

EXTRA/ORDINARY DRESSCODE

ILLUSTRATED FIELDNOTES, 2009

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Cosplay Encounters: Transiting from Ordinary to Extraordinary Selves

For me, cosplay is a spiritual experience - when my Gundam costume goes on I am taken into another world and I sense the strength of the character enter my body, and then I feel as though I could fly or do anything I wanted -- it's so powerful. ⁽¹⁾

Cosplay or costume play is currently a popular trend in Asia, with evidence of a growing global expansion, where young adults dress up in themed costumes assuming the persona of characters from Japanese comic books (manga), animated cartoons (anime) and cute or gothic style Lolitas, including other new media sources such as fantasy film, television shows and video games.

It is the camaraderie, festival atmosphere and sense of a shared yet closed community that strikes the outside observer both amongst, and between, the cosplayers. As Karamura noted of contemporary youth street fashion in Tokyo,

There is a strong social connection and a sense of belonging among those youngsters who dress themselves in unique and original outfits, some of which may be outrageous, radical and extraordinary. ⁽²⁾

This is evident as they examine each other's outfits and take mutual photographs, or team up for a group photo and pose professionally, and authentically in character, for the bevy of the official and unofficial photographers. In Japan, the onlookers are nicknamed "otaku", or obsessive anime/manga fans, who always frequent these cosplay meetings in numbers almost equaling the cosplayers themselves, and jostle for a strategic position to take the best image which is later posted up on websites, and social networking sites.

Likewise, observing groups of young people dressing up in cosplay we became aware of the sense of belonging or affiliation and mutual admiration

對我而言，cosplay是一種精神體驗。每當我穿好高達的服裝，剎那間我就進入了另一個國度，身上集聚著高達才擁有的力量，我感到自己無所不能。這是多麼的神奇。

Cosplay是當下東南亞流行的風尚，並作為一種文化現象在全球範圍擴張。Cosplay是指年輕人們穿上特別的服裝扮演日本動漫作品中的人物，例如可愛型或是哥特型的洛麗塔。當然，有時靈感也可以是來自其它類型的新媒體資源，比如幻想型的電影、電視節目和電腦遊戲等等。



between the cosplayer groups and their followers, both in a real and virtual sense. This was clearly a stimulus to their involvement in this fantasy-based activity based on a collusion to believe and seek refuge in another universe. Yet, in effect this cosplay scene offers a great escape to a collective universe of loners and outsiders fleeing their own neuroses, frustrations and inadequacies – in response to parental, institutional and societal pressures. It looks like great fun – but it is in fact a deadly serious game for those who choose to play it. Also, it became clear from our interviews that the cosplayers are often harsh and judgmental towards each other and that sending hateful anonymous remarks is part of the world of being a cosplayer.

For several years, our own lives and our weekends have been consumed by Cosplay as we visited many cosplayer conventions and gatherings both in Hong Kong and Japan. We have interviewed hundreds of cosplayers at these locations, and taken endless photographs, besides recording our encounters on video. In the end, we compiled case studies about three cosplayers who are more deeply involved in dressing up activities—Mizuki, Maggie and Kin. We met these three cosplayers at various conventions in Hong Kong across a space of two years and were impressed by the display of complete dedication to their craft.

Mizuki Mochizuki is studying fashion design at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and prefers to live in older centuries, mostly dressing up as princess characters, such as the historical Princess Elisabeth from Hungary (Sisi) or Marie Antoinette from the Shoujo manga, Rose of Versailles. She is very articulate and passionate about the classics of Japanese animation and channels her unusual creativity and psychic states by ploughing away at a rare DIY collection of elaborate costumes. Maggie is a cosplayer who uses female costumes to explore his/her transgendered identity, which s/he is also in the process of adopting in actual life. In this way, Maggie differs from the “cross-players” who like to wear costumes of the opposite gender, but do not wish to pursue a queer identity, or who may even be homophobic and socially conservative towards the “real” queers. Maggie explores topics of desire and queer sexuality and how his/her physical body can be questioned and altered through acts of socializing and self-fashioning. Kin is the third and most experienced cosplayer who has been cosplaying for ten years and largely takes on male identities. She

多年來，我們自己的日常生活和週末假期都被cosplay點綴，那是因為我們在日本和香港訪問了許許多多的cosplay活動和聚會。在這些場合，我們採訪了幾百位cosplayer，也拍攝了數不盡的照片和視頻。最終，我們編寫了關於三位深度投入到cosplay的cosplayer的案例研究，這三位分別為Mizuki、Maggie和Kin。兩年來，我們在香港各種不同的cosplay盛會中不斷看到他們的影蹤，更被他們全身心的投入深深打動。

wears the grand costumes of male warriors and explores different ways of projecting power through the act of dressing-up. Kin is a well practiced expert in producing and validating cosplay knowledge. She also questions the worn-out dynamic between female models and male photographers. She is also not one of those cute females who welcomes being surrounded by hordes of male photographers, as she works with a circle of female friends who act as both models and photographers at cosplay events.

We invited our cosplayers to dress up in a TV studio so that we could witness their process of identity transformation, while taking photographs and video footage to capture this moment of transition from ordinary to extraordinary self. Even though it was hard for us to enter into deep conversations with them, we wanted to catch them in the heat of the transformative moment and present a sample of their original cosplay ideas and photographic evidence of the range of their various cosplay characters. Through our interviews and photographs, or video sessions, we came to understand that they are highly passionate and protective about their cosplay hobby and of the characters of animation culture whose (multiple) identities they materially create and visually assume, thereby exploring new boundaries between fashioned, embodied and other sexual selves.

Cosplayers claim that the main benefits of their hobby embrace not only the thespian skills required in role playing their characters, but also the project management and teamwork needed to plan and execute group performances in costume, in addition to acquiring the technical DIY ability to construct their outfits, and deliver an entertaining performance for a closed community. Despite the public display of extraordinary outfits at events and the appropriation of the public domain of city space to meet and greet other cosplayers, it is a secret, closed world only accessible to a specific demographic set.



Cosplayer們相信，他們的興趣不僅僅可以幫助他們累計在角色扮演中學到的戲劇技巧，更可以通過策劃組織表演而掌握團隊合作和項目管理的精髓，更不必說DIY製作道具服裝和為社群奉獻精彩演出所得的經驗了。儘管那些美麗非凡的cosplay服裝往往在公共展覽中出現，儘管cosplayer們經常利用城市公共空間見面交流，cosplay本身仍然是一個秘密的世界，一個封閉的世界，在那裡只有一些特定的人們才可以出出進進。



This cosplay trend also appears to be a further logical manifestation of the evolving entertainment landscape in Asian cities where cosplayers are expressing themselves as active consumers of manga and anime in these indigenous entertainment economies. Chinese people have fallen for “Japanese-ness” over the past few decades as an anguished quest for idealized beauty and alternative sexual identities, for a purity and adventurousness that cannot be found in their reality, and in search of a subtle and modern sex appeal that is still quite taboo inside the Confucian tradition.

For instance, there is the security of the imagined feminine-masculine persona and the homosexual relationship (Yaoi or Boy Love) for women. They embody these male personas in love while in real social worlds taboos are still evoked by homosexual relationships and females may still consider themselves to be victims of gender marginalization. As Kinsella explains about the world of “beautiful boys” manga,

這一股cosplay的潮流也可被視作是東南亞城市發展中的娛樂風景的標示。在這些城市本土的娛樂經濟發展中，cosplayer們向人們展示他們作為動漫文化積極地消費者的姿態。中國人在最近幾十年來陷入了一種對“日本（性）”的愛戀。人們不無苦楚的在日本文化中追尋著理想化的美和同性浪漫，追尋著在本土文化中難以實現的純愛和冒險，更探索著在儒家傳統中仍難容身的當代的性的吸引力。

Although the characters of these stories are biologically male, in essence they are genderless ideal types, combining favoured masculine qualities with favoured feminine qualities. Readers are likely to directly identify with 'gay male' lead characters – and female readers often with the slightly more effeminate male of the pair of characters. Young female fans feel more able to imagine and depict idealised strong and free characters if they are male.⁽³⁾

The yaoi or Boy Love culture specifically allows young women in to express their desires and creativity, to develop voices of excessive angst and frustration in finding a suitable kind of love and beauty that they are often unable to locate in their own culture and society. For instance, Chinese girls upload and remix Japanese Boy Love animation videos in a genre called AMV (Animation Music Videos). In this genre, fans sample and edit together their favorite scene of Japanese animation and add music or a soundtrack of their choice.

In fact, the huge range and amount of anime and manga products that seemingly constitute a continuous flow of media products that are consumed on a weekly basis means that the fans, and fan-turned-cosplayers, have a rich resource to draw from, but one that also necessitates a total immersion in their fetishized and fantasy world of choice.

Given that many manga and anime narratives are available as computer games and are consumed online also means that the relationship established between player and character in the narrative is interactive and all inclusive. Hence, assuming the form of a virtual character on screen is just one step away from actually physically replicating the character through costume play.

In this way, cosplayers and animation fans are pursuing a DIY culture of self-fashioning and online socializing, but they also develop these shades of sexuality within the boundaries of commodity culture. Hong Kong may not admit it so easily, but people's queer and alternative subjectivities are affected

耽美文化（美型男子中發生的浪漫愛情故事）尤其可以幫助年輕女性抒發她們的慾望表達，展示她們的創造力，幫助她們說出自己在追尋本土文化所缺失的那一種愛與美時遭遇的焦慮和無力。譬如，中國女孩子們重新剪輯日本的耽美動畫並上傳至網絡，這種作品被命名為AMV（動畫音樂視頻）。在這一類作品中，動漫迷們尋找自己最喜愛的鏡頭，並把它們剪輯在一起，同時配上自己選擇的音樂或音軌。

by the censorship politics of mainland China. As Lisa Rowel points out in *Desiring China*, modes of sexual innovation and restlessness can only be developed if they are divorced from the “dangerous passions of politics”⁽⁴⁾ People identify with a “Japanese” kind of openness and branding as an escape from the boundaries and stigmas within Chinese sex culture, but they also reveal a deep longing to inhabit the characters and costumes of commodity culture. The “other” here provides a safe refuge.

The same tendency to articulate identity and sexuality through the purchase of specific brands and material possessions such as ball-jointed dolls also finds a visual form and performative expression in cosplay. Some cosplayers avidly collect and dress up ball-jointed dolls as mini-versions of themselves. These dolls become best friends, sisters, brothers, confidantes and counselors for the collector, cosplayer and aspiring cosplayer seeking gratification and unconditional love in mute humanoid form.

Saito Tamaki explains in his essay *Otaku sexuality* that the sexuality of animation fans and cosplayers is one of fictionality and possession. They are not so much attached to wealth as to other types of possession, involving ongoing creative processes of fictionalization, which are also defined and sold as cultural memories or cultural fictions. Tamaki defines otaku sexuality as a peculiar type of sexuality or fetishism that gives people the power to fantasize and possess alternative characters, while also giving them the opportunity to waver between actuality and fiction. (5). Cosplayers invite us to waver between real and imagined sex affairs and to relive adolescent probings and pettiness. By dressing in the costumes of young mythical fantasy characters who conquer other worlds, the cosplayer appears to be addressing issues of personal control over, and an escape from, the social pressures and bureaucratic, sexual and collective cultural constraints that constitute everyday life in Hong Kong and Asia. We hope that young people across Asia will take these complex shades of identity formation and sexuality into adulthood, if not into a more solidified public culture and an engagement with queer politics, plus a wider understanding of otherness in all of its abstract and material forms.

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5. Saito Tamaki, 'Otaku Sexuality,' In: Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay jr. and Takyuki Tatsumi eds. *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams. Japanese Science Fictions from Origins to Anime*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. p. 237.



2 MIZUKI MOCHIZUKI: PRINCESS AFTER PRINCESS

First we ran into Mizuki at various Cosplay conventions, where she was almost always dressed nostalgically like a lush princess. Then we invited her to the TV studio and witnessed her identity transformation. She is totally dedicated to manga and anime classics such as the Rose of Versailles and the process of becoming-princess. She is a student in fashion design at Hong Kong Polytechnic University and she certainly is a performer who will take her onlookers to new creative heights.

Mizuki: So now I'll stick on my eyelashes. Usually the girl comic characters have sparkling eyes, and mascara is not enough for that kind of stage make up. Have you noticed those girls in Japanese comics? Their eyes are so big with super long eyelashes?

(Mizuki shows her fake lashes to the camera)

Katrien: Is that what you call "sparkling eyes"?

Mizuki: Yes, those princesses have sparkling eyes, so we need to stick on long, long eye lashes.

Katrien: Does it hurt?

Mizuki: No, actually I don't feel it. It's very light. Some girls stick them in the wrong places that would make it very uncomfortable for the eyes. But, if you are a bit experienced, after having stuck them on so many times, you will know where to stick them on.

Katrien: You also have long hair.

Mizuki: I need to hide my hair later on, and put it into this wig.

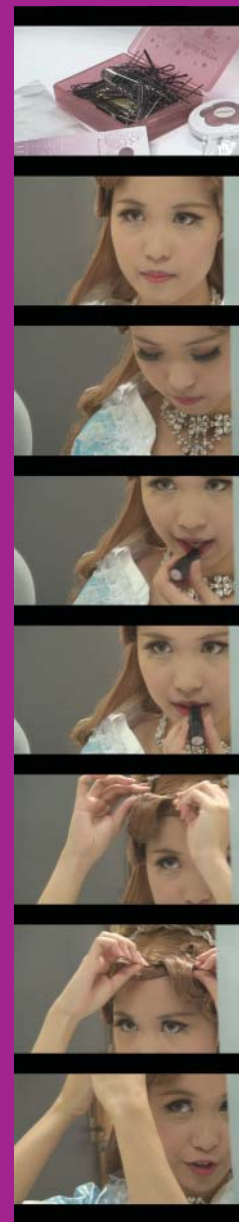
(Mizuki shows the hair net to tie up her hair)

Mizuki: Usually, I will put on one layer of blush, then wear the wig, and then see if I need to put on more. Because sometimes the wig is in pink or white color, which will make the face look very pale. So, when I put on the wig, I will know if I need to apply more blush.

(Mizuki puts on the rouge)

Katrien: Is it usually fun when you do this together with other people?

Mizuki: No. Actually nobody cares about you, because at those events, everyone is too busy caring about their own faces. No one would bother looking at you. Everyone just tries to grab a place with a mirror. Usually in the bathroom (pointing to the mirror in front of her), with this size of a mirror, you would have ten Cosers standing in front of it. Ten Cosers would squeeze in together and try to find one place to make up.



Katrien: This is a brand new facility. You are the first talent here.

Mizuki: Some Cosers choose to apply make up at home because it is so crowded at the event. Like me, I usually put on the base at home. But some people think that Hong Kong is too hot, and when you make up at home, it will be melting by the time you get to the venue.

Katrien: How do people react to you when you walk through the city wearing this costume?

Mizuki: Usually, I always Cos a princess-style character. When little girls see me, they will usually say, 'Mami, there's a princess!' But the boys will say, 'Oh that's a monster!' It's quite different. And then the adults, they will just stare at you. Some will show their interest, but some will show that you they are hateful.

Katrien: So you get different reactions. You told me also about getting nasty reactions on the message boards and in the chat rooms.

Mizuki: Actually those are Cosplayers being competitive, because maybe they love the same character and Cos the same character. They just want to be the best. Usually with some famous or popular characters, many people would Cos them at the same time and they just want to show they are the best Coser to Cos this character. They would go to those chat rooms or message boards and write made up facts to hurt their competitors.

Katrien: You are very talented to make these dresses yourself.

Now you are playing characters like Marie Antoinette from the manga classic *Rose of Versailles*.

Mizuki: Thank you. I find that in doing cosplay, it has changed my life. I've focused a lot on fabrics and my mum is always telling me off, saying that my room is full of costumes and no normal clothing. I have no clothes to wear outside, but lots of costumes.



Mizuki : 其實那些參與cosplay的人之間充滿了競爭。因為有可能很多人想扮演同樣的角色，而每一個人都想成為cos的最好的那個。常常可以見到很多人同時cos那些很有名或是很流行的人物，人人都想證明自己是最好的。有時，他們甚至會在聊天室或是論壇裏面寫一些並不符合事實的東西來中傷他們的競爭對手。

Mizuki : 謝謝你。我覺得cosplay這個愛好已經改變了我的生活。我花費越來越多時間在布料上，我媽媽總是責備我說我的房間除了戲服都沒有甚麼正常的衣服。我沒有甚麼可以穿出去的衣服，但有非常多的戲服。

Katrien: I have that too. My closet is half real and half costumes.

Mizuki: For me, it's 90% costume. I usually find some other places like under the chair, my sisters' rooms. I just try to hide my things inside their rooms. And sometime later they will find that and then scold me!

Katrien: So your mother cannot deal with it very well?

Mizuki: At first she wanted me to stop my hobby. She would scold me and not allow me to enter Cosplay events. I just tried to escape and tell her that I have school projects. And then later on, she found that I was getting more mature and I knew what I am doing. She realized that I could not change my hobby anymore.

Katrien: Later she will see that it's beautiful. It takes some time, don't worry.

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Mizuki: In the cosplay competitions, when we perform, it can be in between 2 to 7 minutes.

Anne: Can you show us how your perform?

Mizuki: * Usually I have a partner and we just dance.

Anne: So, you don't speak?

Mizuki: Normally I don't speak, because it is very confusing to be princess, because the audience in Hong Kong wants to listen to Cantonese, but I think it's very weird to be a princess speaking in Cantonese.

Anne: What voice does the princess have if she speaks?

Mizuki: I think foreign languages just like English or French would be very suitable. But it is weird for Hong Kong people to listen to us in English, so I prefer not to say anything.

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Katrien: 我也有很多。我的衣櫥裡一半是戲服，一半是真衣服。

Mizuki: 我的衣服裏百分之九十是戲服。我常常找另外的地方藏這些衣服，比如椅子底下啊，我的姐妹們的房間啊。我會把衣服藏在她們的房間裏。不過有時候，她們會遲些發現那些衣服然後責怪我。



Mizuki: 一般我都不會講話的，因為做公主真的蠻複雜的。香港的觀眾都想聽廣東話，但是我覺得一個公主講廣東話非常奇怪。



- Anne: Do you feel different when you put on each level of costume?
- Mizuki: Yeah, just like those real princesses when they are wearing the costumes. I just feel that in the real world no one would recognize you, when I wear the wig, and the costume. Even my mum maybe can't recognize me anymore. Makes me so happy.
- Anne: Do you become this character? Who is this character?
- Mizuki: Marie Antoinette. I try to become like her. Very grand, very glamorous, very beautiful and just very polite. And everyone who looks at you would know immediately that you are a queen, a princess.
- Anne: So your behavior is different as well, in the way you move?
- Mizuki: Yeah, also. Because I just don't only want the look of a princess. I actually want to become a princess.
- Anne: Do you always want to be a princess? And when you were a little girl? Can you talk a little a bit about that? Who influence that princess dreams when you were young?
- Mizuki: Well, maybe it was Walt Disney, because I always watched their films when I was small like Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella and Beauty and the Beast. Those are my favorite films. My mum told me that when I was young, I wanted to watch a film every day — a princess film.
- Anne: How old were you when you were doing this, watching their movies?
- Mizuki: Five or six. Yes, and I keep this habit until now. I watch them once a week.
- Anne: What's your favorite Disney princess?
- Mizuki: For the story and the music I would choose the Beauty and the Beast. But for the look, I would choose Princess Aurora, the Sleeping Beauty. I Cosplay that character also. Because in my mind, this princess has blonde hair and a pink dress — she is exactly my dream. The princesses in most of these tales are blonde. Yeah, it's just deep in my mind, the blonde hair and the pink dress.

Mizuki: 會啊，就好像那些真的公主穿上她們的服裝一樣，當我帶好假髮、穿上戲服以後，我就是覺得在現實世界裏人們都認不出我了。甚至我媽媽都有可能不再認得出我，我覺得好開心。



Mizuki: 也許是Walt Disney吧。因為小時候我常常看迪士尼電影。比如睡美人啦，仙蒂瑞拉啦，還有美女與野獸。那都是我最喜歡的電影。我媽媽剛剛告訴我，那時候，我每天都想看一部電影，一部有關公主的電影。



Anne: And again with the Disney costume, do you make your own costumes? Because you can buy them, obviously they are everywhere in the Toys 'R' Us, But do you make your own costumes.

Mizuki: Yeah I make them myself. I want them to be very authentic, and I buy all my fabrics in Sham Shui Po. I like to choose the fabrics. Just like girls want to choose some clothes from the shops, I love to see all the fabrics. And just in my mind, in my dress, what I have to be, and then I would try to find my favorite cloth to make it.

Anne: Yes, because this is part of your training and part of your creative skill set and your talent.

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Mizuki: I think that the fabric is very important.

Anne: And do you read the books? Do you read the Disney fairy stories in the book form or is it just in film?

Mizuki: When I decide to make a costume, I will first watch those films, and then read the story books. I would try to find the original story books and look at it, because the Walt Disney version is somehow too fantastic. The original story is not like that.

Anne: Ok you mean not Disney but just story books. Where did you get these books from?

Mizuki: Usually from bookstores or online; people have many different versions of princesses. I try to look at all the versions, pick some characters I love, and then try to make a new dress for myself. Because I think there's no point in making the same dress as the Disney versions. I can never make such a perfect dress as the princesses in Disneyland.

Anne: So how do you modify it?

Mizuki: In the colors and in the cutting. Sometimes I think the pattern cutting is very important to who you wear. If it's for me, I just want to hide my mistake. Sometimes I would try to find some patterns so as to show I am such a slim and cute girl. And I would find some special patterns. I draw the pattern myself. Because that will be perfectly match my body.

Mizuki: 對，我自己做。我想讓我的衣服非常有原真的感覺，我的布料都是深水埗買到的。我喜歡挑選布料。就好像別的女孩子喜歡在店裡挑衣服一樣，我想看到所有的布料。我知道我要什麼衣服，我想要變成什麼樣子，然後我就努力去找我最喜歡的布料來做衣服。

Mizuki: 通常在書店裡或是網絡上，許多人都有不同版本的公主的樣子。我則會盡力看完所有的版本，挑選一些我喜愛的角色，然後來為自己做件新衣服。因為我覺得沒必要做和迪士尼一樣的衣服。我也沒可能做出和迪士尼公園裡的公主們穿的那樣完美的衣服啊。

Anne: So you Cosplay Sleeping Beauty and now you are Cosplaying Marie Antoinette; do you feel like each different princess or female character?

Mizuki: When I cosplay Sleeping Beauty I would use very childhood like, Just like I will walk in the forest and then sings along. very fantasy way to cosplay it and to show that, so sometimes very popular between those young girls. They all want to have photos with me. But when I cosplay Marie Antoinette sometimes I would think of her tragedy ending, and the story, and become more mature-like.

Anne: Ok, just to do a bit of research around it. That's interesting. Have you been to Disneyland?

Mizuki: Yes! Many times.

Anne: You don't dress up when you go to Disneyland? Do you?

Mizuki: Sometimes I will. But Hong Kong Disneyland doesn't allow me to cosplay the Disney characters inside. Because they have their own character and don't want to cause confusion.

Anne: So what would you cosplay when you go to Disney?

Mizuki: We'll cosplay some magical characters, like in Hong Kong Disneyland we have the American road, some fantasy streets and a castle, so sometimes I would Cosplay other princesses or other girls in the 19th century, just to take photos.

Anne: Like a generic princess? When you dress up as Marie Antoinette or Sleeping Beauty are you imagining what is surrounding you? As you mentioned, when you are Sleeping Beauty, you walk along, singing like you're in a forest -- are you imagining you are walking through a forest? Are you imagining you are Marie Antoinette walking through the Palace of Versailles? It seems to me that for Cosplayers, their surroundings are important, which is why they like to go to the old buildings in HKU and have their photos taken, and the gardens in UST or CityU. But how important is that for you to imagine you are in the situation of the character?

Mizuki: Usually I only imagine the surroundings during private shots. Because with photos, I need atmosphere to create the mood. But when I'm going to events, I would imagine the princess had come to Hong Kong University, for example. That's more suitable because I'm doing performance art, like the real princess has come to Hong Kong.



Anne: So you feel consciously part of a performance. What about when you meet up with other princesses, Cosplay princesses — do you interact, do you talk? Do you have friends who do princesses?

Mizuki: Very few. In Hong Kong, women like to Cosplay uniform or male characters. You can see many girls Cosplaying male characters from manga and anime, because generally the girls like the male characters.

Anne: Why is that do you think?

Mikuki: Because in the comics, the girls would like the male characters right, because we are girls. And then we would want to cosplay that character because we love it so much. But I'm a bit different because my mind has always told me that I'm so princess-like, so childlike, I just like fantastical things, so I always Cosplay princesses. And that is very famous in the Hong Kong Cosplay world.

Anne: Yes right, because you have your own little role or niche.

Mizuki: Because very few people compete with me in this area.

Katrien: And what about your boots? Come on! (Camera panning towards her high boots)

Mizuki: Yeah, really high, because that doll is very high, around 185cm, so I need to wear higher boots.

Katrien: Are these the highest boots you've ever worn? How much do they cost?

Mizuki: About HK\$700

Katrien: Great! And tell me something about your eyes. They are green.

Mizuki: This is my "con" color. (Contact lenses)

Katrien: Very beautiful. And then your character has ears?

Mizuki: Yes, they are made of plastic.

Katrien: Is your character also an animal?

Mizuki: It is an elf. Actually, this is a doll made by a Korean company. The story is about a moon elf who betrayed her own country, and then turned to the darker side, becoming a dark elf.

Katrien: The dark elf? What does she do?

Mizuki: She helps Lucifer. I know the story from the original site.



Katrien: Do you also cos other characters?

Mizuki: I've joined the competition here for the last three years. And this year I use Queen Marie Antoinette as the character, and I'll do singing and dancing in the performance.

.....

Katrien: So you've been Cosplaying for a while then?

Mizuki: Yeah, quite many years (Smile).

Katrien: Some people say that Cosplay is only for young people, but do you think you will also want to do it when you get older? What do you think?

Mizuki: Yeah, I think if I have still have time, and have the passion to do that, I will continue this hobby, even when I get older.

Katrien: Do you, do you go outside sometimes with your outfit?

Mizuki: Yeah, sometimes we go outside to have a private shoot, or we to go some place like the Hong Kong University, yeah, to take some photos that suits for this character, yeah.

Katrien: Do you also sometimes go outside without going to a function? Sometimes I see people walk around like in the city. They just dress up and they are not going to a function.

Mizuki: I seldom do this because, you know... wearing this outfit to just go outside is a horrible task, it's super hot.

Katrien: What do you say when people react weirdly to your outfit?

Mizuki: Just ah... I hear nothing, he he (she smiles)

Her web site: <http://diary.blog.yam.com/mizukimochizuki>

Anne: Would you say that your cosplay friends are like your family?

Mizuki: Actually they are very competitive. Yeah, sometimes they comment online and I think their wordings are very rude.

Anne: Is that happening to you or..?



Mizuki: Yeah. Always.

Anne: What...can you describe an example?

Mizuki: Amm, just like, on the internet, some message board where don't need to put down your name, they will start to scold you.

Anne: Really? In what way? What are they saying?

Mizuki: Like the color. For example, they will say, "the character is not this color. It should be darker, or lighter." Or, "your wig is very ugly", or, "you made your costume the wrong way".

Anne: And... do you reply?

Mizuki: I won't.

Anne: Why not?

Mizuki: I think that most Cosplayers follow original images, but I want to add more personal designs to it. Because this is, after all, my costume.

Anne: Of course.

Mizuki: I don't owe them an explanation. And I think they are not my boss anyway.

Anne: And are your friends Cosplayers? Do you have a friendship group or...?

Anne: And how do you, I mean are your friends cosplayers? Do you have a friendship group or...?

Mizuki: Yeah. Like her. She has always been my partner. And some Cosplayer friends are my closest friends actually. I have better relationships there with them than with other university students, because we share the same hobby. We can share how we shoot the costume, what we are going to cos. Sometimes we will cos the same characters, same games or same comics. Then the photographer can capture the variations and have different combinations in the photos.



Mizuki: 比如說顏色啊。舉個例子，他們會說“這個角色不是這種顏色的。它應該更深，或是更淺”或說“你的假髮好醜啊”，或者“你的衣服做錯了”



Mizuki: 我有啊。就像她。她是我最好的搭檔。而一些cosplay的朋友事實上都是我最好的朋友。我和她們的關係甚至好過和其他大學同學的關係，因為我們愛好相同啊。我們可以分享大家是怎麼拍衣服的，分享我們之後會扮演甚麼角色、有時候，我們會cos一樣的角色，一樣的遊戲或是一樣的漫畫。然後攝影師就能拍到很多變化，照片上都會有一些不同的組合。

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3 KAZUMI NAGAIKE: ON THE MEANING OF KAWAI

Kazumi Nagaike is associate Professor at Oita National University whose work deals with sexuality and ethnicity in Japanese Ladies Comics and Boy Love manga/anime

Kazumi: Kawaii culture is actually used to characterize modern Japanese society over all. Everything actually should be forming in the “Kawaii” way. Kawaii doesn't have any kind of negative connotations and it is more of an idealized term.

Katrien: Do you think that the development of the ideal of pretty girls, cute girls, is a problem for the psychology of women?

Kazumi: It is not such a problem because Kawaii does not have gender specific connotations. Kawaii is actually a gender neutral term. Because if we actually say “Kirei”, that's beautiful for women. “Kakkoi”, cool for men. And “Kawaii”, as I said before, can actually be used for everything. Of course, it started in girls' culture, but expanded in different directions. So, it is really an important keyword to understand the common and contemporary Japanese society.

There is an example. You know “Koizumi Junichiro”, our former Japanese prime minister. At that time when he was really popular among the Japanese people, there were a lot of girls who used the word “Kawaii” to characterize him. And he doesn't even look like Kawaii at all! But you see, you can even use that term for that kind of man.

So Kawaii is not actually used as a gender specific term. That's one of the ways to introduce some complexity in the sexual productive economy. Because that's one of the weapons which Japanese women and Japanese girls can use to not be involved in some kind of specific gender identity.

Because the “kawaii shoujo”, is a kind of independent gender. Because we sooner or later actually should become “women” in Japanese society. And to become a woman means to enter the constraints of gender specific concepts. I mean that the girl, “syouzou”, “Kawaii syouzou”, had more freedom in a way. “Kawaii” is some kind of magical term for the Japanese girls, to have some kind of freedom.



Kazumi: 並沒有這樣的問題因為Kawaii不具有針對某一性別的內涵。Kawaii事實上是一個性別中立的詞語。因為如果我們說“Kirei”，那是在說專屬於女性的美麗，而“Kakkoi”則是屬於男性的酷。而“Kawaii”如同我剛剛講的那樣，可以用在任何物體上。當然它始於少女文化，但是它已經向不同的方向發展了。所以，Kawaii是一個對於理解當代日本大眾文化的很重要的詞語。

因為“Kawaii shoujo” (Kevin suggested Kawaii shoujo)即可愛女孩是一種獨立的性別角色。因為在日本社會裏面，我們遲早都會變成一個“女人”，而變作女人意味著我們將要進入一個滿是性別角色和性別束縛的世界。少女，可愛少女，在某種意義上，則有更多的自由。“Kawaii”對於日本女孩子來說是一個有魔力的詞語，能給她們更多自由。



4 MAGGIE LEUNG: IN THAT I AM NOT MALE

Maggie Leung is a cosplayer and cross-player who mostly takes on female characters from ancient Japanese court dramas and modern TV series. He also uses his female impersonations to explore and reveal a transgendered identity, which distinguishes him from other cosplayers who may dress-up and cross-dress, but may also be sexually conservative or homophobic.

Maggie: In this story ("*Hana-Kimi*"), all the characters in the school are males, except the girl who conceals her gender. One minor reason I chose this role is because I think the shape of my face resembles the character in the story.

Katrien: You think you look like the character, so you are cosplaying "her"? Did you shave?

Maggie: I epilated my beard.

Katrien: Do you put on the make up on yourself, or do others help you do that?

Maggie: I do it myself.

Katrien: So you are like a male cosplaying the role of a TB (Tom Boy)?

Maggie: But a tomboy should look "cool", right?

Katrien: But then you think you do not look cool now?

Maggie: Nope... I don't think so, coz' I can't say I am a cool-looking person. If you look at other cosplayers, you realize that they look much cooler than I do. Yes...





- Karien: Have you ever cosplayed female roles in the past?
- Maggie: Yes, The Hell Girl, and also Cagalli Yula Athha from *Gundam Seed*.
- Katrien: Are there many cross-players in this culture?
- Maggie: Yes many girls cross-cosplay male roles, they are indeed the majority. So, actually we (people like me) are only a minority.
- Anne: So, can you introduce the character you are playing today?
- Maggie: My character today is Ai Enma from The Hell Girl. This character "The Hell Girl" is an anime and manga that was quite popular not long ago. The plot is that one of the characters is called "Yim Mor (a monster)", and Ai Enma aims to collect hatred from human beings, and in turn causes those human beings to be sent to hell. In simple words, the Ai Enma is a messenger sent from hell.
- Anne: So why do you like this character? Now that you are dressed in the costume, how do you feel? Any difference from your normal outfit?
- Maggie: When participating in cosplay, one not only has to be like the character in the appearance/outfit, one should also "act" like the character. Otherwise it is only like having the "shell", but not the "soul" of the character.

(Filming the wooden cross and hand accessories of Maggie)

- Anne: So for example there is a cosplay event. Would you start to "transform" into the character once you put on your outfit, or it is during the photo-shooting when you would feel that you "are" the character? When would you start to feel that you are different from the "normal you"?
- Maggie: When everything's ready and I have finished the entire costume and including make-up, when I am looking at myself in the mirror, I'd start to cultivate my feeling towards the character I am acting.

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Maggie: 是的，很多女孩都會跨越性別飾演一些男性角色，這些人其實是主流。而我們（像我這樣的人）則是少數派。

Maggie: 我今天的角色是地域少女中的 Ai Enma。地域少女是一個不久前相當流行的動漫角色。故事就是講其中一個被人們稱為 Ai Enma（怪獸）的女孩，她想要收集人類的仇恨然後用這些仇恨的力量把人類送去地獄。簡單說，Ai Enma 即是地獄的使者。



Anne: So, can you tell how many roles you have cosplayed since you first started participating?

Maggie: About 12 roles.

Anne: And do you still keep all your costumes?

Maggie: I sold one of the costumes.

Anne: Do you make your own costumes or are they tailor-made?

Maggie: For some costumes and clothings, I would go to shops like Giordano and G2000, or the Ladies' Market in Mong Kok, and then mix and match them to get the desired effect. But for most costumes, they are specially ordered and tailor-made.

Anne: What about the one you're now wearing?

Maggie: This one is also tailor-made. I asked one of my friends for help. They specialize in making "Kimonos", the traditional/national Japanese costume.

Anne: Do the tailors usually have any knowledge of the characters of cosplay?

Maggie: Usually you will find so called "agents" on online discussion forums. The "agents" themselves may be cosplayers as well, and they would help customers to order... for example there might be a certain factory in China, and the "agent" would be a middle person between the factories and the customers, and share the cost/benefit with the factories.

Anne: What are your friends and family members' perception about your cosplaying?

Maggie: When I first participated, my family members felt that it was nonsense and a waste of time. To be more precise, they thought I was bringing a bad reputation to the family. They thought I was spoiling the name of the clan. Maybe my family members are rather conservative, and traditional Chinese thinking.

Anne: Is it because you are cosplaying female roles? Or it doesn't matter what roles you are cosplaying? Are they negative about the whole act?

Maggie: Yes... yes... whenever I am cosplaying, they think that I am spoiling the name of the clan... something like that. But they gradually got accustomed to it.



Maggie：我第一次參與的時候，我的家人覺得十分無聊而且浪費時間。更準確說，他們覺得我敗壞了家人的名聲。他們認為我給家族的聲望帶來了侮辱。也許是因為我的家人特別保守吧，而且他們想事情都很傳統，很中國。

Maggie: In order to look natural, the fake eyelashes must be very, very soft, as if you have not put anything on yourself. If they are too natural, you can't see their effect. If they are not a bit exaggerated, why should I even put them on?

(Placing glue on the fake eyelashes, and getting ready to stick on his eyes)

Maggie: You have to place on the exact location (on your eyes), and press them into place.

Katrien: ... So beautiful!

Maggie: Recently, there are cheaper fake eyelashes that cost about a hundred Hong Kong dollars per box, with 8-10 pairs per box. The price is very reasonable! Not bad at all! It is better than just buying a pair of cheap ones. These (cheap ones) are about HK\$20, and those are only about HK\$60. And their quality is good. It is very reasonable.

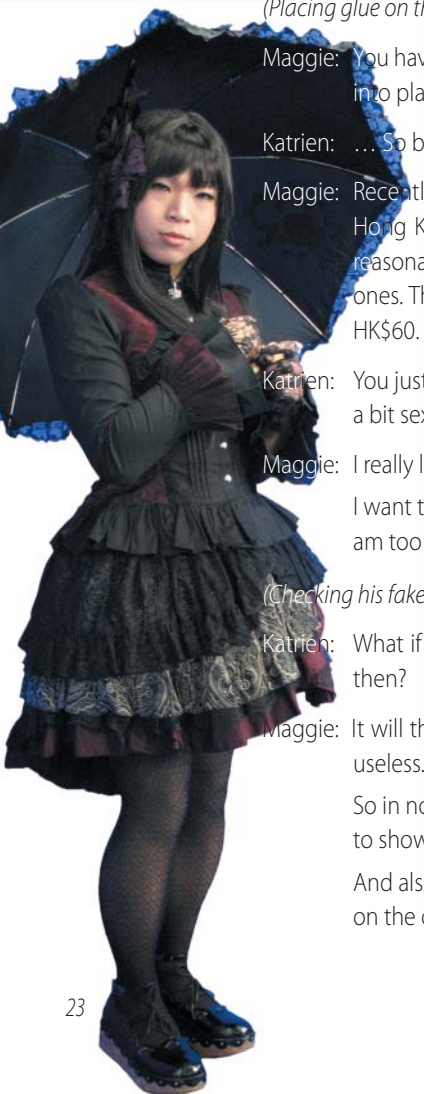
Katrien: You just now mentioned that if you put on the eyelashes, you will look a bit sexy. Can you tell us more?

Maggie: I really look girlish, right? Don't you feel that? It's really girlish...
I want to look more "pure", but once I put on the fake eyelashes, I feel I am too girlish and lustful! It is REALLY lustful!

(Checking his fake eye lashes)

Katrien: What if you use less exaggerated eyelashes? How would you still feel then?

Maggie: It will then look as if I didn't put on any fake eyelashes. It will then be useless. If the fake eyelashes are not present, my eyes will look dull.
So in normal days, even when I put on mascara, it would still be hard to show the contrast in the shape of the eyes.
And also, it depends on the skill of putting on the eyeliner. It depends on the color you are applying, and how you are applying it.





Maggie : 今天的服裝是一套Gothic Lolita的服裝。她的衣服通常顏色深暗，比如黑色，而又有一些羅曼蒂克的內涵。給人一種很有聲望或是皇室的感覺。同時也有死亡的味道。

Maggie: Today the costume is that of Gothic Lolita. Her outfits are usually darker in color, black-colored, and having some romantic connotations.

Some prestigious and “royal family” (noble) feeling. And there is also the feeling of “death”.

Anne: And now we go to the costume. Do you feel very different? We’d like you to explain how you feel today?

Maggie: I feel that I can be my true self after putting on the outfit.

Anne: What about your costume? Did you buy this, make it yourself, or is it ordered to be tailor-made?

Maggie: This costume is custom-made. I ordered it from a shop called “Spider” in Mong Kok; they have their own brand called “Spider”. This one cost me about HK\$700.

Anne: Does your character have a life? Does she have a story of her own?

Maggie: I don’t feel that way. I think Lolita is more like a fashion style.

Anne: But the social inspiration is Japanese? A Japanese notion of Lolita?

Maggie: The word “Lolita” originated in Europe. The Japanese then adapted and improved the Lolita style. So in general, the Lolita that you are seeing (in Hong Kong) are Japanese-adapted ones.

Anne: Are the cosplayers interested in knowing about the “original” European style?

Maggie: Actually, most people would not bother knowing the in depth history of the origins of Lolita. They simply put on the outfits because they are beautiful, or they design their own Lolita (style of outfits).

Anne: So what you are doing today, is it cosplay? Or just dressing up?

Maggie: Just dressing up.

Anne: So, would you go out dressed like this, outside in public in Mong Kok for instance? Would you go out dressed like this in Lolita with your friends?



Maggie: Yeah, we might do this. I would go out with my male friends for private shooting functions, or café meetings. We would put on the female Lolita outfits, but most people of course just wear them at home, for private functions. They'd seldom wear those outfits publicly.

Anne: Do you dress up at home?

Maggie: I actually can't do that, because of family members' rejection.

Anne: What about other cosplayers? Do they accept you? How you feel amongst the other cosplayers dressed as a Lolita or as a female cosplay character?

Maggie: I don't feel anything special. cosplayers just focus on whether you can be exactly like the cosplay "character" or not.

Anne: Ok, so they are not interested in sexual identity or your sex role?

Maggie: Actually.... some girls would feel very excited about it! But I don't know why. They get very excited about a guy cross-cosplaying a female character. They want to take photos with you.

.....

Katrien: I'd like to ask you about your trans-gender identity.

How does Hong Kong's culture react to you when you show your trans-gender identity.

Maggie: I think that people here are too conservative, but there is still a trans-gender community. Usually we cross-dress and communicate with each other through online forums or meetings/gatherings.

Katrien: So, do you identify as gay and "trans"? Do you like girls or boys? Or both?

Maggie: I have thought about that question a lot. I think the concern is not whether I like boys or girls. When meeting other people, I don't care so much about physical sex/gender. I'd rather focus on the feeling when we meet. And also I am mostly "in a female role", so I would like others to take care of me.

Maggie : 我們也許會這樣。我可以和我的男性朋友出去拍照或是在咖啡廳見面。我們會穿上女性的洛麗塔的衣服，但是當然大部分人只在家裡或是私人聚會才穿成這樣，公共場合他們則不會這樣。



Maggie : 我想這裡的人們太過保守了，但是這裡仍然有一個跨性別社群。通常我們會在網絡或是約會聚會中異裝打扮並且相互交流。

Katrien: You would like a boy to take care of you?

Maggie: Boy or TB (Tom Boy). If it were a “boy”, he would be a true male physically. The feeling would be very solid; For “tomboy”, although she is not a real “male”, she would understand what a “girl” would be thinking about. So sometimes I would prefer “tomboys” over “boys”.

Katrien: Is it difficult to find a partner in Hong Kong?

Maggie: You can say that. It is because others may find it hard to define whether you are a gay or a trans-gender. In the world of lesbians, they would reject transgendered people like us. The lesbians would actually like “real” girls.

I may not reveal myself so easily and let them discover themselves. Whether if I am with a boy or girl, I think they would have to love “me”, my inner-self, but not my “body”. If we have feeling towards each other, regardless of the gender, we would still get along with each other. This is what I believe.

Katrien: We heard that you lost your job at the school you was working in because of your transgender identity? So I was wondering if you could explain what happened?

Maggie: Actually, it is a rather complicated story. Some teachers felt that although my interest in trans-gender cosplay did not directly relate to my work performance, nor affect my work, they would still feel this would be a potential problem. Also, the a new principal is a very judgmental person. I’m not sure if he is a Catholic or a Christian. Anyway, from his point of view, he could not accept what I was doing. The past principal knew about my sexuality. His position was that it was my personal problem, as long as it did not affect my work performance, the school would not interfere. But for the new principal, I don’t know what exactly he is thinking... I felt quite helpless. He told me that I had some problem with moral attitudes.



Maggie : 我不會輕易地顯露自己的身份，也不會讓他們發現。無論我是男是女，我想他們都應該愛的是“我”，是那個內在的我，而不是我的“身體”。如果我們彼此有感覺，那不管是甚麼性別，我們都應該和彼此相處的不錯。我相信這些。





Katrien: so I am interested in your experiences in the cosplay community, as well as in the trans-gender community in Hong Kong. It seems like you are at the intersection of the two communities, right?

Maggie: I know some of them. But... they would choose to be "hidden", in the worst case not letting others know of their inclinations. Those people who are trans-gender would not let people know.

Katrien: Even though they cosplay female roles, they still wouldn't tell you that they are trans-gender, right?

Maggie: Yes, you are right.

Katrien: I find it very interesting because my perception is that cosplay community is actually quite conservative. They would feel that "being/performing" Boy Love is normal, but they are condemning of actual gay people.

Actually the "BL" cosplayers often use these themes as a selling point. It is like selling x-rated movies in malls in Mong Ko to attract people to watch them. It is a selling point for a particular comic if they have a BL element. It is even more attractive than the original comics! It is a way of survival for the comic publishers by issuing comics with BL elements.

It depends on if they want to match the characters with their actual sexual orientation. The situation is that, you can say everyone is "telling a lie" now, they are normalizing lesbian and gay love. But it has nothing to do with homosexuality.

Katrien: Yes, a lot of women are developing boys' characters, right? But in reality they maybe cannot love you. They cannot become your lovers because it is a different world, right?

Maggie: I think it is like a "grey area". It may be very easy for girls to cross-cosplay male characters, into a very handsome type. It's very easy for them to look alike... but then it's not about love.



Maggie: 我覺得那是一個“灰色地帶”。對於女孩子來說，在cosplay裏面異裝為男性角色，尤其是英俊的男性，其實很簡單。要做到“貌似”並不難……但那和愛情無關。

Katrien: It is very hard for me to understand that it would not affect you.

Maggie: I just think that it doesn't involve their psyche. Their psyche is not there, exactly. I think this is normal, because they only love the character's role and not the person.

.....

(Maggie describing the outfit to the interviewers, as he has undressed his Lolita costumes, and also removed all his make-ups)

Katrien: So how do you feel now? *(Smiling)*

Maggie: I don't know... I feel troubled. When I go home I have to settle all of my costumes!

Katrien: Yeah, OK, but do you feel OK now to be a male person? To go back, home, back to your family, back to your mum?

Maggie: I hate them now...

Katrien: Why don't you let your mum know... let her know that you don't like to be male? To what extent do they know about your sexual orientation?

Maggie: They know that I have to consult a specialist.

Katrien: Do you want to take hormones?

Maggie: I am taking them. They have changed my metabolism, and in some ways affected my thoughts. Sure, definitely. I become emotional.

And it also makes me feel unwell. For example, I feel tired easily, suddenly... physically unwell and uncomfortable. Sweating... panting involuntarily, and also having pains in the bones and the stomach, near the chest area.

Katrien: But you still want to take them?

Maggie: The hormones are effective in some ways. It will improve your skin condition, and also make you feel differently. I think they make the shape of my face look very feminine.

Katrien: So that means you really want to transform your gender and have breasts implants and a surgical operation?.

Maggie: Yes, but there is still the family problem.

Katrien: I think there's a big difference in the Chinese culture that you have to live with your parents, right?

Maggie: And live with what your parents have given you. So, it is an exhausting inner struggle for me.



5 KIN: ANCIENT WARRIORS, HIDDEN POWERS, I BECOME MALE

Kin is a very experienced cosplayer who has been dressing up for over ten years, and has made more than a hundred costumes. The first time we observed Kin she was wearing a long blue dress and was surrounded by a horde of male photographers. She explained later that she was surprised to see these reactions, as she was actually a male character but managed to confuse her spectators. She mostly dresses as male characters and is well acquainted with Boy Love animations and BL cosplay.

Kin: The character itself is a male Japanese warrior from Sengoku, from a long long time ago. He is famous in history actually, Dating Masamune. This is actually a real person in history. But, the Japanese transformed him and put him into this game.

Katrien: What do you like about him?

Kin: Well, he is a really clever guy and he is really good at using people, and... how can I say it? I mean he is a really clever person with a clear mind, with strength and gut. He is really famous for his courage in history.

Katrien: I am actually interested about your shoes. You have two sets of platform shoes. So, these are your regular platform shoes. And then you have your cosplay platform shoes, which are much higher. Where did you get those from?

Kin: I got it from mainland China. Yes, those are really high things. We can buy something like 3-inches in Hong Kong. But for this kind of stuff, we have to get them custom-made. Yes, it's really useful. We get one pair and then you just redecorate it for every character.

Anne: Right, it's a good investment. How much do they cost?

Kin: \$200 and something I think.

.....



Kin: The character is famous because he has only got one eye. As for his other eye, he ate it himself. I am not sure why he ate it but he had some kind of sun-induced disease in his eye and he became blind. But not many people cos this character because the costume is pretty complicated to make and there are all the accessories and the costume is made from the rubber as well.

Katrien: It's a safe costume for if the lighting strikes you, with all this rubber material.

Kin: And now I have to put my glove(s?) on and try to carry six swords.

Katrien: So you have been cosplaying for many years, right?

Kin: This is my tenth year. I started when I was 16 and now I am 26.

Katrien: That's amazing! How many characters have you done then?

Kin: I haven't been calculating but it must be almost a hundred. I started cosplaying a J-Rock band called "Gray". And the bass player, his name is "G-law". I really fell for him and I loved the music of this band very much. And that's why I started cosplaying. Basically, all the characters that I have cosplayed are male characters, and I have done a lot of Boy Love stories as well.

Katrien: So what is the different now, with you 10 years older?

Kin: To be honest, I wasn't as energetic before, but I did not really think about about cosplay till now. It is also hard to do this for so many years because a lot of my friends have quit from the circle. Because when you grow up, you find less and less spare time to spend on your hobbies. And your family may not fully support it.

Katrien: Do they give you pressure, your family?

Kin: As long as I can handle my schedule, they wouldn't say anything.

Kin: 這個角色很有名，因為他只有一隻眼睛。他吃掉了自己的另一隻眼睛。我不知道為甚麼他這樣做，但他曾經有一種眼病，後來就失明了。可是很少人會cos這個人物因為服裝非常難做，還要準備各種配飾，橡膠甚麼的。

Kin: 我沒有數過，但絕對有近百個。我最初cos的是一個日本的搖滾樂隊Gray，其中有一個貝斯手G-law，我真的對他很有感情，我也很愛他們的音樂。他們是我開始cosplay的原因。基本上所有我cosplay的角色都是男性，我也參與過很多關於Boy Love（耽美）的故事。



Kin at Polyu. Dressed as a female character

Anne: Do you feel good?

Kin: Yes. My friend made this dress for me. And I made the accessories and it took about two weeks. Most of my characters are hero types and I have never cosplayed a female character till now. Yeah, 10 years!

Katrien: What do you like about cosplaying a male character?

Kin: Because I think I can try a different life when I cosplaying.

Anne: Do you feel different then?

Kin: Yeah, totally different.

Anne: Do you feel like a male when you do it?

Kin: I'll make myself feel it. I'll try my hardest to convince myself and others that I'm a boy or a man. I think it is really challenging!

Anne: Is it like being a model or how would you describe it?

Kin: I think you can do that -- you can put on some pretty clothes and go for a photo shoot. But then you can't say that is cosplaying. It's something totally different, because to cosplay a character, you have to get into the character, you have to act, behave and be it.

Anne: You were saying that you tried to give up cosplay but you just can't give it up. Could you talk about why this is the case for you?

Kin: Honestly, I think it's because I've been doing this for such a long time. And sometimes I feel that this has become a part of my life. I read a lot of comics, I watch animation and I play games. Everything in my life involves ACG; and whenever I see something new, I want to try it out.

Katrien: So can you imagine yourself 10 years from now?

Kin: Well, I guess I can't continue to cosplay till I'm 30. I have kind of promised myself and my parents that I won't. Actually, I've promised them a few times already, but I just couldn't leave it behind.

Anne: 當你做的時候會不會覺得自己是一個男人？

Kin: 我會讓我自己這樣去感受。我會盡力讓自己和別人相信我是個男孩，或是男人。我覺得這太有挑戰性了！

Kin: 我想你可以這樣做，你可以穿上好看的衣服，然後就去拍照。但是不能說那就是cosplay了。因為其實是完全不同的，如果要cosplay一個角色，你需要進入那個角色，你要有像他一樣的言行舉止。

Anne: 你說過你曾經想要放棄cosplay，但是沒有做到，可以講講是怎樣一回事麼？

Kin: 坦白說，我想是因為我做的太久了。有時我覺得這已經是我生命的一部份。我讀過很多很多漫畫，看了不少動畫，也玩了許多遊戲。我生命中所有事情都和ACG有關，每當我看到新的東西，我都想試試。

Katrien: 那你可以想像到十年後的自己是怎樣的麼？

Kin: 我想我不能繼續cosplay到三十歲。我有過對自己和父母承諾說我不會那樣。事實上，我承諾他們好多次了，但是我還是做不到。

Katrien: But It also means in a positive way, that maybe you can still maintain other fantasies? I am just curious how this new generation is going to grow up. I am curious about how they are going to develop this great fantasy, in positive way?

Kin: I'm really glad to see more people trying to cosplay. But I don't really like the idea of making it commercialized. Like in mainland China there are a lot of competitions involving a lot of prizes. Personally, I don't really like this idea. I see this as a hobby; if you are doing cosplay for money, then you can say that you are model, and you are no longer a cosplayer.

Katrien: Can I ask you one more thing about cosplaying male characters. Do people react strangely to this phenomenon?

Well in Hong Kong and Taiwan it is not really accepted by men. Most of the Asian guys don't like the idea of girls cosplaying guys roles. They hate the idea of 'tomboys' and cosplaying, and they hate to see girls acting as a boy, or something like that.

Katrien: So it is kind of women's rebellion in some sense?

Kin: In Hong Kong women can be very strong and convey the sense that they don't need anything else. But I think that most female cosplayers just like these male characters and are doing it just for that reason. But still in that way they are trying out something different.

Anne: Does it make you feel more powerful?

Kin: I don't know what the others are feeling, but when I'm acting as a character, I think like I am that character himself. So, I don't think of anything else and I don't analyze it.

Katrien: 我想再問一件關於cosplay男性角色的事情。人們是否會對這個現象作出奇怪的反應？

Kin: 在香港和臺灣，男人們不太接受這個。大部份亞洲男人不欣賞女孩子出來cosplay。他們憎恨tomboy（假小子）或是cosplay，也憎恨女孩子像男孩子一樣做事。

Katrien: In Yaoi animation there is a romantic relationship between two male characters, right?

Kin: Personally I am pretty open to gay sexual relationships and problems, whatever. But most of my friends, they are heterosexual and they are not bisexual. They do not even accept lesbian relationships, but they do enjoy reading gay comics.

Kin: Sometime it is because women really fall for some male actors or characters. And they don't really want those guys to be with other girls. So they imagine this male person to be with another male, which creates an easier bond for them

Katrien: So it's just you can have more control?

Kin: Yes. And another reason is that people enjoy seeing two good- looking guy together.

.....

Anne : What about cosplaying for male photographers? Do they make you uncomfortable sometimes? When we saw you at Poly University, when we first met you, you were surrounded by maybe 30 photographers?

Kin: Well, you know, that was the first time for me to be surrounded by so many male photographers. Because I am always cosplaying male characters, I seldom wear long dresses, I was cosplaying a male character that day, but that male character was wearing a long dress. And I think most of the photographers just did not get that. I was pretty shocked about that because in the past 10 years, I am seldom surrounded by male photographers.

Katrien: So the male photographers they take hundreds and thousands of pictures right?

Kin: Yes. But I am not used to them as I usually work with female photographers. We create our own events and take photographers along, sometimes in private home spaces and sometimes in public parks. And maybe cosplayers are also photographers.



Kin : 對。但是我不太習慣和男攝影師合作，我更喜歡女攝影師。我們會自己策劃活動，一起攝影，有時候在私人空間，有時候是公共花園。而且有時cosplay者自己也可以做攝影師。



Lei belongs an excellent manga-anime club (黑白動漫社) in Beijing, which was originally opened for Beijing Technology University students only, but now consists of all kinds of fans. The club has more than 3500 registered members, with about 50 very active ones. These people started from scratch, but they donate money which they earned through freelance work for comic strips, logo designs, etc. to support their participation in nationwide cosplay conventions such as ChinaJoy. Lei has a low-key personality, but he has become a major character in the club. He has also directed cosplay and has acted a major role in a large-scale cosplay called '惡魔城Count Dracula.' Right now, he is running a bookstore specializing in manga in Beijing, and also squeezes in time to participate in all kinds of conventions.



http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMzA1MDA3NjQ=.html

Yang Jing: What kind of characters do you like to cosplay?

Lei: If you are talking about characters from ACG (Animation Comics and Games) there are simply too many that are popular here. I myself have played characters from *Prince of Tennis* and *Count Dracula*.

But we are different from the cosers, the professional cosplayers. There are around a hundred of professional cosers in China. They make a living from participating in cosplay shows and being judges for compensation. Some of them can earn 100,000 yuan per show.

Yang Jing: How come your community loves Japanese pop culture so much? What does “Japanese” mean to you?

Lei: It's inevitable that we are influenced by Japanese pop culture, since the largest comic book industry is dominated by Japan, and nearly 95% of comics we see today are Japanese ones. So, most of the cosplay terms are imported from Japan; you can call it a new cultural communication. But in our cosplay shows, we are not limited to Japanese comics. We are now actually adapting game cultures and anime cultures too. And now we are trying something more challenging—we are trying to blend these elements into Chinese culture.

For instance, in recent years we have created shows like *Eight Fairies* (fairy tales of Han Dynasty Taoist divinities), which won the first place in 2007 China International Cartoon & Animation Festival, *Generals of the Yang Family* (stories about a group of female generals of the Yang family in the Song Dynasty) which won us a Golden Mask Award, and *The Legend of Chinese Zodiac Signs* (legends of the 12 animals) which won champion at the 2009 China Joy Cosplay Award

We also have other cosplay narratives adapted from Chinese animations like Blue Cat I and Deer Lamb. Recently, the Chinese style is very trendy. Cosplay is some kind of multi-cultural phenomenon, so there are no fixed rules or models. Sometimes you can find that the images are quite Japanese while the story is not.

We pursue originality and always try to add more different layers into cosplay, like kungfu, ballet, Peking opera or opera. Like we may use music from popular movies such as *Perhaps Love* and *Moulin Rouge*. Some clubs are rich enough to even compose their own music.



雷公：受日本影響是必須的，現在最大的動漫系統就是日系動漫，我們所觀看的95%以上都是日本的動漫，而且很多的動漫專業辭彙都國內是由日本傳入內，可以說是一種新文化傳播，必須是很大的影響。但是在cosplay中，我們不僅僅限於動漫或日本動漫，在A.C.G（Anime, Comic, Games）方面都會有涉及，畢竟在cosplay的效果上面，日本是先驅，我們是要從模仿開始的，然而在這些年的發展之後，比如遊戲啊，或者還沒有動畫化的漫畫，都可以用來表演，而在這些的學習模仿之後，我們現在把這些融入到中國文化裏。

我們很原創，可以在cosplay中加入各種元素，比如武打、芭蕾舞、京劇、歌劇。音樂來講，有很多是改編流行文化，譬如《如果·愛》、《紅磨坊》，一些有錢的社團甚至可以做音樂。

Yang Jing: Do you make your own costumes or where do people buy them?

Lei: Let me tell you the difference between Northern China and Southern China before I answer your question. In the North, we focus on the representations of the stories, while in the South people focus on the "pure image" and hence photo-taking is more of the case. In the North, most clubs are made up of students who have limited funds; in the South, cosplay clubs are a communal or societal thing, containing white collar workers, students, IT professionals, whatever ... they have more money. Plus, Southern China is more economically-advanced than Northern China. I have seen some Southern clubs spending 27 thousand yuan on one costume. They also make clothes of 1:1 proportion.

Once I saw a costume for a *Three Kingdom* cosplay that was made of metal. You can actually fight a war wearing it. Here, we can't afford that. What we do is we find a tailor first. He or she would make a simple dress we want out of some chosen fabric, and then we do the rest. We make the collar, the sleeve, accessories and patterns, everything. And now many conventions don't allow the use of metal, so we cannot buy the real stuff for props. We make them on our own. Of course, super rich clubs have their private labs, so they can make everything – it's very professional stuff. Therefore, when we are making an angel wing, we end up with something one meter long, while Southerners would have something of eight meters.

But on the other side, if your costume is too heavy and too delicate, you can't really perform. So we have our advantages in performing.



雷公：南北相比，北方靠劇本，南方靠道具。北方重視內容再現，南方重視影像重現，所以他們很重視拍照。北方多是學生團體，資金較少，年平均社團支出在1~2萬；南方很多都是社會團體，經濟寬裕，有時一件衣服就可以花掉他們2.7萬，或是做一些1:1大小的服裝。





Yang Jing: How is Chinese government supporting these developments?

Lei: On the government level, in cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou, the government is quite supportive. ACG is part of the consumer culture. If it goes well, the local economy can benefit a bit. Therefore, in these cities, every year there are scores of competition and shows. And nowadays, even if it's some kind of non-relevant exhibition, cosplay clubs are invited to perform in order to attract more people.

Also, sometimes shopping malls will invite us to perform for their promotional campaigns and other kinds of shows. Since we are quite the phenomenon right now, we go and perform to raise money for our club.

Of course there is censorship too. Now that we are supposed to be in a "harmonious society," everything has to be harmonized. Before we do the performance, we have to submit an audio copy of the show to the related bureau. And that's when many sensitive things are cut out.

雷公：政府的話，在北京上海杭州這樣的城市是很支持的，動漫本來就是消費性行業，推廣起來能推動經濟，所以每年都會有幾十次大大小小的全區全市全國級的比賽或者展出，而且就算是某某其他類的展會，只要有可能，都會拉出來一支COS團隊來做演出以吸引人們的目光。



For political censorship's sake, we don't take on sensitive topics in our cosplay; for instance, we don't talk about the Taiwan problem or Tibetan problems, and we don't mention national leaders' names. And the story must be positive and morally upright. You have to abide by these rules even if it may reduce your story to "super stupidity."

As for erotica things, the rules are basically quite simple: you can't show breast nor crotch, and don't be flirtatious. Apart from that, in terms of content, you have to be subtle in many things, and not too explicit. Like if you have a Boy Love (Male-Male love story) plot, you can put two men in a scene, show their admiration for each other, or even jealousy, but you can't let them touch each other sexually, like kissing is unacceptable.

Actually, audiences who understand the plot already have a mindset for such meaning, so what we do is drop a hint for them rather than representing it. Yes, the Boy Love theme is a bit troublesome, and it's not only just in cosplay. I run a comic shop and we import most of our books from Taiwan, because they do a great job in translation. But Boy Love books can be banned in the Customs House. That's why most Boy Love you see in China are pirated ones.

We also have "Lolitas" and "Weird Uncles" (older men who desire young Lolitas) in our society now, which echoes with things in cosplay culture. In our club, there are many gays and lesbians, and they are very good actors; among the best, I'd say. As for transvestism, cosplay IS a culture where dress speaks for everything. So yes, there is a huge amount of transvestism going on here.

It's hard to say what it actually means, as we never count or define the genders. As I mentioned, "cos" in the word cosplay symbolises transvestism, so we don't really care if one is a man or a woman. Are there still gender restrictions these days? Look at popular tomboy singer Li Yuchun, and Korean flora-boy Jun-ki Lee; with our massive population in China, surely you'd expect there to be quite a few more of them?

雷公：在限制方面，色情對衣著的要求基本上很簡單，就是不要露點，不要挑逗。另外內容上來講，很多東西只可意會，不能言傳。比如BL，你可以放兩個男人在一起並肩作戰，一個甚至為另一個吃醋，但是情色性質的行為，比如接吻，是絕對不可以的。



雷公：這個無法統計，男女的多少不是說按照喜好就可以分出來的，Cosplay的COS本來就是變裝的意思，至於變成男人變成女人，這就很難說了，對於現在而言，還有性別限制麼？李宇春，李俊基，兩個典型帶便，這樣的人在中國這個人口大國來說你覺得會少麼？





Everyday we put on clothes, some form of fabric draped over our shoulders, wrapped around our hips. Those who are truly extraordinary remain naked throughout the day; perhaps we use our domicile as an extension of the fabric that conceals our nakedness.

Everyday we make quick or considered decisions about what we should wear. Yet, these individual fashion choices are not entirely “free” or devoid of social standards, and most certainly, entail the limits of specific economies.

If you live in one those urban areas encompassed by the global market, a situation full of consumer choices, an area that does not enforce strictly codified modes of dress, and where, perhaps, creativity or individualism is encouraged, you can decide if you want to appear colorful or drab, strange or non-descript, extraordinary or average.

That is: “appear” rather than “be”, as no matter what the social and economic parameters, the second skin is also a kind of camouflage, a cover for what you actually are. Yet, the first step in declaring your autonomous identity may be a daring choice in fashion (and... what could be more daring than being naked in public?).

The subjects that appear in these photos chose their costumes in the context of Hong Kong 2009. They have not placed themselves in a theater or on a screen, but appear on that most well known of stages. This is why we have given them a white backdrop to stand against, situating them somewhere between the ordinary and the extraordinary.



每天我們都換上衣衫，或不如說是一些布料，它從我們的肩膀垂下，遮蓋住我們的臀。而那些真正不凡的人仍會一整天都赤裸全身。也許我們的寓所也不過是一種延伸，從我們用來包裹赤裸的布料又延伸到更遠。

每一日，我們或是匆匆決定，或是冥思苦想：“今天當穿甚麼”。然而這些個人選擇卻遠非是隔絕於社會準則之外，更遠非是“自由”的。恰恰相反，這些選擇總是隱隱得由這樣或是那樣的經濟條件限制。

這些照片裡的人物，穿著自己挑選的服裝行走在2009年的香港。如是，儘管並無現身銀幕或是劇場，他們仍然能夠躋身于一座耀眼的舞臺。故而我們撿了白色做背景，希望能夠彰顯這些照片能令觀者“於無聲處聽驚雷”的質素。

As has been well noted, the camera is a machine that makes a reasonably realistic image of anything one chooses. This magic, as with any human-made machine, is qualified, in this case by the modifier “reasonable”. Humans have yet to make something that is truly magical. But, in regards to the camera, if we understand its limits, the possible angles and the sizes of its glass eye, we can visually document anything that is, or becomes, visual through our own biological apertures.

If we can make this kind of two-dimensional object, representing whatever we see, then what image is worthy of the camera’s production? The use of any technological product is not regulated by the inventor’s intentions, but by the consumer’s initiative; anyone with the price of a camera can alter its use to their specific needs.

At first, with the focused light and chemicals of the film camera’s darkroom, the widest range of imagery, from personal pornographies to every consumed meal, was less accessible to the amateur. The digital camera has now made the photographic environment, an environment already cluttered with images, entirely open to every whim, to every level of intention, to every instant’s possibility of becoming a two dimensional image.

Yet, the amateur still leans towards questioning the professional, or specialist: How does one take a photograph? But really, equal weight can be given to a question that could be answered by anyone: What should I take a photograph of? The former encompasses not only a technological facility, but the idea of quality (i.e. how does one take a good photograph?), while the latter dispenses with notions of quality and give precedence to feeling, or ambiance; a decision that can embrace the lucky mistake.

One way for the photographer to deal, at once, with quality and content is to not put the camera at the service of complex beauty, but of simple memory, especially memory’s dull cousin, the bureaucratic record. Every I.D. photo is uniform by way of the camera’s position, the framing of the subject, and the light source. Once one subject is correctly captured, we are invariably ready for the rest.

This is a mode borrowed, or subverted, by conceptual trends in contemporary art (one, indeed, not explicitly concerned with beauty); it has been named “seriality”. And we have returned to taking a picture of every meal that any given subject has consumed.







When we hit the streets of Hong Kong with our subject matter settled, to make a record, a sample, of the modes of dress of the city's population in 2009, we understand that we are not the first (or second) photographer to undertake this kind of project (in Hong Kong or any other city or population). Nevertheless, we are faced with a challenge, a dare that involves moving among and interacting with strangers. Apparently, not everyone can do this; it is easier to let the camera manifest the inherent distancing between the photographer and the photographed. In our case, the project encompasses some "extra-camera work," a performance that the specific moment plays out.

In this way, the project moves beyond a purely visual record and becomes part of my existence. I am gleaning information that would not be encountered in any other way, consisting of bits and pieces of verbal and body language difficult to compile. I am socializing in an extraordinary way. Given these fluctuating conditions, a project at once unique and unoriginal, that partially puts the camera at the service of performance, that asks the photographer and the photographed to play distinct and interactive roles, and that relies on the subject's individuality (their one-of-a-kind face and body), then whose project is this (who own the product)?

This is, possibly, where I make my acknowledgements, a list of all those without whom this project may never have come to pass. By way of the conceptual trends of contemporary art, everything is integrated into the project (not simply acknowledged). The crucial, indispensable player in this collaborative has been my interpreter, William Fung (馮偉倫), supposedly a non-artist, but someone who through his own creative consumptions understood and embraced the project (perhaps to his own surprise). My low level Cantonese, and William's part as the "native guide", again blurs the distinctions between genres (a bureaucratic record, a work of journalism, an art project, a sampling of fashion), so that we mimic (and parody) ethnographic research.

當我們走在香港的街頭巷尾，我們心意已定，想要記錄下這個城市的人們在2009年的衣飾風格，或僅僅是搜集關於此話題的一個樣本。我們當然知道自己絕不是第一個（甚至也不是第二個）這樣做的攝影師（在香港或是其他城市，甚至任何地方）。然而，我們也都要面對挑戰，要有勇氣在陌生人之間遊走更要與他們碰觸。顯然，並非人人可以勝任這些。其實，讓鏡頭自己呈現攝影師與相中人的距離更加從容。不過在我們的故事里，還有一些“鏡頭外的作業”，那是一些在某個瞬間才會迸發出的影像。

這裡應當是我該致謝的地方，應當有一份名單，上面應當有些對此研究來說不可或缺的人們的名字。可據現代藝術的概念潮，一切的一切都已經維繫在我們的project之內（而並不是僅僅用致謝就可以道盡真諦的）。非常關鍵的一位人物是我的翻譯馮偉倫，他本非一個藝術家，可他的創意思維使得他不僅懂得，更加融入了這個project（也許他自己都很驚訝呢）。我的不很靈光的廣東話，加上馮偉倫的“土著導引”，又一次模糊了各種類型之間的界限（這project既可以是一個官方記錄，又可以是一種新聞作業，也可以是一件藝術計畫，還可以是份時尚抽樣），於是我們最終（拙劣）模仿到的，其實是一種民族志。



1. In a small dark shop in Mong K'ok, an old commercial district in the metropolis of Hong Kong I bought a doll and named him 'Zaphy'



2. In the same strange, cluttered shop I bought a doll and named her 'Delphine'



3. Inside their doll boxes they looked zombi-like, lifeless and inanimate.



4. But once they were removed from their cardboard "coffins" they seemed to come alive.



5. They were attracted to each other in a most peculiar and powerful manner - the way they stared at each other gave me solace but also sorrow.



6. Often I feel lost and alone not sure if I can even find my real self in this greedy, commercial world, dancing slowly through the lonely crowds of Hong Kong.



7. Little things remind me that I am alone: smells, fabrics, fancy thoughts, strong memories of my beloved Felicia. She dumped me the day after my doctoral defense - my emotions went from high to low.



8. Dr. Chen, my academic supervisor, tells me to get the hell out of here and rejuvenate my spirit in Japan. "Why Japan?" I quiz him.



9. "Ha ha ha!" He laughs and his stomach shakes "It's a magical country with plenty of dreamers and freaks like you."



10. Felicia will not be there. It hurts. I lost a cute girl with traditional but demanding expectations. I hated her. I loved her.



11. That night I dreamed of two foxes in a dark green forest - one female with white fur, one male with an orange coat guarding a demon gate. They fed me with rice and let me ride on their back. 12. "You are safe with us - we have the power to rejuvenate you," they growled.



12. But the black demons lurked in the shadows taunting me. "There is no hope you are doomed to a life of loneliness and despair," they whisper ominously.



13. As the pale dawn started to break, I wake up and hear a husky fox-like voice, "You gotta move out," Zaphy "You just gotta move on!"

14. I break out in a cold sweat. I can't get the vision of the foxes out of my head, and run out to buy a suitcase and start my journey floating through the universe.



15. I arrive in Tokyo - the capital city of Japan - I have swapped one place for another - the fashion temples of Ginza and the hi-tech shrines of Akihabara are strangely familiar and hold no interest for me.



16. I flee Tokyo city riding on the back of the silver bullet train - the verdant landscape flashing past me on fast forward.



17. I find myself in Kyoto at the Museum and ornate birthplace of Superdolfie dolls. My trip has started but my pain is unbearable by now - I feel even more lost and alone.



18. But the madonna and her angels are smiling down at me from the cherubic skies of the doll shrine.



20. The car you always dreamed of owning. Mr. Zaph. Yup! Felicia wanted one for each of you.



21. She is trying to talk to me but she cannot get through. She still sounds like every nagging woman. I have ever met.

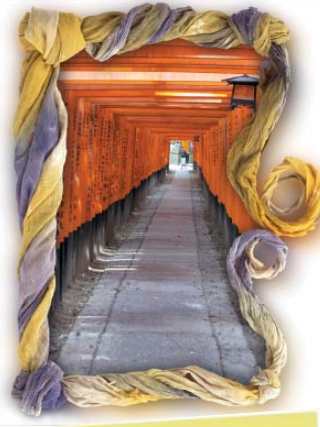
19. Demon, why are you roaring with laughter?



22. Inside the dolls' house, subjected to the gaze of many dolls with many genders and identities, I am starting to feel faint and have to ask the museum attendant for water.



23. "You look so pale, my friend," he says in a concerned manner, "Go take a walk in our garden. Or visit the woods just outside the city. Even better - you can find solace with the foxes and the fox gods.



24. I find myself wandering through a winding pathway of erect orange torii gate poles Kyoto's Fushimi Inari-Taisha temple of the fox rice god Inari, guarded by the twin fox guardians.



25. Ok, another Shinto shrine, but what is there to be found for me in these ancient temples? Is that why I came to Japan? Are the fox spirits who I saw in my dream still alive here?



26. I hear musical voices on the breeze. Not one, but a harmonious chorus of little bird-like sounds so beautiful and calming.



27. It sounds like a love song by a heavenly choir. My dark mood begins to fade away.



28. I feel like singing along in this sun-lit forest. Maybe I will find her here in this rural haven, my perfect little doll?



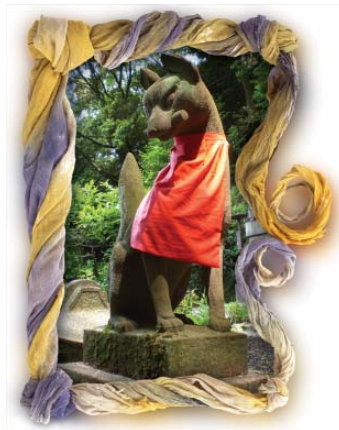
29. Who knows where she be will be hiding? What will she look like, my new lover Delphine? What would she like to do with me?



30. A low growling sound behind one of the orange gates behind me catches my attention. "Who's th-there?" I stammer.



33. She introduces me to her fox god family - the divine guardians of the rice harvest. We feast, we laugh, sing and chat until the bright moon appears in the night sky. I think that I'm falling deeply in love with this mysterious goddess.



31. A flash of white fur, a rustle of red cloth, the growl becomes a mocking greeting, "Well - hello stranger!"



34. What kind of house will we live in, Delphine? What will be our favorite restaurant be Delphine?



32. In front of me stands a beautiful pale blonde girl - bewitching me with her wide eyes, "I am Delphine-San the fox goddess. Come play with me" she urges, "Don't be shy, we met before in your dreams."



35. She likes fish balls and fried octopus snacks, just like me - so much to share, so much alike.



36. We make love until the break of dawn. She likes my body, my new skirts, my fishnet stockings—we are two hipster girls in love.



37. I will take her back to Hong Kong and we can shop around for a Cheongsham Chinese dress.

38. We will get a couple of small, cute dogs and dress them up the Hong Kong way.



39. "Enjoy your life Zaphy -be happy and gay!" chants this goddess. She sings her haunting tunes with a choir of youthful fox spirits accompanying her.



40. I don't recall falling asleep. But, I awake all alone in the gloomy forest. "Delphine - where are you?" My cries echo in the dark stillness - but there is no reply. I feel the fear creeping back again.

41. The red eyed demons return, "Loser - all alone again! Delphine hates you and intends to kill you by leaving you here to die!" they taunt me.



42. My heart pounds with cold fear and I begin to doubt her. They may be right - foxes are cunning and sly. Yet, I know in my heart that I will always remember her beauty and grace - she is my muse forever and always.



43. A loud howl and Delphine appears from nowhere and with a flick of her red cape she scares away the demons.



44. "Why did you leave me in such a cruel way?" I yell at her. "Ah my dear Zaphy," she replies soothingly, foxes can be curious creatures - I needed to test the depth of your love - and you have proved it!"



45. We fall in love in that forest near Kyoto and several weeks later she visits me in Hong Kong.



46. She confesses that she is an animal-spirit and can see into the future, she really is the mercurial fox goddess.



47. She feels that Zaphy has a flexible male-female identity which she loves. Maybe he will even get an academic promotion if she stays around in Hong Kong to protect him from the evil forces that are all around.



48. One day they are out together fashion shopping in Hong Kong and an old woman at a market stall offers them both a free sample of cuttle fish which they accept hungrily. A few minutes later they both feel drowsy and sit down by an old bicycle nearby.



49. The next thing Zaphy finds himself alone on the street - Delphine is nowhere to be seen. He searches for hours but to no avail - she has gone.



50. Weeks go by and Zaphy begins to think that he will never see his fox goddess again.



51. The demons return to haunt him in his dark dreams and tell him that her fox family in Japan are angry that she left them and have sent evil spirits of the air to take her back to her fox temple home forever.



52. That night Delphine appears in a beautiful dream and tells him that she is safe as she was rescued by the doll network - many lonesome brothers and sisters with the most amazing shoes, hats, wigs, clothes and crazy lifestyles.

53. She tells him to come and find her at a small doll shop in Mong Kok where she is safe with her new brothers and sisters.



54. Outside it is raining heavily, but the sun is also shining. He rushes to the doll shop and finds her sitting on a shelf with all of her new doll friends.



55. So, in the end love conquers all - they are reunited at last and plan their fox wedding amongst their doll friends - dress code - extra/ordinary.





我是文本

我視我為一幅「畫布」，展演「我」各式各樣的性別與身分。每天襯衫扮靚，無非是不斷學習及塑造一個又一個「我」。對於我為一幅流動的「畫布」，在日常生活中還有很多想像空間待展現、詮釋、再現。

我以「我」作為文本，探討展現性/別流動性的對象：

1. 注視自身，以身體作為一幅「畫布」呈現性/別的游離性。你看見的身體只是一個皮囊，盛載沒大不了的傳統社會身分、角色。由於我們只習慣觀看事物的表面，套上無形框架而非接受另一種角度看「身體」。諸如女性被賦予愛美的天性，愛被凝視；男性則是看的一群。我卻否定約定俗成的觀念，以自身為「畫布」，被塗上一層一層社會界線的色彩，表現著自我流動——男人不一定是男性化的表演。
2. 塑造自身，以「我」為展現的過程，游離於一種「想像」的性/別，游離於既定的外表／內涵；表演身體的「真實」與「虛假」，彰顯男、女的性別界限。我經營「我」的演出，展演另一個鏡像的「我」的流動。

Me As A Text

Me as a canvas, paper or subject of photography, we can draw and take anything on it (body).

The project Me As A Text is aimed at providing another perspectives on thinking “me”. On my body, there are multiple and complex structures. Through my personal experience of dressing up in order to construct ‘me’, I want to share this mobile ‘self’ of ‘me’ on how to ‘play’ self-identity.

Me, a text beyond the “self” to the trans-self-boundary

When I was a child, I had a special experience. Mother hoped the family would have a girl for a daughter, but was surprised by me as a boy. I learnt from the (non) traditional muscular style, dressing myself up, playing with dolls or learning to sew and cook. Furthermore, it was socially constructed when I was a child.

Me, the process of the activities of doing self

It is the concept of a series on everyday experience of ordinary individuals. I observe “me” within a multiple person’s stories, gender, culture role... nature of identity or personhood etc. That is a kind of reflective self-consciousness and “inner life”, focusing on the subjective sense of self and expressing my life. I sculpt my body to give it more boundaries that shift and change in different “texts” to express my his-tory to her/ his-tory. Certainly, through that personal gaze, it diversifies my life experiences to the “text” expounding my personal narrative art.

Me, the action and interpretation of the research

I am passing through actions (clothes, cosmetics, gestures) to explore the “ideal body / image” to beyond fe/male forms challenging the traditional and stereotype of gender roles in society. It links and builds up “self” as symbol to represent personal identity in social experience.



標題：I am That: Cosplay
 年份：June 2009
 時間：7.35 min
 導演：Mia Chen陳明秀

故事大綱：

Cosplay裡，她化名為Mierocco。Mierocco與miracle發音很像，而創造miracle—令人驚嘆的cosplay是她的自我期待，也是朋友對她的期待。她說她不是著迷，而是上了癮、戒不掉，就如cosplay圈內最常聽到的一個說法：「因為有愛！」對那些角色人物愛上了癮，因此要將他們從電影、布袋戲、動漫畫中解放，讓他們在現實世界「活」起來。

Mierocco在部落格上記下對於cosplay的愛，那些文字一則接著一則，時而像是跟情人對話，時而又像是自我表白—她私秘崇拜著的cosplay女神，伴隨她走過聯考壓力的動漫作品，還有cosplay販售會裡可愛熱情的朋友。

隨著歲月增長，Mierocco或許會漸漸脫離cosplay，但她不會忘記會場上此起彼落的閃光燈，不會忘記每天出沒在自己留言版上五花八門的暱稱，不會忘記夕陽餘暉中散場後不捨離去的人群。此後的時光裡，不一定常常提起cosplay，但它是人生永不磨滅的一部份。

Title: **I am That: Cosplay**
 Running Time: 7min29sec
 —> not consistent with Chinese time
 Language: Mandarin with English subtitles
 Director: Mia Chen

Synopsis:

Mierocco — that's her name in Cosplay. To her, Mierocco is pronounced like 'miracle'. And to create miracles when she cosplays is what she expects of herself and what



her friends would like to see from her. She says it isn't an obsession; it's an addiction that she can't quit. It's as if what cosplayers often say: "Because there's LOVE!" That they are addicted in love for those characters, therefore they must salvage them from movies, glove puppetry, anime and manga bringing those characters to 'life' in this real world.

In her blog diary, Mierrocco records her passion for Cosplay. One story

after another, the story sometimes reads like an intimate conversation to a lover, at times it is like talking to herself about those cosplay goddess that she secretly worships, those animes that accompanied her through stresses caused by the College Entrance Exam, not to mention the adorable, fun cosplayers she befriended at conventions.

As years go by, Mierocco might eventually leave cosplay behind;

but she'll never forget the non-stop camera flashlights at the conventions, nor those marvellous nicknames that appear on her bulletin board every day. Mierocco said on her blog, "Whenever I go to conventions, I get to see the looks on some people's faces. Their faces brighten up when they see their favorite cartoon characters walking out from comic books. They seem so happy and excited; that's one of the reasons cosplay is my favorite."

Katrien: I was wondering how long you gave been fascinated with cosplay, and what exactly it is that attract you to cosplayers?

Mia: 我開始觀察cosplay是1997年，那時我是新聞記者，為了尋找製作新聞報導的題材，而注意到一個活動的訊息，那是某個關懷青少年的基金會所舉辦的「同人文化節」，那個活動後來也被一本台灣同人誌專書《變身天使寇詩兒Cosplay》定義為第一個同人誌公開的集會活動，可以說是同人誌販售會的前身。

第一次看到cosplay，我的印象是：放大的動畫人物活生生的在我眼前，那是一種奇妙的感覺，奇妙在於，原來虛擬不可及，只在幻想世界中的角色，竟然就在眼前，與我同在這個現實的世界。另一方面，也很好奇為什麼真人要將自己變成「假人」，變成虛擬世界中的不真實的角色。這就是我想要瞭解cosplay。

Katrien: Have you ever cosplayed or dressed up in another way? Are you an animation fan yourself?

Mia: 雖然，我對於裝扮成動漫畫人物相當有興趣，為了不讓我作為觀察者的角色混淆，我始終沒有嘗試去cosplay。

過去台灣高度的升學競爭環境下，看漫畫不被父母接受，我自己從小即是一個動漫畫迷，經常瞞著父母偷看漫畫。等到升上中學，聯考的壓力來了，看漫畫更是一種禁忌，學校與家裡都禁止看漫畫，因此不得不放次這項愛好。等到上了高中，世界變大了，可以接觸到的面向更廣大，因此也就將漫畫遺忘，等到再次接觸cosplay，重燃我對漫畫的舊情懷，那像是一種鄉愁，對於是去青春期的緬懷。

Katrien: How is the cosplay scene in Taiwan? Do people visit public spaces spontaneously or is it mostly in gatherings? Where are the gatherings?

Mia: Cosplay 最常出現的場合就是同人誌販售會。

台灣同人誌販售會，十年前大約一年一次，現在因為參與人數眾多，已經發展到平均每個月都有活動，大型的販售會大約三個月一次，在台灣大學體育場舉辦的暑假場以及農曆新年後所謂的紅包場（因為過年領了紅包，有了錢就可以去販售會好好血拼！），是年度兩場最大規模，規模較小或是單一主題（如：剛彈only）的同人誌販售會散見其他時節與台灣其他都市。台灣同人誌販售會的訊息流通很廣，除了網站會定期公佈，





網友們也會互相告知，cosplayers會一起揪團去販售會，前兩年台灣經濟景氣好的時候，甚至便利商店也會預售同人誌販售會的目錄。台北大型的同人誌販售會幾乎都是在台灣大學體育館舉辦，台中是在中興大學，台南在成功大學，大學生特別是cosplay與同人誌的來源。

Cosplayers 會到處參加販售會，跑遍台北、台中、台南的販售會，像是我的 “I am That: Cosplay” 中的主角Mierocco 住在台北，當她興致高昂的時候，都是在販售會開始前一天去到台中住在朋友家，一起熬夜準備隔天cosplay的道具，天亮前小睡片刻，一早起床著衣、化妝，帶著大包小包前往販售會現場。

我想這就是cosplayers的對於 cosplay 熱情展現。

Katrien: Is Taiwanese society very accepting of cosplayers or are conservative parties and people worried about it—like are there any controversie about BL themes?

Mia：台灣的大眾媒體經常會出現cosplay的新聞片段，尤其是電視新聞，只要動漫展或是同人誌販售會開展，電視新聞都會排在尾聲當作一則有趣的花絮，因為cosplay亮麗的造型與奇特的裝扮，總是會吸引人多看兩眼。

不了解的人多半是好奇的眼光看待cosplay，這幾年在同人誌販售會現場，可以看到一些cosplayers 由父母陪同參加，爸爸開車送子女到現場，媽媽幫忙拖運裝滿道具、服裝的行李箱，我曾經問過一個陪著女兒去參加販售會的媽媽，她表示這不是一種不好的嗜好，我一個會裁縫的朋友，有一度企圖幫她迷上cosplay的女兒製作衣服。現在一部份父母心態多半抱著，姑且順著小孩的志向與興趣，說不定小孩可以發展出一片天，可以玩出個名堂，甚至作可以賺大錢，因為他們實在不了解虛擬網路的世代。對於BL的態度，台灣人就是視而不見，這個與台灣人對於同性戀的態度相類似，總是不願意多講，一種不願意多談的默契：可以做不能說。父母即使不小心翻到這類的東西，都是不願意多言，認為這種事是青少年一時的癖好而已，只要過了這一個階段，就會雲淡風輕。台灣宗教在同性戀與同性癖好的反對力量，無法如西方般的強烈，因為台灣人認為性是一種個人的私事，不方便公開的討論。這種對於同性戀的不可言說的氣氛，也延伸到對cosplay的BL態度。





11

BERNADETTE BRAVO:

THE WHOLE FAMILY MAY GO TO THE EVENT

Ma Bernadette Bravo is a scholar from the Philippines who studies the development of “Pinoy cosplay”, the Filipino version of cosplay. She is a student at the Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies at Waseda University, Japan and she volunteered to be our guide when interviewing cosplayers in Akihabara and Harajuku on our fieldtrip to Tokyo.

Bernadette: I discovered cosplayers when I came here and I noticed that their standards are at a really high level. Cosplay here is really popular. Well, in the Philippines we used to improvise a lot more and we made the costumes, so it was a lot more DIY (Do-It-Yourself).

Katrien: So the Japanese don't make their own costumes?

Bernadette: Well, I am not so sure about it. But I interviewed one of the groups before and most of the things they wear, they buy online or order it from special shops. They just give their measurements to shops, especially the Mandarake (one of Tokyo's largest vendor of used anime/manga products) on the 4th floor of Nakano Broadway (mall).

Anne: Why have cosplayers shifted to the area of Akihabara?

Bernadette: Well, apparently it's because of the maid café boom. Because the “French Maid” is one of the most popular fashions in Japan and it has become a huge phenomenon here.

Anne: How do they get along among their groups? The maids and the cosplayers -- how do they relate to each other?

Bernadette: It's obvious that most of those women in the maid cafes do it as part-time jobs, which is baito in Japanese. It is more like a job to them than a hobby. I went to a maid cafe once with some friends and I had mixed feelings about it. I thought that their dress-up was really great, but they were a bit like in an over-dramatic Japanese TV show.



Bernadette：我來到這裡以後開始關注 Cosplay 者，發現他們的水平很高。在這裡 Cosplay 真的很流行。在菲律賓，我們喜歡即興表演也會自己製作服飾，所以我們更加 DIY。

Bernadette：很顯然大部份在女僕咖啡店工作的女人只是在那裡做一份臨時工，日語叫做 Baito。對她們來說，與其說是興趣，不如說是工作。我和幾個朋友去過一次女僕咖啡店，我有一種蠻複雜的感覺。我覺得她們的外表真是不錯，但是又有點類似於過於戲劇化的日本戲劇。

Katrien: Yes, we noticed that and we also noticed that there are so many rules, like you cannot touch the maids, not even to give them a handshake. Or you have to respond to the games they play. I thought that the rules were too starkly present.

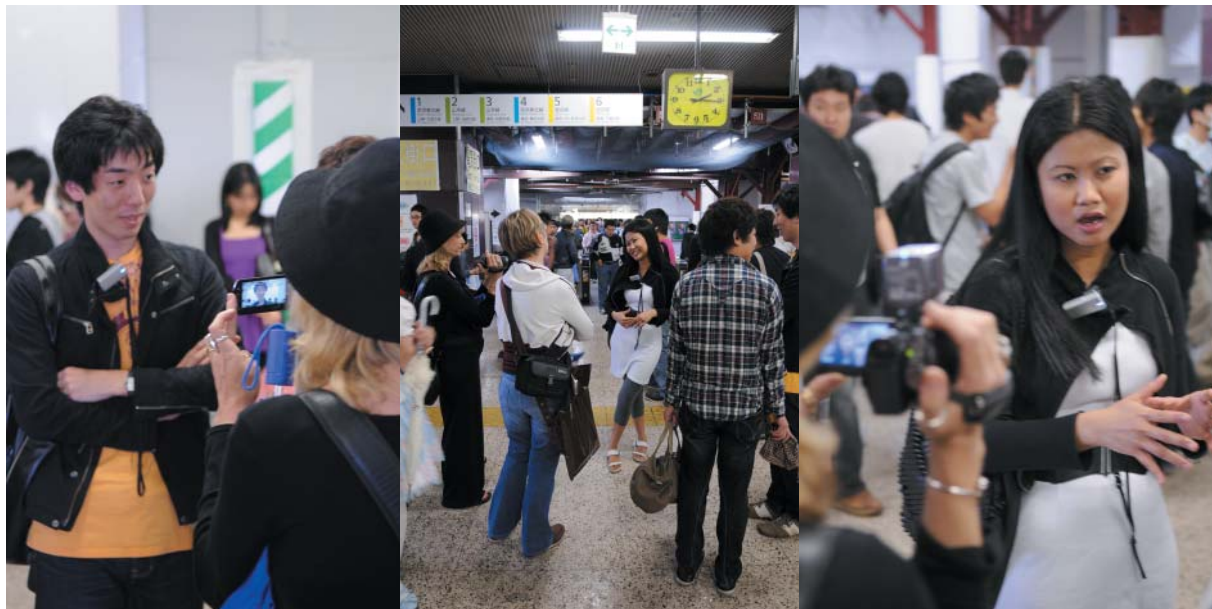
Bernadette: For the Japanese, they probably don't feel the same way, because it is a part of life. The cosplayers in Japan also have many rules.

Too many rules. In the Philippines, it is a whole different story, as the whole family may go to cosplay events. The grandmothers probably won't go in a costume, but they enjoy being with their grandchildren and seeing them in costumes.

Actually, a lot of them are high-school girls who travel from far away to be in Harajuku or Akihabara on Sundays. You can see them all arriving, dragging their big suitcases. But they have nowhere to dress up so they tend to do it in the toilets of McDonald's in Takeshita Street. That's where they suit themselves all up. There was a time when McDonald's had a sign that said, "If you want to use our bathroom, please be responsible for your actions". This is because they tend to leave a lot of stuff behind.



Bernadette: 很多人其實是從遠方長途跋涉而來，想要週日可以身在原宿或是秋葉原的高校女生。你看到她們全都從遠方來，人人都拖著一個大提箱。但她們找不到地方化妝換衣，有時她們會在竹下街麥當勞的洗手間里準備好服裝和化妝。曾經那家麥當勞掛出一副廣告說“請注意自己的行為，如果你還想使用我們的洗手間的話。”因為女孩子們會將許多東西扔在那裡。





Anne: We have also noticed that it is hard to photograph the cosplayers. Is it like in Hong Kong, where they basically have their own photographers?

Bernadette: Yeah, in Japan they have their own "camera boys" who follow them around. They go around and try to shoot cosplay girls specifically.

Katrien: And when you do your cosplay, what do you dress as?

Bernadette: I haven't dressed up here in Japan. But in the Philippines I did many times, dressing like androgynous characters of the J-rock bands. I also have a photo of myself doing Motoko Kusanagi from *Ghost in the shell*. Her character is quite sexual, but that isn't so accepted in the Philippines, so I put a coat on.

Bernadette: 在日本我不做cosplay，可是在菲律賓我常常都會。我會穿得像日本搖滾樂隊裡那些雌雄同體的人們一樣。我還有一種照片，上面是我模仿Motoko Kusanag（草薙素子）在「攻殼機動隊」（*Ghost in the shell*）裡的造型。她的角色有非常大的性意味，但是在菲律賓人們很難接受這一點。所以在照片里我加了一件外衣。

12 ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF GAZETTE: HARAJUKU COSPLAY



We went to the famous Harajuku Bridge in Tokyo to interview more cosplayers at the “birthplace” of cos. We were happily surprised to find hundreds of cosplayers chatting with each other and hanging around in little groups. It turned out that they were there to celebrate the birthday of Reita of the J-Rock band The Gazette.

Dutch Girl: I am from Holland, doing an internship here. I love cosplay and have come here almost every weekend and made my own little family here. Japan is a very closed culture, but Harajuku is the place where you can actually open up, so there are a lot of teenagers here. And it is a very encouraging place if you want to dress up. And yes, I made a lot of friends here. But, people mostly cosplay “visual kei” bands here, because the trend of cosplaying anime characters has dropped off a bit. But it has become like a tourist attraction kind of thing.

.....

Boyish Girl with Moustache, friend of Dutch Girl.

Katrien: What is your character?

Cosplayer: Miyabi is a Japanese rock musician in the visual kei style. He is a guitar player. He has a moustache on one of his singles.

Katrien: Do you always cos the same character, or do you do many characters?

Cosplayer: Always the same character.

Katrien: Do you also play music?

Cosplayers: Yeah, I play in a band and I play bass guitar. I am always boyish-looking.

Katrien: I don't see many boyish girls you like in Tokyo. Are Japanese girls mostly very girlish?

Cosplayer: Ah...I don't hate the girlish girls, but I don't want to be like that. If you look around here, you will see those boyish girls.

Katrien: Alright, so we came to the right place to find them.

Cosplayer: Yeah.

Katrien: So do you think that it is a kind of positive thing for the Japanese girls to be boyish? Do you like those boyish girls?

Cosplayer: Yes.

Katrien: So, are you also lesbian then?

Cosplayer: I'm bi-sexual.

.....



Kiura and Akakuro, both wearing kindergarden uniforms, with gothic make up; one of them has a bandage on her face.

Kiura(Ki): kindergarden uniform, with gothic make up.

Akakuro(Aka): kindergarden uniform, with a bandage on face.

Anne: How old are you?

Cosplayers: We are both 16.

Anne: Have you been cosplaying for a while?

Cosplayers: Only for about 6 to 8 months.

Anne: You look beautiful. Who is the character?

Cosplayers: We are an artist and musician from the band Gazette. The band members don't dress like we did but we base it on a talk they gave.

Anne: Do you always wear the same costume?

Cosplayers: Yes, the same costume, mostly from the materials of Gazette.

.....

Two girls wearing white shirts with black vests and bowties.

Anne: So you are also cosplaying the Gazette. Are you friends or sisters?

Cosplayers: We are sisters and we are both studying in junior high school.

Sister A: I have been doing this for two to three years.

Sister B: I am still new to this, just a couple of months actually.

Anne: How do your parents react to this then?

Sister A: They are bewildered but they are very much fine with it.

.....





Boy wearing white contact lenses, a black bow-tie and a white coat.

Boy: My cos image is similar to costume of The Gazette but it is not actually the same.

Katrien: Are your contact lenses the same as those of the Gazette?

Boy: I actually bought these lenses a while ago because I like white color contact lenses. I hope it would scare others.

Katrien: Do you always cosplay with the same costume?

Boy: It depends on my mood of the day. Since I am not a student, I can cosplay the visual kei band members as a hobby during holidays.

Katrien: How do you feel about being a man here? Because there are a lot more women than men right? So how do you feel about that?

Boy: I don't think it is an issue. I just try not to touch the girls.

Katrien: What kind of job do you have?

Boy: Supermarket sales.



男孩子帶白色的隱形眼鏡，穿一件白外衣，另有一個黑領結。

男孩：我的cos形象有一點像the Gazette，但其實和那不一樣。

Katrien：你的隱形眼鏡和他們一樣么？

男孩：我的眼鏡買了很久了，我喜歡白色的隱形眼鏡，我希望別人會被驚倒。

Katrien：你會不會在cosplay里穿同樣的衣服。

男孩：那取決於我當時的感覺。因為我不是學生，我可以在假日cosplay那些視覺系樂團的成員。

Katrien：你覺得作為一個男性在這裡感覺怎樣？因為這裡女人多過男人很多？你有甚麼想法？

男孩：我覺得沒問題，我就是儘量不要碰到那些女孩子。

Katrien：你的工作是？

男孩：超市推銷員。

A group of Japanese university students who are also doing research on cosplay approached us for an interview. So we did our mutual interview with them surrounded by the Harajuku cosplayers.

Student A: Foreigners may think that the young Japanese fashion is really strange and they may laugh at Japanese cosplayers. But they are just expressing themselves, so it is not so bad after all. It is like a very “colorful” expression of themselves, and of Japanese culture.

Anne: I think that Japanese fashion is spreading all over the world. We have a lot of it in Hong Kong. You know, it’s influencing many youths.

Student B: Japanese fashion started to influence the world since the 1980s and it goes from strength to strength, or from fashion to fashion.

Student A: But, most of the Japanese are really negative about cosplay. Ever since the word otaku appeared, many young people hate the word and don’t want to be characterized as an otaku. This is quite a problem.

Student B: Yeah, so otaku people gather with otaku people and non-otaku people hang out with non-otaku people. And many pretend that they are non-otaku, even if they are in fact otaku.

Katrien: Well, otakus are very smart people, right?

Student A: The definition of *otaku* in Japanese is somebody who is really, *really* into something. He or she doesn’t have to like anime. I have to define it as having an obsession with something, I think. It doesn’t have to be anime or cosplay. For example, I love music and the guitar. So I am a guitar otaku. But the ones who get the most attention are the one that can be visibly recognized as otaku — like cosplayers, for example, who are hardcore anime fans.

Student B: I think one of the reasons why it is such a big issue is the financial impact. The *otaku* culture sells a lot; it is a huge market in Japan. It is exported into the United States and to everywhere in the world. I think it has become a major market in Japan.



學生A：外國人也許會覺得日本年輕人的時尚觀念很奇怪，也許會嘲笑日本的cosplay者。但是他們只是在表達自己，所以cosplay並不是壞事。它更像一種非常“色彩斑斕”的對於自己的也是對於日本的表達。

學生A：但是大部份日本人對於cosplay真的很反感。自從Otaku（禦宅男）這個詞出現后，很多年輕人都厭惡它，更不想自己會被聯繫到otaku這個詞上。這是一個嚴重的問題。

學生B：對啊，所以禦宅男只和禦宅男交流，而不是禦宅男的人也只和不是禦宅男的人在一起。很多禦宅男都會假裝自己不是禦宅男。



Student A: I wouldn't really like to be part of the cosplay thing because I think it is one of the "boxes of identity". Everybody wants an identity. Japanese fashion magazines are trying to sell identities like packaged goods.

Katrien: Yeah. You feel like you are outside that box, right?

Student B: I actually think that we are all part of it somehow. We all have a boxed identity and this is the topic of our research paper. There are groups of people who are skinny, wear torn jeans, hang many chains and accessories on their clothes and wear an extra t-shirt -- they are called the "visual kei". Then there are the Hip-Hoppers. And then there is the category called "casual kei". People try to categorize everything, you know, and it's crazy.

學生B：我其實覺得我們每個人都是其中一部份。我們都有一個被裝在盒子裡的身份，我們的研究題目也是這個關在盒子里的身份。有一些人，他們很瘦，穿破了的牛仔褲，衣服上有很多鏈條和其他東西，再加一件T恤，那就被叫做是視覺系。也有一些被稱為說唱風的，還有一族被叫做隨意系的。人們想要把所有的東西都分類。這種分類是瘋狂的。

Major Motoko Kusanagi (Ghost in the Shell)

Ghost in the Shell (攻殻機動隊) is a Japanese multimedia cyberpunk masterpiece represented in manga, films, anime series, video games and story books. The narrative focuses on the business of the anti-terrorist organization Public Security Section 9 (PSS9), led by Major Motoko Kusanagi (草薙素子).

It is quite challenging to “cos” the Major since this character is portrayed differently in the manga and animation versions both physically and mentally.

The character and sexuality of Motoko Kusanagi is adjusted according to the particular storyline in this futuristic world story. As a consequence, Major expresses both feminine and masculine characteristics throughout the series.

Sadly, at the end of the Ghost in the Shell, Major loses her memory after a serious injury.

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The Gazette

The Gazette (ガゼット) is a Japanese heavy metal band formed in March 2002. Five stylish guys, Ruki, Uruha, Reita, Aoi, and Yune formed a band under the name Gazette. Yet in early 2003, Yune was replaced by Kai.

500 cosplayers recently grouped to celebrate the birthday of Reita, the bass guitar player from Gazette, in Tokyo.

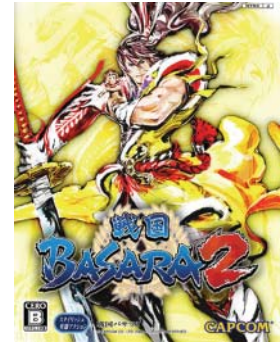
Gazette have released 11 Albums and EP's in total. Their music style is varies greatly but mainly taps into the genres of Heavy Metal and Alternative Metal.

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Sengoku Basara

Set in the warrior period of feudal Japan, numerous bloody fighting scenes revolve around the tales of the Devil Kings (戦国BASARA). The dark lord Oda Nobunaga, also named Devil King, is a big threat to everyone. The manga series focuses on how Date Masamune and Sanada Yukimura, two young leading warriors, form an alliance with the other generals in order to take down Devil King.



Date Masamune is one of the key heroic characters of this story. The young Masamune suffered a bout with smallpox that caused an infection in his right eye-which he plucked out himself afterwards. Together with his aggressive and unstable demeanor, he earns respect with a nickname of, "One-eyed Dragon".

The young Masamune suffered a bout of small pox which caused an infection in his right eye-which he then plucked out himself. Combined with his early aggressive and unstable demeanor, Masamune earned the tag 'One-eyed Dragon'. That nickname would stick with him, but became it also become one indicating respect.

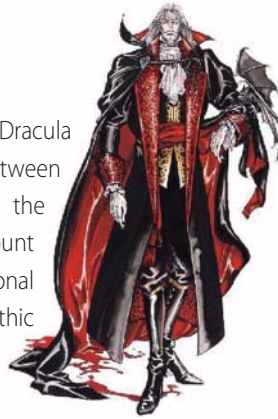
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Count Dracula

The story of Akumajō Dracula (悪魔城) is about war between two vampire families, the Belmonts and Dracula. Count Dracula is one of the fictional characters from a 1897 Gothic horror novel Dracula by Bram Stoker.



Count Dracula is considered to be the most influential fictional character who provided the foundations for the world of vampires. He was also considered to be one of the most powerful monsters of Gothic literature, whilst additional traits of human characteristics were found in him.

Would it be too fictional if a cosplayer could shape-shift Count Dracula into the form of a wolf or a bat as well? In Age of the Cyborg, "impossible is nothing"!

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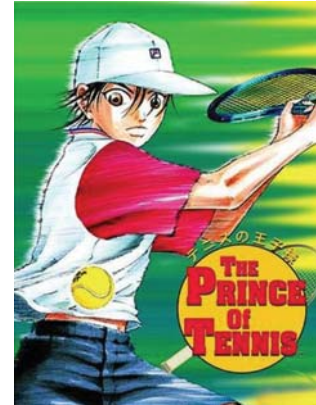
The Prince of Tennis

The Prince of Tennis (テニスの王子様), often shortened to TeniPuri, is a popular Japanese shōnen manga series by Takeshi Konomi.

Set in Tokyo, members of the Seishun Academy's tennis

team are well known for their talented, gifted, and athletic achievements. The story revolves around how Ryoma Echizen, a confident tennis prodigy, leads his team to achieve the National Middle School Tennis Championships. It's exciting to see how the team members improve and master their tennis skills with rigorous and extremely disciplined practice.

Ryoma, nicknamed Samurai Junior, shows his passion for tennis and even develops his own style. It would be so cool to cos Ryoma, the Prince of Tennis!



References:

Wikipedia (2009, August 31). *The Prince of Tennis*. Retrieved September 5, 2009, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Prince_of_Tennis



Hana-kimi

Hana Kimi (花ざかりの君たちへ) is a popular shōjo manga series written by Hisaya Nakajo.

The romance in Hana Kimi begins when Mizuki Ashiya a Japanese girl, returns from America and falls head over heels in love with a boy named Izumi Sano after seeing his high jump performance on television.

Wanting to get to know him more, she decides to find out all about him and so she attends to the same school as him, as Izumi Sano attends class in a boy's high school. This story creates an interesting plot based on identity changes, especially when Mizuki Ashiya transforms herself into a young boy and enters the boys' school.

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Hell Girl

Ai Enma (閻魔あい, Enma Ai) is a supernatural spirit who can be contacted only by those whose hearts are burning with hatred and then she can help them take revenge.

Ai Enma is also entitled the hell girl. She helps those from her website who want to seek help in taking revenge to send their enemy to straight to hell. By giving her clients cursing-dolls and asking them to untie their red strings, they agree to have their enemies sent to hell. Yet, Ai Enma also guides their souls to hell when they die.

The story set in in a medieval Japanese times, which is also reflected by the dress of Enma Ai. This helps depict the hell girl with a sense of elegance.

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Cagalli Yula Athha

Gundam (ガンダム, Gandamu) is a popular Japanese anime created by Sunrise studios featuring a giant robot named "Gundam". The series started in 1979, and continues narrating this legend today.

Mobile Suit Gundam SEED Destiny (機動戦士ガンダムSEED DESTINY) is the second anime series of Gundam in 2004. Set 2 years after the previous series, many new characters appeared and Cagalli Yula Athha is one of the main tough guys.

Cagalli Yula , also a princess, is the adopted daughter of the representative Orb Union. Having a tough and strong character, she tried her best to fight and protect those she loves.

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Marie Antoinette (in The Rose of Versailles)

The Rose of Versailles is a popular shōjo manga by Riyoko Ikeda. This interesting story-line focuses on Lady Oscar throughout the series, a girl raised from birth as a man, who commands the palace guards at Versailles in the years before the 1789 French Revolution.



Oscar is always torn between her gender identity and her official role. This leads to conflicting desires in terms of being female or male, and hence complicates her relationship with another main female character, Marie Antoinette.

Marie Antoinette is the Princess of Austria. She married the prince Louis XVI in order to seal the alliance agreed between King Louis XV and her mother, Queen Maria Theresa. She is a beautiful and lively character in the series.

References:

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Sleeping Beauty - Princess Aurora

Aurora is also Sleeping Beauty who is named after the Roman goddess of the dawn, and later became one of the famous Disney Princesses, also known as "Briar Rose".

She received both blessings and curses from good and bad fairies respectively at her christening. Aurora was cursed to die from touching a spinning wheel's spindle on her sixteenth birthday.

Fortunately, one of her blessings weakens the curse from a death curse to a deep sleep, until she is awakened by her true love - Prince Phillip's kiss.

The moderated curse helps bring Sleeping Beauty to true romance and a life of happy ever after.

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elf I-RA

Elf I-RA is an imaginary character from a Korean website, Dream of Doll.

As dark elf Duncan's right arm, I-Ra ranked the highest class of dark elf swordswoman. She is the only one who could manage the Odyssey sword that captured the soul of the best swordsman ever.

I-RA, who was actually a Moon Elf, eventually turned to a Dark Elf as she was attracted to Duncan.

References:

Dream Of Doll(2004). *LIMITED D.O.D*. Retrieved August 28, 2009, from <http://www.dreamofdoll.com/>



Elisabeth of Bavaria

Born in Munich, Elisabeth of Bavaria (24 December 1837 - 10 September 1898) was the Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary as the spouse of Emperor Francis Joseph I.

Elisabeth was nicknamed Sissi by family and friends from an early age. Sisi's romance began at 16, when she followed her mother and sister Duchess Helene to the Austrian resort. Francis Joseph fell in love with Sisi at first sight and chose to marry her. They subsequently had four children.

Sisi was famous for her beauty, as well as her fashion sense, healthy diet and passion for sports. Sisi's story was eventually turned into classic romance film entitled Sissi (1955), directed by Ernst Marischka.

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