

Screening of “*Josō* 2020”

Female cross-dress boom in Japan:

Discussion and Q&A with Sharon Kinsella and David Panos

Sharon Kinsella (Director), University of Manchester

David Panos (Producer), Conditions Art Studio



Nov. 26th, 7pm – approx. 8:30 pm (Tokyo time)

On Zoom

Please register from [HERE](https://forms.office.com/r/WbFzifn9Z5): (<https://forms.office.com/r/WbFzifn9Z5>)

Sharon

Kinsella and David Panos will be present to discuss the phenomenon and thought processes behind her recent film *Josō* 2020 which explores the various social agents and layers involved in the recent female cross-dress boom in Japan.

Josō 2020 is a film collaboration combining ethnographic documentation and art film to

explore the nature of male reaction and sentiment on the cusp of change in Japan. Filmic flow through Tokyo, Saitama and Fukushima captures signs and context of the heavily ideological and yet ambiguously gendered presence built into the contemporary urban environment. Urban Japan in the mid-2010s is seen in its own style of motion under the enthusiastic and benign gazes of enormous teenage girl faces screened and posted throughout the city. Interleaved in this macro-landscape the film shows the micro-gestures and movements of unknown people in gendered postures. As the film unfolds deeper layers begin to emerge. There are signs that the girl is the new model commuter and employee: flexible,



disciplined and cute. Under the implicit directions of the gendered city young men are witnessed engaged in complex active reactions: cross-dressing, de-masculinizing, idolizing and parodying.

Close interaction and conversation with young men involved with specific recent male subcultures – *otoko no ko* (dressing as girls) and *himote* (“men without” women) – appear, and through their gestures and words the audience is drawn into the language and emotion of young men in the contemporary period.

Focus on bodily gesture and voice also works to discourage Orientalist and essentialist desire for the film’s subject. This is not a film about ‘Japan’ but about people struggling to express the sentiments of a moment in time. Light usage of archival material and cultural references, such as Yamaguchi Momoe’s voice during her bridal retirement speech in 1980; *Ultraman* and the creator’s grandson in *josō* mode; *ero shōjo* characters and collectors at Comic Market in 2015; shoreline re-building and stagnant waters in Fukushima in 2013; and lyrics of animes series, all hint at the historical situation.

Sharon Kinsella is a researcher and theorist of gendered subcultures and cultural production in Japan, who has worked on the politics, history and social relations of *kawaii*, *otakuism*, *seinen manga zasshi*, *shukkanshi*, *gyaru*, and *enjo kōsai*. Sharon’s work is known for its detail, visual quality and critical attention to the meaning of mass media and visual cultural trends.

David Panos is a widely-exhibited artist filmmaker whose work has taken up critical themes, such as gentrification and resistance in East London (Polly II, Trail of the Spider), and has dealt with historical and contemporary concerns in performance and aesthetic language. His most recent film collaboration prior to this project put the story of the origins of money and abstract thought, in ancient Greece, into gestural language (Ultimate Substance, 2012).

This event is organized by David H. Slater (Professor of Anthropology, FLA, Sophia University).