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Abstract

There are no set theories that show the specific relationship between Trinidad and Japan culture. However, this thesis looks at the cross-cultural aspects between Trinidadian artist and Japanese otaku culture that have been cultivated through popular culture and our advancing technological age. As otaku culture become an increasingly trendy part of popular culture, Trinidadian artists are increasingly drawing inspiration from it using it as way of self-exploration and leisure. This thesis provides answers from the otaku artist's point of view. Findings that can also add to the body of cross-cultural research, include examples of anime styled artwork and qualitative data on the cultural influences of Japanese otaku culture in Trinidad.

Key words: otaku, anime, Trinidad, popular culture, culture, identity

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Chapter 1

Introduction

There is a high level of exchange of cultural ideas and practices between Trinidad and Japan. This cross-cultural exchange has its origins in 1979 when the relationship between Japan and the Caribbean was solidified in Port of Spain, Trinidad with the formation of the Embassy of Japan (Embassy of Japan in Trinidad and Tobago, “Mission”). However, this initial conduit of cultural exchange pales in comparison opportunities the internet and social media offers for acculturation. As such, the emergence of Japanese Otaku culture within the art space of Trinidad saw a natural evolution especially with younger and more tech savvy artists.

Otaku is a term used to describe a genre of popular culture that has its genesis in Japan. This form of popular culture describes persons with consuming interests in Anime, Manga, idols and video games all originating from Japan (“Otaku”). A person whose lifestyle and interests are influenced by Otaku culture is ultimately called an Otaku. Otaku is also used as a suffix which is used when describing the type of Otaku a person is (“Otaku”). An Anime Otaku describes someone who is interested in anime, which is now synonymous with animations originating from Japan (Welin 6). Anime has become increasingly trendy and many young people worldwide. Trinidad is definitely not exempt from this anime trend as more and more youths are becoming interested in Japanese otaku culture. A Manga Otaku, is someone who is interested in Japanese comics and cosplay which is the act of parading in a costume as a character (Phillip). Other types of Otakus such as those interested in video games have developed a growing fanbase in Trinidad (Phillip) as well is Idol Otakus which describes those who, as the name suggests, idolize pop singer girl groups. These groups form an intrinsic slice of Otaku culture.

The Crossover of Japan's Otaku Culture in Trinidad

Interactions between groups of differentiating cultures are not uncommon in the twenty-first century. While there is no specific research dissecting the relationship between Trinidadian and Japanese culture and traditions, there is research on different types of cross-cultural interactions as well as official platforms and relationships that bridge the gap between the two nations. This includes The Embassy of Japan in Trinidad and Tobago, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Centre for Language Learning as well as Anima Caribbean.

According to Matsubara Yutaka, the current ambassador of Japan to Trinidad and Tobago, the embassy allows for friendly cross-cultural interactions between nations such as, “sports and cultural exchanges, Japanese speech contest, Kendo tournaments and the introduction of Japanese cuisine” This is especially highlighted in the temporary job opportunities for Trinidadian in Japan with the Japan Exchange and Teaching system (Embassy of Japan in Trinidad and Tobago). It enables Japanese locals to employ foreign youth as Assistant English Language Teachers (JET Programme Official). The JET system opens opportunities for young Trinidadians interested in Japanese cultures, including otaku culture, with an opportunity to interact with that environment while actively learning about it (Embassy of Japan in Trinidad and Tobago). Artists are also affected by Trinbago's relationship with Japan via the embassy. One example is Trinbagonian author Phillip Simon's children's book, *Petra and the Pouie*, which follows a young Trinbagonian girl who comes into contact with Japanese culture, linking the similarities between Trinbago's Pouie tree and Japan's famous Cherry Blossom trees (Ghouralal). Simon's inspirations stem from aspects of otaku culture including anime and manga series which he explored further by taking three years of Japanese language learning and participating in the JET program from 2016 to 2018 (Ghouralal). The illustration art style of the book is also heavily influenced by these aspects of

otaku culture. The positive feedback from the book is what led to the establishment of a partnership with the Japanese Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago (Ghouralal). This is just one example of the growing interest in Japan's otaku culture in the community of young artists of Trinidad.

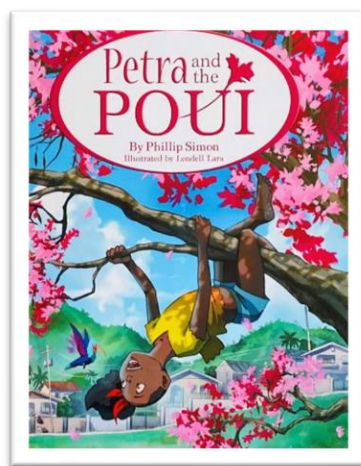


Figure 1 Petra and the Pou by Phillip Simon

The formal setting at The University of the West Indies' Centre for Language and Learning also gives way to cultural exchange. The centre offers courses in Japanese language which in turn fosters an exploration of Japanese culture. The courses seek "to introduce students to the study of the Japanese language. It will expose students to basic aspects of Japanese culture and daily life" ("Undergraduate Students").

The formation of Animae Caribe provides further evidence of the influence of otaku culture as they are an organization that hosts the Caribbean's biggest animation festival. Japanese animation is a crucial component of otaku culture. Animae Caribe's Animation and Digital Media Festival launched a film called "Opal" in 2021 which, based on the trailer on their website, had an art style reminiscent of the 3d Japanese anime art style found in anime and video game character

design. Examples of similarly styled character and world design found in otaku culture include Chinese video game Genshin Impact and the anime Dorohedoro (Animae Caribe Festival Cinema).

Objective and Methodology

The paper is qualitative in nature and interrogates the significance of the Japanese otaku culture for Trinidadian artists who utilise this artform as a medium of expression. Data was collected with the use of a questionnaire which was administered using two sampling methods: convenience sampling and snowball sampling. The google forms online platform was used to distribute the questionnaire electronically and data was collected from twenty (20) respondents.

Research Questions

1. What is the significance of the Japanese otaku culture for Trinidadian artists who utilise this artform as a medium of expression?
2. Is this style of art taken seriously in the Trinidadian art space?
3. What are the experiences of the artists who engage with this medium in the Trinidadian art space?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Culture has been defined by many scholars of many different backgrounds with definitions ranging from simple, to having more complex tones and concepts. Ralph Linton defines the culture of a society as, “The sum total of knowledge, attitudes and habitual behaviour patterns shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society” (Thompson). Caribbean Cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, views culture as a space of interpretive struggle. He argues that, “the media not only reflects reality but also “produces” it while “reproducing” the dominant cultural order, in particular the order inherited from the Empire” (Demart). Although each definition holds its own context, they are all similar in nature collectively articulating that culture is derived from a defined set of patterns in behaviour and thinking. Schein’s view of culture follows this narrative best as he believes that, “culture can be viewed as a widely held, shared set of values, beliefs and ideas” (Lebrón and G. Méndez).

Popular culture on the other hand originates from the masses and is influenced by their everyday experiences. It can at times begin as a form of niche culture that blossoms into a form of mass culture. Harmon defined popular culture as “consisting of the arts, rituals and events, myths and beliefs, and artifacts widely shared by a significant portion of a group of people at a specific time (11). Harmon also highlighted that popular culture is functional in nature as it introduces its consumers to new values, attitudes and lifestyles. Any form of popular cultures according to Harmon, also provides its consumers with role models, comfort and security and more often than not they are presented with a platform to have complex issues simplified within a cultural context (11-13). Harmon also notes that popular culture is quite complex and when one attempts to analyse

it, there are “revelations about matters such as the myths that drive us”, making the phenomena “life-affirming and live enhancing” (13).

As with any form of popular culture, Otaku culture emerged from a marginalised group. According to B-Ikeguchi, this culture developed in Japan in the 1960's as a “marginalised and stigmatised geek sub-culture” (247). Since then it has become a one of the most famous forms of Japanese popular culture that has a global influence (Ito, Okabe, & Tsuji). In the contemporary Western World, Otaku is simply seen as a Japanese term that translates to ‘nerd’ in English and specifies individuals who are heavily invested in Japanese animation, comics, video games, idols and the fantasy genre (B-Ikeguchi 246). Originally, Japanese anime and manga fans used this term to refer to each other (B-Ikeguchi 247). This term, often used in popular culture, can apply to anyone and vary with positive or negative connotations depending on the geographical or social context. Whereas, in Japan, it is often used in a depreciatory manner; as in the formal Japanese language translations can imply an image of an antisocial and isolated individual, Western fans often use the term more enthusiastically (Hills and McGregor 1). The word first caught the attention of the then disturbed Japanese public in the 1990s as their very first otaku serial killer emerged (B-Ikeguchi). This was a major turning point in Japanese crime history popularly known as “The Miyazaki case” or “The Otaku Murderer” (Dire Trip). Concern was expressed by the Japanese public as the otaku fanbase shared the same interests as the killer who was found in possession of manga and other otaku related paraphernalia (B-Ikeguchi 9). From then on, otaku, which was viewed as a normal social trend, suddenly became a weighty word with hostile connotations such as ‘murder’ as expressed by the Japanese public. It did not help that otakus are often stereotypically described as introverted and socially awkward males with eccentric behaviour towards anime and other otaku-related products (Welin 8). Many anime, a term which is now

synonymously linked to stylized animations originating from Japan, and other anime-related products cater to a wide range of ages. This means adult imagery including violence, gore, sex and other level of lewdness referred to as “ecchi” can often be seen in these products which further pushes the stereotype of otakus being degenerative or labelling the culture and those who indulge in it as socially deviant (Sullivan iii). This also pushed the otaku image away from the conservative Japanese nationalist’s way of living which dates to their political history where conservatists overpowered the socialists (Maki 243).

Anime, as previously stated, has gained a substantial mass of fans outside of Japan. However, its global popularity only began to develop after the second World War where Ofuji Noburo’s work began to take off, rather than in the 1940’s where the phrasing was first used. Noburo was revered as the first great anime artist. While there was short controversy surrounding the appropriation of anime from Walt Disney’s cartoons during the 1930s and 1940s, this understanding faded as anime was linked to historical traditions such as scroll painting and the convergence of inspiration from Japan, China, the United States of America and Eastern and western Europe along with inspiration from cinematic productions of the time. Well known manga artists also contributed to the rising popularity of anime as animation studios were built on the preface of certain well-known manga. Famous for his well-known character, Astro Boy, manga artist Tezuka Osamu established his own animation studio in 1961. By the 1980s anime was being led by four major Japanese artists whose work retained a high quality and became internationally loved and evolved into the basis of many otaku merchandise although these well-known mangaka¹ did not lean into the otaku culture fad. Anime went through a period of rough critique during the late 1980s, however this is when anime animators, namely Anno Hideaki, began to fully embrace

¹ A person who creates manga.

the predictable otaku cultural tropes in this work (Buckley 17-19). Manga, the Japanese word for comics, hold many similar themes to anime in its variation of genre from child-like fantasy to depictions of gore and other sexual adult themes. Manga also played a more serious role, being used for political propaganda during the second World War. However in the mid twentieth century, manga began to emerge in the children and teenage comic market with a specific target towards making ‘Shonen comics’ or ‘comics for boys’. The success of Shonen comics lead to Shojo comics, which translates to ‘comics for girls’ which opened doors for many female comic artists. The inclusion of the female comic artists created more complex Shojo stories of those of the male comic counterparts (Buckley 295-296).

Despite the Japanese’s insider view of otakus, there are still many destinations which capitalize from Japanese Otaku culture with places such as the Studio Ghibli theme park in Aichi Japan attracting both foreigners and locals alike (Welin 4). The Anime Tourism Association, established in 2016, was formed due to a global attraction to the Japanese otaku culture. The concept and mission of the association, as stated on their website, expresses their intention to grow and collaborate with the anime industry to promote Japan and its regions around the world (About Us: Anime Tourism Association). Like this association which plans to establish various anime-themed tourist destinations throughout the region, Trinidad has also had its fair share of many anime themed conventions and has many pop-up and permanent shops that cater to a Trinidadian otaku fanbase. Shinsei Café, Kansai Con, Alias Entertainment and GalactaKon are a few named anime events to take place in 2023. These events encapsulate Japanese otaku culture as they highlight activities such as cosplay and the selling of anime merchandise which creates an ecosystem for young Trinidadian otakus with like-minded interests. Shinsei Café, for example, is an event in Trinidad that heavily focuses on Japanese maid café culture where one is also

welcomed to enjoy cosplay and gaming among other otaku-related activities. A maid café, as stated by the ShinseiCon organizers on the event promoting website *WahWeDoing*, is a “subcategory of cosplay restaurants found predominantly in Japan [where] waitresses, dressed in maid costumes, act as servants, and treat customers as masters in a private home, rather than as café patrons.”

While this history of Trinidad’s first encounter with otaku culture is not easily found due to lack of records, many citizens have been enthralled with anime and manga since the late 1990s. One example of this is the story of *Anime Central TnT*, a small family run business that sells and blogs about otaku centred topics and merchandise. Run by three siblings who grew up watching anime on television during the nineties, they noticed that there were hardly any stalls dedicated to selling the anime otaku merchandise that they wanted to display in their rooms after attending a small convention in 2013. On July 6th of the same year, they decided to be a bridge to local anime lovers by establishing *Anime Central TnT* with the goal of providing high quality anime merchandise at affordable prices. Their website provided the origins and inspiration for the beginnings as well as serving as an online store platform for their anime merchandise, cosplay costumes, contact lenses, official K-POP albums/merchandise, manga/manhwa/webtoon & light novels of various genres (Our Story: Anime Central TnT).

The formation of *Animae Caribe* in 2001 was monumental since it provided a space to young creatives interested in otaku culture, specifically animation, to express themselves and explore their interests. In 2010, the animation and digital media festival screened a plethora of Caribbean and international animation shorts, many of which were inspired by life in the Caribbean (The University of Trinidad and Tobago). Trinidadian artists have been integrating their work with that of otaku culture in the forms of drawing fan art of their favourite anime characters and making their own original character concept inspired by the typical anime art style. In 2017 husband and

wife animation team, Everard McBain and Dixie-Ann Archer-McBain, along with the help of GemGfx Animation Studios, created *Jumbie*. This animated projects chronicles the adventures of its young black female Trinidadian protagonist who possess the ability to transform into a superpowered jumbie ²vigilante. Other Carnival Mas characters such as the moko jumbie, jab jab and devil are referenced in the animation beautifully fusing Trinidadian culture and Japanese a form popular culture. While this work relays closer to a European comic superhero style as it is inspired by Marvel comic book characters, it is reminiscent of the ‘magical girl’ anime trope where the main female protagonist flashily fights crime in order to keep everyone safe and is seen as a strong female rather than a damsel in distress. The animation’s creator, Everard McBain, relayed that the average local teen would be able to relay the synopsis of current popular anime series and stressed the importance of putting our culture into the same vehicles as that of Japanese and American creators so that the youth could fall in love with our culture (Neaves). McBain’s mention of anime and its corelation to the youth further shows the growing interest in otaku culture in Trinidad as well as it being an inspiration for more cross-cultural art to take place.

Adrian Reynolds, a contemporary designer/artist based in Dublin Ireland, defines cultural identity as a person’s conscious acceptance of appropriate cultural norms and patterns of behaviour, value orientations, and language. Phenomena such as globalisation, the internet and travel has given way to fluid cultures which in turn fosters a more fluid sense of identity (Sachant and Blood). Post modern theories view identity as multifaceted, fluid and socially constructed (Sachant and Blood). As such, the acculturation of otaku culture within the Trinidadian context is a natural part of the formation of an individual’s cultural identity and the fluidity that it entails. Sachant and Blood postulate that artists interrogate their sense of self symbolically in works of art

² A ghost or spirit of a dead person or animal.

that relate to culture and in doing so they are given the opportunity to explore themselves and “see how they fit within their contemporary culture”. What determines the existence of cultural identity claimed Reynolds, is the level of regulation that each individual finds in the community of other people. Collective support and interaction are pivotal to the quality of human survival (Sachant and Blood). According to Reynolds, the establishment of one’s cultural identity fosters an understanding of the socio-cultural space within which a person thrives which in turn allows the individual to freely navigate in the world having developed that sense of self. Historically, artists have been associated with different groups, movements and organizations that share common interests or forward a cause and being affiliated with these groups gives way to people who are more psychologically and physically strong (Sachant and Blood). It is within this context that this once marginalised aspect of Japanese culture continues to play a major role in the cultural identity persons in Trinidad and in turn influences their artwork.

Art tends to reflect the environment or culture that it is created in. As a result, artwork produced in Trinidad tends to encompass elements of our tropical climate and our social and economic environment. While there are a mixture of answers concerning the size of the anime community in Trinidad and Tobago, there is little recorded information on how otaku culture affects the artists Trinidad and how seriously otaku-inspired art (momokatsuki707). This is especially true around the 1800s when Trinidad’s earliest fine artist, Michel-Jean Cazabon, dominated this era with his paintings that captured and recorded Trinidadian landscape during the 1800s before the camera was invented (Doyle). Many of the otaku-themed mentioned before such as Kasai Con, Galactacon and Alias Entertainment Expo usually have otaku merchandise booths where items are sold to the guests (kasaiconinternational). Since artist can rent these booth spaces, this can push them to create fan art. Fan art is unofficial artwork that is based of

off popular works of fiction (“Fan Art”). Artists, such as Kaidie Edwards, have taken to drawing fan art from popular anime and video games such as Genshin Impact, Demon Slayer and Naruto. Edwards has also made announcements about cosplaying at some of the upcoming 2023 anime events in Trinidad.

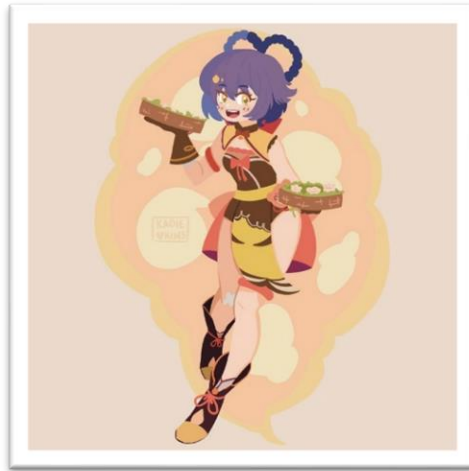


Figure 2 Kaidie Edwards, Fan art of Xiangling

Chapter 3

Findings and Analysis

Eighty percent of the participants considered themselves artists and Sixty-five percent of the demographic were females that live in Trinidad with the most common ages being twenty-two and twenty-three.

The first research question explored the significance of the Japanese otaku culture for Trinidadian artists is who utilise this artform as a medium of expression. This was asked to ascertain if otaku culture was taken seriously within the Trinidadian art space. Fifty percent of the respondents indicated that artwork inspired by the Japanese culture is seen as important, while the other half of the respondents remain unsure or oppose this view. Although the responses take a generally supportive tone, which is an indication that otaku culture is becoming increasingly popular in the Trinidadian art space, there is evidence that suggests that it is still viewed as a marginalized geek sub culture. There were many respondents though who felt that the anime art style is not taken serious in the space. They highlighted that there is still evidence of distaste towards the art style and that negative connotations are associated with those whose work are inspired by otaku culture in general or the anime style art. This is exemplified when one respondent stated that *“you have to stay mostly closeted because of the many negative perceptions of otakus (being weird, perverted etc) though it may be true for some, it is not the whole community.”* It is clear that many of the negative stereotypes associated with otaku culture are still prevalent and are still linked to the social deviancy associated with the culture as previously mentioned in Sullivan’s interpretation of the otaku stereotype.

Respondents felt that the anime art style is not taken seriously within the educational system. They believe that it is being undermined with one respondent stating that “In the

educational environment, it is not validated”, as many who engage with this art form face ridicule from teachers with their artwork being described as “lazy” art. Another respondent seemed to justify the negative attitude of art professors towards otaku inspired art as she believes that these professors react this way as they hope to give students a stronger art foundation rather than rely on anime’s heavily stylized visuals as a reference point. Both participants agree nonetheless that anime style artwork is not taken seriously because for some it manifests as “silly cartoons” for children. They both hold steadfast to the idea that anime styled art is heavily stigmatized and should be taken more seriously due to the artist’s dedication to the craft.

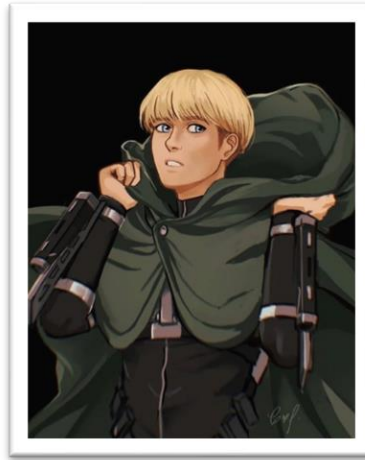


Figure 3 Charissa Payne, Fan art of Armin

A major topic that emerged from the responses was cultural identity, specifically, Trinidadian art identity, with statements conveying that as Trinidadians, we are heavily rooted in our culture. As such, Trinidadian mainstream art tends to reflect our cultural norms such as Carnival and our tropical landscape and climate. As a result of this rootedness in our culture within the art space, a respondent claimed that otaku- inspired art is not taken seriously in Trinidad because, “[some people believe that] it doesn't represent the Caribbean experience,” it does not reflect their lived reality. There was indeed consensus among the respondents that although

inspired by Japanese culture rather than that of Trinidad, it should be taken just as seriously as those that reflect the pure Trinidadian lived experience. This is so as just like any form of art anime style art that emerges from the otaku space, takes time and skill to create. Here we see the need to acknowledge and accept the fluidity of culture and of one's cultural identity. As Sachant and Blood postulated, postmodern theories view identity as multifaceted, fluid and socially constructed. So, artists who engage with the otaku culture to express themselves, see it as a means of navigating their personal identities within the local cultural landscape and the global space. For one respondent, involvement in otaku culture is a foundational aspect of her personality, she stated that *"it is something I enjoy doing, its fun and has helped me become the person I am today and I'll never want to change that"*. She further explained that *"it was lonely at first since I've never fit in with the party/dancehall groupies but now I've found my ppl in TnT, I can enjoy the activities TnT ppl do now"*.

In addition to expressing the view that anime styled art is not taken seriously in Trinidad, some respondents gave reasons why it should be legitimised within the Trinidadian art space citing especially the importance of cross-cultural interactions, as an inclusion of a variety of cultures helps expand people's views on traditions which are different from their own as it creates a safe space and support system for individualistic and artistic intelligence. This way of thinking aligns with the effect of globalization and the internet on Trinidadian artist as other respondents mentioned that it is well received and taken seriously depending on the environment in which it is displayed, expressed and discussed. Due to the belief that "Trinbagonian art space is very Caribbean culture focus", the reception of Japanese based art, "depends on the audience and spaces the work is carried." One respondent highlighted that unlike 'the traditional art scene' in Trinidad, this style of art is only taken seriously on online forums. This is evident as many examples given

in chapter two expound on the use of social media as an ecosystem for Trinidadian weeb where anime convention events, anime fan art and otaku themed content is frequently posted. Eighty-five percent of the respondents knew other Trinbagonian artists with otaku interests. Sachant and Blood express that community, such as an online forum of Trinidadian artists that share an interest in otaku culture, is important for human survival and determining the existence of their cultural identity. Respondents also note that everyone's inspirations are valid no matter where they derive from. A lone respondent believed that Japanese culture should stay in Japan.

When asked how Japanese culture influenced their artwork, fifty percent of the respondents saw their interest in otaku as quite impactful on their work. This implies that Trinidadian artists use otaku culture as a means of identity definition and it, in turn, influences their artwork. Many respondents expressed the physical aspects of their art style changing such as more stylized features such as expressive eyes and facial expressions, dynamic and colourful auras and 'quirky' gestures and poses. Respondents also express that their interest in otaku culture changed the overall trajectory of their interests, pushing them to become animators that dream of working in the Japanese animation production pipeline and comic book writers. For others, the interest in otaku culture served as a stepping stone into the world of art; pushing them to start drawing, with statements like, *"it was my first foundation in anatomy. Now I have strayed away entirely from the style and developed my own, but anime has played a developmental role in my love for art."* This respondent went on to say that it as a style which influenced their own personal art style because they watched anime growing up. Many respondents also shared that they mainly ever draw fan art simply because they enjoy it, which aligns with Harmon's view on popular culture, stating that it provides consumers [of otaku culture] with a sense of comfort and security as an artist detailed, it gives her a sense of "belonging and pride". One could link the familiarity of anime from the artist's

childhood with their strong inclination to embrace this form of culture, that is not part of their home country's cultural landscape but it is still part of their cultural identity.

The final research question explored the experience of being an otaku in Trinidad. Many responses encapsulate the journey of a marginalized geek- subculture transitioning into popular culture. I respondent admitted that, *"When I was younger, I was not open to weebz or telling people I like anime due to stigmas of being perceived as weird, but now I fully embrace it and made a lot of cool friends and people I could relate to."* Another respondent stated quite frankly that *"it's pretty normal since anime is very popular now"*. Other respondents expressed that being an otaku in the Trinidadian society does not affect their general lives. They noted that despite the negative connotations of "cringe" that can come with being a weeb, it only emerges when they interact with their inner circle of friends who are like minded or simply understanding. Here the acculturation of otaku culture in Trinidad is evident and the formation of cultural identities and social groups around it validates its importance in the Trinidadian cultural landscape as well as the art space. As this culture becomes more widely accepted and normalized, respondents explained that now they feel a sense of belonging and pride. Along with finding a like-minded community of people in Trinidad, they further explained that otaku culture helped them become the person that they are as they were unable to fit in with the mainstream crowd in their past. Although many responses elaborate that otaku-inspired art and otaku culture is now a growing community and growing artistic movement especially within the online Trinidadian space, one respondent rebutted that they dislike the idea of being stereotyped due to the otaku label while another hinted at staying as a 'closeted weeb' due to negative stereotypes.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Trinidadian artists are being influenced by otaku culture as it is rapidly growing popular sub-culture that is developing with our technologically advanced younger artists. The importance of Japanese otaku culture for Trinidadian artists is explored through concepts that involve finding one's identity and comfort. Artists utilize anime style as an inspiration and self-expression as well as a form of leisure. While a majority of these artist believe that anime styled art is stigmatized due to the educational system which still paints it with the negative stereotypes of the unsociable and marginalized, they concluded that it helped them navigate their personal art journey. The experience of being perceived an otaku in the Trinidadian art space is defined by the online community that is formed among Trinidadian weeb. In the local culture-driven art scene, these artists have founded and formed communities and developed resources for themselves and other non-artistic Trinidadian weeb. With the acceleration of otaku-themed and other 'geek' themed conventions occurring in Trinidad yearly, there is certainly a possibility of the expansion of this popular culture known as otaku culture in Trinidad that will impact artists and non-artists alike.



Figure 4 sereinxmori, Original character "Cara"

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Appendix

Questionnaire

1. Age
2. Sexual Orientation
3. Where are you from?
4. Do you consider yourself an artist?
5. If you are a visual artist, what mediums do you use? (Watercolour, acrylic, mixed media, resin etc.)
6. What genre is your art? (Surreal, realism, Afrofuturism etc.)
7. Did you know what an otaku is prior to the definition given?
8. Are you influenced by Japanese otaku culture?
9. Which of the following do you partake in? (I watch anime/ I read manga/ I play video games/ I cosplay characters/ I listen to J-pop and anime opening sequences/ I watch V-Tubers/ I buy anime, manga or game related merch/ all of the above/ other:)
10. Do you consider yourself a weeb/ otaku?
11. How much of an otaku do you consider yourself?
12. If you consider yourself an otaku, has this lifestyle impacted your artwork?
13. How has it impacted your artwork?
14. Do you know other artists with otaku interests?
15. Do you know any artists inspired/intrigued by general Japanese culture?
16. Do you think artwork that takes inspiration from Japanese culture is seen as important in the Trinbagonian art space?

17. Do you think this artwork is taken seriously? Should it be taken seriously? Please elaborate on your answer
18. please elaborate on any further feelings about otakus or how it feels to be one in Trinidad and Tobago.