University of Zurich UZH

IKMZ – Institute of Communication and Media Research

The IKMZ Speaker Series presents:

Romancing AI? Gender and New Digital Intimacies in Contemporary Japan

**Hiromi Tanaka,
Meiji University, Tokyo**

**Monday, Oct 3, 2022
16:15-17:15
Room: TBA**

Intimacy between humans and non-humans has been a popular theme in popular culture across cultures. While this phenomenon can be seen in the West, Japanese popular culture, such as manga, anime, and games, also offers many examples of such intimacy. In this talk, we will present some findings from our preliminary analysis of gendered discourses about and media representations of intimacy between humans and non-humans, particularly machines or artificial intelligence (AI). Drawing on qualitative methods, our talk will be based on two recent cases: a) a live-action science-fiction romantic film titled *A.I. Love You* (2016) directed by Miyaki Shogo, and b) a *bishōjo* (beautiful girl) AI— also known as hologram or virtual assistant—called Azuma Hikari produced by Gatebox in 2016. We will explore how gender ideologies are manifested in discursive images of and ideas about romance with AI in Japanese popular culture, discussing the cases from comparative cultural perspectives as well as those of gender, sexuality, and desire.

Dr. Hiromi Tanaka is an Associate Professor in the School of Information and Communication at Meiji University, Tokyo. She received her PhD (Dr. rer. soc.) in sociology from Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany. She specializes in feminist cultural and media studies. Her research concerns the transformation of gender, sexuality, and intimacy via digital technoogy. Currently she is working on several funded projects including Emotional AI (UKRI-ESRC/JST-RISTEX) and social media (MEXT/JSPS Kaken). This and next year she is staying as a visiting scholar at Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) of the University of Amsterdam (UVA).