUBLIC CHAT-ROOMS
At the end of each panel, the lecturers will log-in online for question and answer sessions in a public chat-room. To attend the chat meetings, attendees are requested to register (for free) on this anonymous Google form: https://tinyurl.com/y8yxjff6. After registering, attendees will receive invitations to join the lecturers and share 20 minutes of discussion.
For those who won't be able to register, just click on the url indicated in the Program and connect directly to each Chat Meeting.

A FULLY RECORDED CONFERENCE
For those who won't be able to attend the LiveStreaming event, no worry: after being streamed, each video will automatically be put online, in free access, on the YouTube channel of the musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac: https://tinyurl.com/ydgwtg2k and on the museum website: http://www.quaibranly.fr
However, during the LiveStreaming, two art videos will become public, never to be seen again.
Also, during the LiveStreaming, attendees will be able to meet through the YouTube ChatBox and post comments in real time. The comments will disappear automatically at the end of each presentation, thus making the LiveStreaming event more lively: we want it to be a shared experience of exchanges through different time zones.

Scientific Planning Committee:
Elena Giannoulis
Agnès Giard
Berthold Frommann

Coordination:
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