

Panel D4

Sala Emiciclo

Objects, Bodies, Gestures

Catherine Munroe Hotes

The Art of Gesture: The Legacy of Traditional Puppet Theatre in the Stop Motion of Jiří Trnka and Kihachirō Kawamoto



When Kihachirō Kawamoto went to Eastern Europe in 1963 to observe the stop motion animation practices there he brought along examples of his own stop motion from commercials and children's television. He was shocked to discover that Europeans found his work very American. He was advised by Jiří Trnka that one had to remember that puppets have their own puppet world. They are not to be mistaken for miniature human beings. By learning how the Czechs had transferred their own puppet theatre tradition into the new media of film, Kawamoto heeded their advice to observe and learn from his native culture's own tradition of *bunraku* theatre. Using Kawamoto's posthumously published letters and journals from his sojourn in the Czech Republic as well as delving into scholarship on Eastern European and Japanese puppet traditions, this paper will examine the legacy of traditional puppet theatre on the work of both Kawamoto and his mentor Jiří Trnka. Clips from Trnka's and Kawamoto's films will be used to demonstrate how subtleties of puppet movement can be used to create great depth of meaning.

Biography

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Catherine Munroe Hotes has a PhD in Film and Visual Culture from the University of Exeter, UK. Over the past decade, she has become known as an expert in independent Japanese animation with her website *Nishikata Film Review*. She also founded and manages the wikis *Japanese Women Behind the Scenes* and the *Japanese Animation Filmography Project*. Since 2011 she has curated of the animation shorts program at the Japanese film festival Nippon Connection in Frankfurt am Main. Her latest project is *Blinkity Blog*, a website that celebrates rare and unique animation from around the world.