

Call for Papers International Symposium

“Film, Screens and Media in Japan: Negotiating Legitimacies and Legacies”

University of Lorraine, Metz (France), 4-5 March 2027

The Research Center on Expertises, Arts and Transitions (CREAT) and the University of Lorraine, with the support of the Université de Genève, the Lyon Institute of East Asian Studies (IAO) and the Laboratory for Aesthetics, Science and Technologies of Cinema and TV (ESTCA), will host an international symposium in Metz on 4–5 March 2027 in Japanese Studies, Film Studies and Humanities entitled “Film, Screens and Media in Japan: Negotiating Legitimacies and Legacies”.

Taking note of research trends on Japanese film and media that challenge established aesthetic discourses rooted in Western theories, as well as the increasing focus on industrial history and cultural studies and the emergence of transversal methodologies, this symposium aims to encourage scholarly discussion on the issues of legitimacy as applied to film and media studies in Japan. This symposium hopes to welcome a variety of fields (including but not limited to live-action, animation and media studies), methodologies from humanities and social sciences, and research practices using a diversity of primary or secondary sources and different media forms (for instance, cinema, TV, advertising, amateur film, etc.). In other words, by moving across established boundaries, the symposium seeks to focus discussion on film and screen-media objects in Japan, their legitimacy (as produced through normative processes of legitimization), and their legacy (as shaped by what such processes allow to endure over time).

Indeed, several recent analyses, spread across neighbouring fields in humanities, have contributed to interrogating the dynamics of legitimating media objects and practices in Japan. As such, the aim of this symposium is to examine these processes in relation to legacy fabrication in their sociological, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions, rather than to provide a forum for opposing competing processes of legitimization.

We hope to bring together voices and studies from a wide variety of researchers with a particular attention to early-career researchers, in order to highlight new methodologies and emerging research on issues related to film and media in Japan.

The symposium invites contributions around **four main themes** : (1) the issue of discussing the generic categories and formats used to describe films and screen media ; (2) the different socio-cultural practices at the heart of moviemaking and movie consumption ; (3) the role played by institutions, governmental policies and other discursive debates in shaping media objects ; (4) a critical review of theories and methodologies used in discussing said objects.

I - Genre, Formats, and Filmic objects

One of the first challenges raised by studying film is to define the boundaries of what constitutes a research object, be it from a material or aesthetic standpoint, especially in Japan. For instance, the media mix model compels us to consider Japanese cinema in relation to different media forms, and appears as the culmination of a long intertextual and transmedia lineage in the history of Japanese film (Nakamura and Tosca 2020, Steinberg 2012). This invites a reconsideration of film not as a separate object, but in relation to other media forms, from early cinema's filmed theater to the more contemporary VOD platforms and proliferation of screens. The diversification of distribution formats, which has only accelerated with the advent of the internet, has allowed for regional, national and transnational circulation (Wada-Marciano 2012) and production, prompting the question of where Japanese cinema begins and ends. Across all sectors of production, the diversity of formats creates ambiguity in the classification of media objects, depending on the economic and artistic interests of those involved. This is suggested by the porous boundary between independent and industrial production (Mahmoudian 2022), the participation of film auteurs in industrial drama, and the role played by amateur practice within the industry (Player 2023). Similarly, studying the formation of genre and categories of classification opens a window into how defining film formats can serve the legitimization of a Japanese cultural object (Hikawa 2025, Morita 2024).

Here, we invite contributors to discuss issues such as:

- Relationship between film and other media
- Dominant and alternative formats
- Seriality, franchises and multiple instances
- Adaptations, re-use and (self)-remakes
- Formation and historical evolution of genres and industrial categories
- Historical evolution and transformations of categories or formats
- Definition criteria of film in industrial fields, heritage practice and aesthetic practice

- Platforms, video and new industry actors
- Characters, actors, idols, stars
- Amateur and commercial works

II - Cultural practice, consumption practice and film practice

Whereas common aesthetic discourse sees in artistic aspects of film a reason to legitimize cinema or TV as a medium, Japanese film production and consumption seems to be more readily determined by industrial dynamics and consumption practices (Capel 2022). On the production side, this can be seen through the industrial powerhouses that are the historical Japanese film majors (Fujiki and Philips 2020) and their role in shaping the film and TV industries (Furuta 2009, Kawashima 2014), as well as the corresponding animation industry (Masuda 2007). In that regard, the structure of the Production Committee, as a defining collective production practice, seems to reflect the domination of complex industrial interests in the making of films (Wakabayashi *et al.* 2014). On the audience's side, the role industrial stakes play in legitimizing film as a medium can be seen in the importance of consumption in determining the value of films, especially through the role played by subcultures, fandoms and transformative cultures (Sadakane 2021). This in turn invites us to ponder the extent to which consumption practices reflect production practices, especially when social determinants such as age, gender, geographical origin and race are taken into account (Igarashi 2021, Moeran and Skov 1995). As such, studying film in Japan invites us to think more broadly about how industrial stakes shape professional film practice, in the form of career trajectories and accounts borrowed from oral history, studio monographies (Denison, 2023, Kimura 2020) and the study of workplace organization (Hanzawa 2013) ; but also to debate the relationship between production groups and consumption groups (Gerow, 2010), as well as the cultural practices of both industry employees and audience members (Katō, 2007, Matsunaga and Nagata 2020).

Here, we invite contributors to discuss issues such as:

- Professional trajectories across artistic practices and media
- Media industries, the studio system and production structures
- Interaction and influences within and across media (film, literature, music...)
- Industrial groups and their action on shaping the industry
- Mainstream and alternative practices of consuming and producing media
- Constitution and evolution of audiences
- (Self) definition of audiences: age, gender, class, geography, interests
- Popular culture, consumer culture, transmedia culture
- Transformative cultures and fandoms
- Transnational flows and exchanges

- Objects and mechanisms of consumption : narrativity, seriality, database, character vs. world

III - Discourses, Institutions, Policies

Comparative studies have long approached “Japanese” films and visual media — ranging from their aesthetics (Burch 1990) to their production and exhibition networks, administrative structures, and copyright systems — as sites of “otherness,” inheriting persistent (self)orientalist and auteurist discourses (Yoshimoto 1991; Tezuka 2020; Jacoby 2020). These perspectives are nourished by the very institutions that bring Japanese films to national and international markets, including film policies (Hirano 1992; Kawashima 2014), soft power initiatives such as “Cool Japan” (Iwabuchi 2002, 2015), and international film festivals (De Valck 2007; Centeno Martín 2018). It is therefore necessary to examine the evolution of these legacies, their geographies and temporalities and their entanglement with market mechanisms (Zahlten 2010; Leora 2020). This entails paying close attention to the contexts, structures, and terminologies of these discourses, as well as to the specificities of the institutions, groups, and individuals that produce them, while also addressing the inherent tensions between what works, discourses or analysis criteria are deemed legitimate and illegitimate. Indeed, non-dominant counterparts to established institutions — such as critical platforms (festivals, journals), heritage institutions (museums, archives, film institutes), educational structures, and exhibition venues (movie theaters, television channels, streaming platforms) — can be identified, yet they tend to be overlooked despite their contributions to shaping the Japanese screen culture.

Here, we invite contributors to consider issues such as:

- National and international festivals
- Discourses around “Japan” and “Japanese cinema”
- Contexts and practices of commercial and non-commercial film criticism
- Translation, adaptation, localization
- Terminology, technical lexicon and their evolution
- Legitimation through cultural institutions, inside and outside Japan
- Transnational approaches, cultural collaboration, and soft-power
- Definition, objectives and motivations of film policy
- Education and propaganda through films and other media
- Auteur and auteurism
- Authorship, copyright and their understanding
- Heritage policies

IV - Methods, Theories, Sources

From a foreign and particularly European perspective, study of film and visual media in Japan is first and foremost influenced by disciplinary boundaries between Area Studies, Film Studies and Media Studies. While methodological diversity should be welcomed, it can also prove limiting, as issues relating to fieldwork and language proficiency illustrate. While scholars have endeavored to make Japanese research more accessible through translation (e.g. Steinberg and Zahlten 2017), objections have been raised regarding an overreliance on canonical approaches at the expense of new ones (Steinberg 2020), or even a disregard for the Japanese academic and social context (Mihara 2025). On the other hand, documents and archives can prove difficult to access, as can be seen in the precarious state of Japan's national film archive, especially compared to French and European counterparts. Local initiatives may bridge these gaps and even lead to the formation of transnational research networks (Ishida and Kim 2019). This situation encourages reframing the objects and means of research, but may also encourage inventive approaches to renew the field even in constrained environments. In this regard, submissions considering the positionality of researchers in Japan and abroad, cultural, material and methodological issues, as well as “backstage” accounts of research work, are encouraged.

Here, we invite contributors to consider issues such as:

- Academically ‘legitimate’ practices and their strategies of legitimation
- Established approaches and innovative approaches
- Soft power, national culture and (self-)orientalism
- Positionality and research ethics
- Area studies, language and social barriers
- Access to fieldwork, documents and archives, public or private
- Research programs, cultural institutions, state incentives
- Archives, intermediate objects, selecting objects of study
- Non institutional documentation : oral history, community resources
- Constituting and aggregating sources : film credits, databases, etc.
- Historiography and periodization
- Transmission, exhibition and trade in objects of knowledge
- Loss, destruction, alteration or rediscovery of sources and objects
- Digital Humanities and online resources
- Genre analysis as method: categorising criteria and their limits

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Submission guidelines:

Individual paper proposals in English are to be sent to **creat-jp-screen-symposium@univ-lorraine.fr**. They must comprise:

- Family name, first name, affiliation if applicable¹, email address
- Title
- Abstract (up to 3000 characters including spaces)
- Bio-bibliography (up to 500 characters including spaces)

Presenters will have 20 minutes to present their paper in English, followed by 10 minutes of questions.

The symposium will be hosted by the Research Center on Expertises, Arts and Transitions (CREAT) at the University of Lorraine in Metz. A limited number of online presentations may be possible for presenters travelling from outside Europe. The symposium may lead to the publication of an edited volume.

We will cover hotel accommodation for all in-person presenters. We have a limited budget for travel support, prioritised for PhD students and early-career researchers without institutional travel funding, followed by presenters travelling within Europe with limited institutional support. Travel from outside Europe cannot be covered, but we are happy to provide formal invitation letters to support funding applications at presenters' home institutions. Please indicate in your application if you wish to be considered for travel support, with a brief note on your funding situation.

Calendar:

- Submission deadline: 30 September 2026, 23:59 UTC+1.
- Notification of acceptance: by the end of November 2026
- Symposium dates: 4 & 5 March 2027

¹ Submissions are also open to independent researchers.

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