

FreezeFrame: A Q&A with Ann Adachi-Tasch, Executive Director of [Collaborative Cataloging Japan](#)

On August 9, Lightbox will premier Japanese Experimental Animation: Ko Nakajima, Keiichi Tanaami and Nobuhiro Aihara, curated by Ann Adachi-Tasch, Executive Director of [Collaborative Cataloging Japan](#), a Philadelphia-based organization that works to preserve and promote Japanese moving-image art. We spoke with Adachi-Tasch about this program and why she works to preserve Japanese film.

How long have you been helping catalogue and preserve films, and what drew you to this work?

The cataloguing work really started only when I started CCJ, since 2016. I'm not an archivist, so I don't do the actual work, but I raise funds to bring archivists to the artists' collections that could use professional assistance. I first got involved in preservation, or more precisely digitization, when I was working on MoMA's sub-site [post.at.moma.org](#), when we were preparing contents related to the film activities of '60s and '70s at Sogetsu Art Center, an epicenter of experimental art of that period. Researcher Go Hirasawa who is still involved with CCJ today, was the curator of the "film at Sogetsu" contents, and he had found unpublished animation work of Tadanori Yokoo, the artist and designer.

I decided to start a nonprofit to support the preservation and presentation of Japanese experimental moving image when I was working on a curatorial project about Japanese video art called Vital Signals at [Electronic Arts Intermix](#), a video art distributor in New York. I realized there were no archives dedicated to the preservation and distribution of avant-garde moving image works in Japan.

How does the collaborative method work, and is it unusual among film organizations?

By joining the resources and knowledge among the archivists and researchers who care about preserving this history, we believe we can spread out our resources to cover more ground than if we were doing this on our own. For example, CCJ does not have the capacity to build a brick-and-mortar archive. But we can work with the rights holder (or the artist) and an institution that does have the infrastructure to maintain archival film prints or digital files, and ask the rights holder to deposit the end-product at an archival facility where it will be kept at the right environment for archival preservation. Researchers direct our priorities in terms of what should be preserved. We take that direction and ask archivists to assess the physical needs of specific works. With very limited grants, we really have to decide carefully, one project at a time. I do think this kind of mode of working is unique, in terms of creatively working under the modest scale and budget.

What is most exciting about this particular set of films and artists—why choose these for preservation?

In February 2018, we conducted collection surveys of works by Keiichi Tanaami and Ko Nakajima, which were led by invited New York-based archivists Peter Oleksik and John Klacsmann. After the survey, Peter and John gave a report which clearly defined what the preservation needs of the works were. The surveys were led by researchers Hirofumi Sakamoto, Sen Uesaki, and myself for the Nakajima collection, and Julian Ross for the Tanaami collection.

We discussed the preservation priorities, in terms of works that are important to the histories of their artistic practices. For this screening, we are digitizing the first two animation works by Nakajima, which is important in terms of Nakajima's oeuvre, as well as the history of the animation festivals at Sogetsu Art Center. Similarly, Tanaami's *Marionettes in Masks* (1966) was screened at Sogetsu, and Tanaami's representative gallery Nanzuka is preparing a digital version now. We are also thrilled to present with Postwar Japan Moving Image Archive, because they are our sister organization in Japan, and have been doing tremendous work—here we present their most recent project, the digitization of works by Nobuhiro Aihara.

What influence did these films and artists have? Where do they fit into the history of experimental moving-image art?

Nakajima comes from photography, but he was very interested in animation. In fact, he was involved with the Japanese Animation Association, and is still giving workshops and lectures about the history of Japanese animation, that dates back to the Edo, and even Jomon (c. 1000 BCE) period! He was very passionate about animation and wanted to show at Sogetsu Art Center. He didn't have much money, so he made up a method of creating animation by drawing directly onto film. He went on to experiment with video, and started a video art collective called Video Earth Tokyo. They are important in the history of Japanese video art because they engaged with cable access television and made their own documentaries. Tanaami started out as a graphic designer, and from there, learned how to make his graphics move. He is known for his pop imagery, and has also done experiments in expanded cinema formats.

What are you working on now or next?

We are currently finishing up our Japanese Expanded Cinema research. We are digitizing and duplicating cut positives that never made it into the published works of Motoharu Jonouchi and VAN Film Science Research Center. Go Hirasawa is leading this project. He is also digitizing some archival papers of Masanori Oe and Motoharu Jonouchi. Julian Ross is working on the expanded cinema of Keiichi Tanaami. He did an interview during our collection survey, which we are about ready to publish. We are also considering duplicating and digitizing one of his expanded cinema works. We are also working on a potential presentation of Shuzo Azuchi Gulliver's expanded cinema work in 2019. And we will tour this Experimental Animation program by request.