

UPDATE: – KEYNOTE SPEAKERS ANNOUNCEMENT –

CALL FOR PAPERS for...

3rd Mechademia Conference on Anime, Manga and Media Theory from Japan:

“World Renewal - Counterfactual Histories, Parallel Universes, and Possible Worlds”

November 29 - December 2, 2012

Dongguk University, Seoul

Deadline for submissions: May 15

In the wake of the disasters and tragedies of 3.11, the cry “Another world is possible” becomes all the more urgent. And so, we ask: How can counterfactual histories, parallel universes, and possible worlds of Japanese popular culture and media formations contribute to recognizing and ending the class warfare that underlies the maintenance of nuclear energy and entrenched forms of socio-historical inequality, and thus contribute to the formation of another world?

From the 1980s to the present, critique of popular culture in Japan has consistently emphasized a problem with narrative. Recent attention has shifted to other forms and practices, such as character (kyara), worlds, and fan repurposing. Narrative has been largely ruled out or dismissed, and often history as well. Nonetheless, our goal here is not a return to narrative analysis, but rather to call attention to the implications of the rise of modalities such as characters and worlds for storytelling and history. As such, we invite contributions that deal with this specific question:

Japanese popular culture — manga, anime, games, and SF — abound in scenarios in which our contemporary reality appears to be but one possible outcome within an open situation. What are implications of such an understanding of our reality?

We envision some of the following lines of inquiry.

Counterfactual Histories. Science fictions often encourage us to approach history in terms of ‘what if’ scenarios — what if there were aliens behind the emperor-system, or

what if there were a battle between superheroes during WWII? Such scenarios invite us to understand history through counterfactual situations. But rather than dismiss such scenarios as non-factual, we ask: What are the social and political implications of understanding our historical reality in such terms?

Parallel universes. Popular culture frequently juxtaposes different realities in the form of alternative timelines or bifurcating temporalities. Here narrative does not hinge on teleological movement (grand or petty) but opens questions of temporality and temporal experience. Thus, instead of assuming that such scenarios destroy story-telling or historical movement, we ask: What kinds of storytelling practices and forms of communication emerge across bifurcating temporalities?

Possible Worlds. Attention to the role of character in media mix and fan practices has highlighted the importance of media and technologies in the formation of “worlds” and “worldviews.” And so, we call for submissions that explore the mediatic and technological dimension of these possible worlds, with an eye to the construction of value within circulation as well as socio-political possibilities or potentiality of Japanese popular culture.

And... The first Mechademia conference in South Korea will also provide a unique opportunity to explore the system of circulation that anime and popular culture from Japan are a part of in East Asia - a circulation that includes commodities, representations, and very importantly, labor. Papers addressing this topic are especially welcome.

Papers presented at the conference will be considered for the 10th and final edition of Mechademia that will be published under the theme of “World renewal.”

ADDITIONAL EVENTS:

Keynote Speakers:

The conference will feature keynote addresses by **Thomas Looser** (New York University) and **Otsuka Eiji** (Kobe Design University).

Thomas Looser is Associate Professor of East Asian Studies at New York University. He has published research on, among others, Japanese animation, architecture and Noh theater.

Otsuka Eiji is a cultural critic, editor, media creator and Professor in the Department of Manga Media at Kobe Design University. Apart from a large number of manga, he has published widely on topics such as animation, popular culture and consumption, and recent political history in Japan.

Podium Interviews:

The conference will present special podium interviews with animators to talk about their work, the interaction of anime and animation in Korea and the question of outsourcing. Featuring Ahn Jae-hoon, director of *Green Days* (Ahn Jae-hoo & Han Hye-jin, 2011), who also worked on the anime version of *Winter Sonata*. Also animator Watanabe Hideo, who has worked on anime such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam*, and subcontracted animation such as *G.I. Joe*.

Archive Tour & Special Screenings:

The Mechademia conference will include a tour of the Korean Film Archive with special emphasis on their animation holdings. The visit to the archive will also entail a special screening of the oldest feature-length Korean animation, the only recently re-discovered and restored *Hong Gil-Dong* (1967, Shin Dong-heon). Also, the Planet Film Archives in Osaka will supply a program of rare pre-war animation films.

Dates:

The conference will be held **November 29 - December 2nd** at the Department of Film & Digital Media at Dongguk University and the Korean Film Archive. Dongguk University is the oldest Buddhist university in Korea and, and its Film Department was the first in Korea.

Submissions:

Please send abstracts of up to 200 words to Mechademia.in.Seoul@gmail.com. **Deadline for submissions is May 15, 2012.** Proposals for complete panels of four presenters are also welcome; please include an abstract and contact information for each presenter. The conference language is English.

Any additional questions may be addressed to the conference organizers: Alexander Zahlten and Aramchan Lee and co-organizer Thomas Lamarre under the same address: Mechademia.in.Seoul@gmail.com.