

## Before the workshop

*By Dino SATO, head of the workshop at the Musashino Art University, Tokyo*

This project is the workshop that young Japanese students in Musashino Art University make short animations through Cavafy's poem.

At that time my students and I didn't know C. P. Cavafy.

Many students didn't know about Greek history very much.

First I offered them to search famous ancient Greeks and Romans.

They learned ancient Greek and Roman through Cavafy's poem.

Then they chose one Cavafy's poem, and made sketches, storyboards and animations.

This project includes the common or difference between Greek and Japan.

One student said that ancient Greek have many gods is same as Japan too.

How will young Japanese students of today understand Cavafy's poem about 100 years ago?

And how will Greeks of today understand the animations?

I think this exchanges of ideas between two countries are very important.

Students made better animation works than usual according to display abroad too.

**But these animations are unskillful or poor representations.**

**I do want to say for my students' prides.**

**These are their first animation.**

**I think they will make better animations soon.**

I am interested that the origin of their animation are from Cavafy's poems.

In Japan, our works will also show November 18-22th at Musashino Art University.

## After the workshop

Here are 21 animations that students in Musashino Art University, Tokyo, Japan tried to interpret Cavafy's poems.

What can I read from these works?

Cavafy's poems have some features.

Especially I was interested in sexual expressions strongly.

When the workshop started, I expected how the students approached sexual poems.

But they avoided expressing sexual expressions.

Or no one chose a sexual poem.

A sensual boy is written in both poems, "*In the Street*" and "*In an Old Book*".

Two students chose the poems as a theme.

But the both students kept away from sexual words.

And they draw as a healthy and innocent boy.

The director of "*Halation*" didn't agree to Cavafy's sexual descriptions.

She portrayed her feelings about his poetry, not about each poem.

Why did students avoid sexual expressions?

In my opinion, this workshop was a study assignment as one of reasons.

We Japanese aren't used to facing sexual expressions in a class.

The word "sex" in a class is almost a sexual reproduction as a science.

In a literature class too, we have read a love story, or have met the word of "mother's bosom" in a textbook.

Our sexual expressions are that level in a class.

We have not read a poem as Cavafy's.

There may be some opposition we can also regard ancient Greek statues or Renaissance paintings as a one of sexual expression in Japan.

This time I heard that Cavafy's poem is very popular in Greece.

I noticed that Greek culture is different from Japanese one again.

Durex surveyed about the frequency of sex in 41 countries.

The frequency of sex in Japan was only 45 times a year.

But In Greek, that was 138 times a year.

Greek's frequency was the 1<sup>st</sup> in 41 countries on the other hand Japan was the lowest.

I can say the result of this workshop is related to this survey report.

(Durex, 2005 Global Sex Survey Report - "Frequency of Sex")

Japanese are apt to hide about sex.

So we are embarrassed to express sexuality.

And we often regard sexual expressions as inferior, like a porno.

Our law prohibits displaying the sex organs in public, even arts and photographs.

Law can't display pornographic woodblock printings about 200 years ago, as well known as erotic Ukiyo-e, unhesitatingly even now.

To speak of extremes, I think sexual expressions are divided into two categories, medical and porno, in present Japan.

The students tend to avoid sexual expressions against such background.

There is not a nudist beach in Japan.

Nudism isn't popular too.

I think that is very symbolic.

I was able to consider about sexual expressions in depth at this time, and I was very interested in the gradation of sexual expression.

And almost the students in my class will take a commercial design after graduation.

Because the commercial design dislike uncomfortable or too much sexual expressions.

So I think the students dislike explicit expressions.

I wonder if we narrow the range of our expressions by ourselves with unconsciousness.

This workshop had me notice many things.

And it is important to think freely without restraints.

I want to make the students to break a stereotyped way of thinking.

I appreciate to Cavafy and ART / European Animation Center that give us the chance.