

Akihabara and the Visual Culture of “Otaku:”

Media Booms and *Moe* in the Heisei Period

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Located in eastern Tokyo, the Akihabara area shifted from a dense cluster of stores selling home appliances and consumer electronics to a symbolic site of manga/anime subculture during the Heisei Period (1989-2019). Specifically, images of *bishōjo*, or manga/anime-style cute girl characters, became more visible there than anywhere else in Japan or the world. This presentation examines the transformation of Akihabara in terms of a historic concentration of adult computer game producers and players in the area, overlapping booms in manga, anime and gaming and the rise of the internet, which brought fans together and allowed them to share objects of affection and desire. Particularly important to the

transformation of Akihabara and its subsequent visual culture is “*moe*,” or an affective response to fictional characters. As fans responded to characters and producers franchised them across media and material forms, Akihabara made public the private affection and desire associated with “otaku.”

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No prior registration necessary / Lecture in English

This lecture is organized by Professor Noriko Murai (FLA) as part of the ICC collaborative research unit project “Heisei Becomes History.”

