

JAMPRO Supports Japanese Manga Animation Workshops

In response to the growing desire locally to learn from Japan's experience of developing the manga industry the Japanese Embassy facilitated the first official visit of a Japanese manga artist, Mr. Takuya Kurita, to Jamaica in the first step of the creation of Jamaica's manga industry and to further develop local animation production.

Sixty participants interested in the manga industry took place in two workshops hosted by Mr. Kurita on Thursday, December 13 at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts and the University of Technology. Mr. Kurita then conducted a lecture on the 'Evolution of Japanese Manga and its Characteristics' at the offices of JAMPRO in New Kingston on Friday, December 14. Manga are comics originating in Japan, in the Japanese language and is considered to be a form of literature there. Manga intersects with animation as the drawings come to life through anime, which has become hugely popular across the globe. Prior to the lecture remarks were made by His Excellency Yasuo Takase, Ambassador of Japan to Jamaica and JAMPRO's Manager of the Creative Industries and Film Commissioner, Kim-Marie Spence. Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce Anthony Hylton also made brief remarks thanking Ambassador Takase and his embassy for bringing this 'rare level of discourse on Japanese culture.' Ambassador Takase outlined the importance of manga stating, 'The Manga industry is huge in Japan to the extent that the industry generated over 5 billion US dollars annually and shares one third of the entire publication industry.' The Jamaica Film Commission at JAMPRO in recognising animation's developmental and economic potential has been encouraging the start and growth of an animation industry through encouraging interest in the creative industries and developing a supply of qualified labour in that field. According to Ms. Spence this is the first lecture on Manga ever done in Jamaica and through the efforts of the Japanese embassy and JAMPRO she hopes there will be many more. 'Animation is growing, everything you can think of can be animated and it is an investment that we want to see made here in Jamaica,' she said. The lecture, which also saw a strong turnout, looked at the evolution of the manga industry and how it has crossed over to other countries. According to Mr. Kurita an estimated 10 billion manga comics are produced in Japan per year. For the aspiring Manga artists in the audience he emphasized that with the proper industry support it is possible to have a profitable career in manga. He gave the example of Japanese manga series 'One Piece' who's creator Eiichiro Oda makes an estimated US 31 million annually from his series. Discussing the workshops that were held Kurita was surprised at the level of concentration from the participants. He said, 'I have fully enjoyed myself at the workshops and lectures and I am surprised at the deep understanding everyone had of the Japanese manga. I have been to other countries so far and Jamaica had the deepest concentration in the work.' He added, 'while in other countries they tended to copy the Japanese manga, there was more originality in Jamaica, they have their own style and a lot of talent.' Mr. Kurita is a manga artist known for his creation 'Furlong' and also lectures Manga and Illustration at Yoyogi Animation School in Tokoyo. As part of the efforts made by the Embassy of Japan, which is sponsored by the Japan Foundation, Mr. Kurita also visited Mexico, Nicaragua and El Salvador. The global animation industry is estimated to be worth US \$80 billion and animation business process outsourcing in the global animation industry is valued at US \$68.4 billion. Contact: JAMPRO Corporate Communications - Mark Thomas mthomas@jamprocorp.com (978-7755-7 EXT. 2284) or Krista Henry khenry@jamprocorp.com (978-7755-7 EXT 2268)