

Foreign Exchange

—
Cross-Cultural
Conversations
Curated by
LeSean Thomas

November 17 – 22, 2025



Overview

Japan's popular arts, including anime, manga, music, fashion, and video games, is a multi-billion dollar industry with a passionate global audience. Yet, despite this success, the creative process behind it has yet to be academically or critically explored.

Further, Japan's popular arts have inspired a whole generation of young Americans to take their first steps into art and creativity. When a pencil and paper are given to students in middle school, high school, and college, over and over what is drawn is influenced by Japan.

The storytelling craft of Japan's popular arts has sparked lifelong passion in young Americans, and Foreign Exchange seeks to spotlight this influence and bridge between cultures.



Our Goals

- **Explore cross-cultural exchange** between Japan and the US through the popular arts.
- **Spotlight creators** blending styles, tools, and traditions across borders.
- **Recognize the art** of Japan's popular arts in academic and educational venues.
- **Provide enriching, no-cost educational programs** for students of all backgrounds.
- **Inspire the next generation** through connections with trailblazing artists.

Creators

The Foreign Exchange project is brought to life by:



Japan Society is a 100+ year old nonprofit organization in NYC focused on connecting the US and Japan. We have welcomed US Presidents, Japanese Prime Ministers, and Nobel Prize winners. We're based in landmarked headquarters one block from the United Nations.



Bronx-born **LeSean Thomas** is among the distinguished few Black Americans making their mark in the TV anime industry. He created and directed *Children of Ether*, *Cannon Busters*, and the critically acclaimed and NAACP Image Award-nominated Netflix series *Yasuke*.



The Imagination Project Inc.

The Imagination Project is a nonprofit that has worked with brands like Microsoft, Nike, and Spotify to create impactful initiatives that connect diverse youth with opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Media, Entrepreneurship, and Design.

Events

Foreign Exchange does this through three primary methods:



DISCUSSIONS

Talks at Japan Society from creators about their careers in Japan's popular arts, including both public events and talks only for students, giving young artists a time to directly interact with and receive advice from creative professionals living their dream.



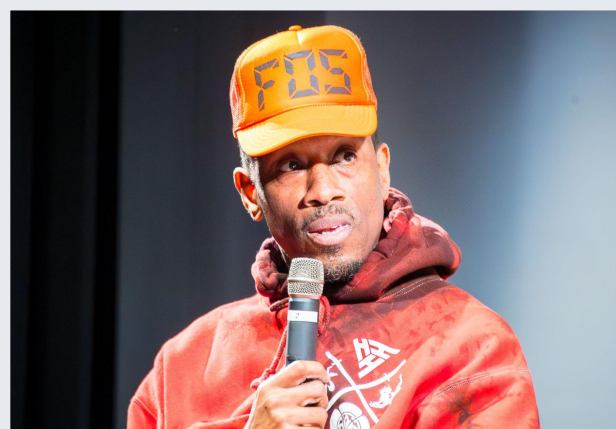
SCREENINGS

Curated screenings of US and Japanese media from our guest creators that include their own projects, works from their Japanese collaborators, and the works that inspired their careers to pass this excitement onto the next generation.



CLASSROOM VISITS

Creator visits to schools and libraries around NYC. These free talks and workshops are held in classrooms with a focus on underserved communities to directly connect with the audiences we can most meaningfully impact.



Foreign Exchange launched as a week-long symposium from Nov. 12-17, 2024.



The background image shows a stage event. Two men are on stage; one in a red jacket and orange cap, the other in a colorful patterned jacket and blue cap. They are addressing a large, diverse audience seated in front of them. The Japan Society logo is visible in the top left corner.

2024 Launch & Impact

3,000+

attendees from across New York City

2

in-person lectures at the School of Visual Arts
and NYU's Tisch School of the Arts

3

public talks at Japan Society with complimentary tickets
provided to students and educators from all over NYC

5

curated screenings introduced by LeSean Thomas, all
featuring Japanese creators who've collaborated with
Thomas on his projects. Screenings included *Ninja Scroll*,
Redline, and *Sword of the Stranger*.

Exhibit of *Yasuke* production
artwork and creation of
companion artbook

Networking reception with
entertainment and education
professionals

Two panels edited and streamed
online

2024 Schools

Last year's Foreign Exchange welcomed students and educators from schools and organizations including:

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- A. Philip Randolph Campus High School
 - AniTOMO
 - Asian American Federation
 - Brooklyn Community Arts & Media High School
 - Brooklyn Technical High School
 - Columbia University
 - Design Works
 - Fashion Institute of Technology
 - Forsyth Satellite Academy
 - Fredrick Douglas Academy
 - Hunter College
 - Ithaca College
 - Marble Hill School for International Studies
 - Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice OPWARF 2.0 Program
 - New Utrecht High School
 - New York University
 - Parsons School of Design
 - Pratt Institute
 - School of Visual Arts
 - The Smith School
 - The Young Women's Leadership School of Manhattan
 - Tokyo Bronx
 - World View High School
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2025 Goals

Foreign Exchange will return to New York City on November 17 – 22, 2025 with the following goals:



4,000+ attendees in New York City and online.



Networking reception with entertainment and education professionals.



Four Guest Speakers including LeSean Thomas and additional Japanese popular arts industry professionals.



Exhibit of production artwork.



Three days of classroom talks at high schools, colleges, and libraries around New York City.



One live online panel for audiences nationwide.



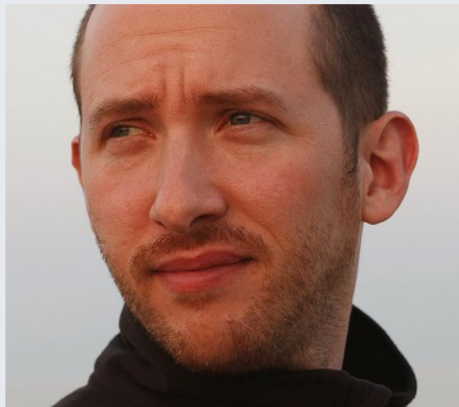
Three days of public talks and curated screenings at Japan Society with complimentary student tickets.

2025 Curators

This year's Foreign Exchange will welcome four culture-crossing curators as speakers and guests:



LeSean Thomas returns home to NYC to lead a week of classes and talks. His journey began with projects including *The Boondocks* and *Black Dynamite*. His talent expanded in Korea working on *The Legend of Korra*. And this paved the way for his move to Japan, where he created the anime *Children of Ether*, *Cannon Busters*, and *Yasuke*.



Justin Leach has over two decades of experience in the animation industry in the US and Japan. He's worked on projects including *Ghost in the Shell 2*, *Kill Bill*, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, and *Kick-Heart*. He's founder of Qubic Pictures and Co-Producer of *Star Wars Visions* at Lucasfilm and Netflix's *Leviathan*, both blending the US and Japan.



“Coach Mike” Peterson was born in Brooklyn and is an author, speaker, and influencer. He's the founder and CEO of The Imagination Project and works to connect young people in underserved communities with education, culture, and community development. His goal is to build a better, brighter, more equitable future for generations to come.



Shinichiro Watanabe is the creator of *Cowboy Bebop*, *Samurai Champloo*, and *Lazarus*, and we are honored to welcome him to New York to speak with audiences inspired by his creations. New this year, Foreign Exchange is honored to welcome this legendary Japanese creator whose work draws from American culture.

Your Support

We look to raise \$100,000 to fund the 2025 Foreign Exchange series. This is not a small sum, but it is necessary to cover travel, technical, operational, and licensing costs. We hope to speak with you about supporting Foreign Exchange and helping us impact young students and creators in New York City and across America.



Your Support

In return for your generous support, we are able to discuss a number of meaningful acknowledgments including:

\$10,000

Your Logo Before All Japan Society Events

Your Logo on Websites, Newsletters, and Marketing Materials

Verbal Thank You Before All Events

Invitations to All Japan Society Events

\$15,000

All \$10,000 Benefits Plus:

Display Materials or Samples at All Japan Society Events

Your Video Before All Japan Society Events

Your Logo on Art Exhibit introductory wall panel

\$25,000

All \$15,000 Benefits Plus:

Your Logo on Step & Repeat at all Japan Society Events

Opportunity to Introduce Japan Society Events

Private Creator Meet & Greet

\$50,000

All \$25,000 Benefits Plus:

Exclusive Title Sponsorship - Your Name/Logo Connected with Foreign Exchange in all mentions and promotions

Next Steps

We look to speak more about your thoughts and interest in Foreign Exchange. Japanese animation inspires creativity and expression across young Americans, and we hope to provide unique and powerful connections which will foster a new generation of artists and creators.

Peter Tatara

Director

Film, Culture and Community

Japan Society

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