



**Spike Spiegel, Edward,
Faye Valentine, and Jet Black**

*Cowboy Bebop
Art By Ellya Kim*

KONSHUU

vol. 56 #2
Genre Blend

DEPTH IN ANIME: SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN



JOSÉ CUEVAS

6th Year, Intended Nuclear Engineering and Philosophy

And you don't seem to understand...

Writer

Serial Experiments Lain is a great anime that mixes the genres of Psychological and Slice of Life. Its incredible depth is almost entirely due to how the screenwriters skillfully defy the audience's expectations for a goofy CGDCT show with cute anime girls by instead using said characters for a deep and gripping story that will change the way you look at anime. Indeed, *Lain* is perhaps one of, if not my absolute favorite anime due to the way it forces viewers to recontextualize their entire understandings of anime and the world as a whole. In that way, it accomplishes the very purpose of anime to begin with: it challenges societal norms and expectations in a way that is starkly realistic yet brimming with the imagination that only Japan's finest animators can muster.

The most important thing about *Lain* is probably how it predicted the future. As a CS major myself, I find deep solidarity with the protagonist, Lain Iwakura, as she begins tinkering with technology, resulting in her falling deeper and deeper into the world of the Internet. I'm sure many CS students can relate – in particular, it reminded me of taking CS 61A and CS 70. It's kind of similar to how modern people of this generation find themselves stuck in loops like Twitter, TikTok, Reddit, or other popular websites like that. What more, *Lain* was made in 1998. It completely predicted how we would soon all interact with the Internet after the turn of the century with striking prescience, particularly how negative the web has become in the last few years. Thus, it is truly a masterpiece and dare I say, revolutionary, in predicting the Internet, its consequences, and how those consequences would affect society in palpable ways. Particularly, *Lain* feels so much like a product of the last five years whilst still being a 90's show. In this sense, *Lain* benefits from both the unique qualities of 90's anime that I can't quite put to words, and up to date, accurate, understandings of the world. It perfectly balances nostalgic attributes with good modern standards, resulting in a one of a kind anime that is difficult to properly explain in text.

Beyond that, I like the structure of *Lain*. The show splits itself into thirteen episodes, with each taking a universal concept and framing it within an understanding of the Internet. In particular, the fourth episode, "Religion", had a lot to say about religion, like how the existence of digital technology has changed what we

consider to be traditional religious practices. It's no secret that 's sometimes confusing background narrative seems to depict Internet denizens in cult-like groups.

When it comes to characters, *Serial Experiments Lain* might suffer because it doesn't have a whole cast of unique likable characters like *Puella Magi Madoka Magica*. Instead, it takes the Neon Genesis route of having only one main character who is developed. However, unlike Eva's Shinji Ikari, who was a dull character that was extremely frustrating to watch, Lain is actually an interesting character because she is god. That fundamentally changes how the viewer sees the show and thus makes Lain Iwakura a far more complex and unique character to other anime characters in shows that fall under Psychological.



When it comes to animation, *Lain* isn't all that great because it's pretty still most of the time. However, that is made up for by the show's use of sound, as its soundtrack is extremely good and vibey – some of the songs in the show's soundtrack are particularly trippy and unique compared to generic Jpop soundtracks in most anime I've seen. It truly has some of the most unique music I've seen in anime, which really makes the show's complex and deep ideas stick out. Thus, *Serial Experiments Lain* is a fantastic show. It might not be that understandable (hell, I still kind of don't understand what happened at the end, to be frank), but it makes up for it with a kickass soundtrack, a great main character whose development is extremely superb, and a story that tackles some of life's greatest conundrums. Particularly, if you recognize the show's amazing opening song, "Duvet", by Boa, from TikToks or something, you should definitely check out *Lain* as it is extremely high quality. I should warn though, *Lain* is a fairly heavy show that tackles extremely controversial subjects, so watch at your own risk. That aside, it stands as what I consider to be the peak of anime as a genre of entertainment and one of my favorite anime of all time.



Nico Yozawa

Love Live! School Idol Project

Art By Mio Kurosaka

THE CONTROVERSY OF CHARLOTTE



RAHM JETHANI

1st Year, Japanese

"Controversy is part of the nature of art and creativity."
- Yoko Ono

Writer



SPOILERS FOR CHARLOTTE

Charlotte's Premise:

Charlotte takes place in an alternate version of Japan where a small percentage of youths have supernatural powers. Enter our main character, Yuu Otosaka. Yuu is a selfish boy with the power to possess people for 5 seconds, and he uses this power to cheat his way through school. However, Yuu is exposed by the student council president of a different school called Hoshinoumi Academy. Yuu tried to run, but was easily caught by Jōjirō Takajō, a comic relief character whose power allows him to run at uncontrollably high speeds. Then, the student council president, who is called Nao Tomori, shows her power by making herself invisible to Yuu, and proceeds to beat him up. She tells Yuu that he and his little sister, Ayumi Otosaka, are to be transferred to Hoshinoumi Academy, which is actually a school for students with powers, and that Yuu is to be a member of the student council. Thus begins the story of *Charlotte*...



The Lighthearted Beginning:

From this point onwards until around episode 7, *Charlotte* stays relatively consistent and cheery. Each episode in this part focuses on the student council members investigating stories of a supernatural incident, confronting a powerful youth causing the incident, and convincing them to stop using their powers. The format in the first half, while very simple, allows for good storytelling and for building familiarity, because the audience sees the story's tone and the characters' motivations. Even minor characters like the young power wielders who cause supernatural

events are given some backstory and a reason for their actions, which is refreshing.

While this part is definitely the most upbeat part of the story, the writers start giving hints about the darker undertones of the story as quickly as episode 2. At the end of the episode, Nao brings Yuu to the hospital to meet her brother, who had been terribly experimented on before Nao joined Hoshinoumi Academy, and was incoherent and insane. She mentions that, thanks to an unnamed trusted person, Nao and her brother were able to escape to the much safer Hoshinoumi Academy.



The Darker Middle:

Taking the darker themes from the first part of the anime, *Charlotte*'s second half decides to dive deeper. At the end of episode 6, it is revealed what Yuu's sister's power is: the power of collapse (just think extremely powerful earthquakes). Due to being attacked by another student, Ayumi unleashes her power, inadvertently killing herself.

The ramifications this has on Yuu is seen in episode 7. Devastated and utterly heart-broken, he becomes a recluse, and refuses to see anyone, including his friends from the student council. As time goes on, he becomes more and more unhinged, attacking gangs and almost trying drugs, but in the end Nao is able to save him, and she convinces Yuu to return to the student council and work hard in the memory of his sister.

This episode cements the fact that the story has moved away from Yuu's daily life in the student council. Some viewers criticize this part, as it betrays the identity the first half of the series had set up. However, without this episode to serve as a bridge between the first and second halves of the series, things would arguably be worse, and Yuu would lack the motivation to do the things he ends up doing later.

After Yuu returns to school, the story only gets more complex and dark. After hearing a certain song, it triggers memories in Yuu. He remembers a parallel timeline where he and his sister were being

experimented on. When Ayumi's collapse power caused damage to the structure he was in, Yuu was able to escape and learn his true power: the power of plunder. With this power, he was able to possess someone for 5 seconds, but also permanently stole their power. He eventually reached someone revealed to be his brother, named Shunsuke, who possessed the power to time travel.

At this point, Yuu's flashback ends, and he goes to meet Shunsuke with Nao. Shunsuke reveals that over the course of several time leaps, he and his friends tried many ways to save children from cruel scientists, and ultimately ended up establishing Hoshinoumi Academy. He also reveals that he had to have Yuu and Ayumi's memories erased by one of his friends to keep them safe. Shunsuke then tells Yuu to plunder his time leap power and save Ayumi, which Yuu promptly does.

So... wow. That's a lot to take in. *Charlotte* just went from a slice-of-life comedy show, to a depressing observation about loss and grief, to a time-travel anime. To say that it's tonally inconsistent would be true, however this is more of a case of tonal whiplash. It's almost as if *Charlotte* doesn't know what genre it wants to be, only knowing what story it wants to tell. However, by leaning into certain genres like slice-of-life and low fantasy, only to then abruptly pull away, *Charlotte*'s story may create friction with the audience. While this isn't what most viewers consider to be the most controversial part of the show, the shift from lighthearted comedy to dramatic fiction certainly causes it. But anyway, let's get on to the *actual* most controversial part of the show: the ending.



The Ambitious End:

For the purposes of categorization, I consider the ending of *Charlotte* to include the last three episodes. In this part, it is revealed as to what the origin of everyone's powers is: the particles of a comet named Charlotte which passes by Earth every 75 years. But no worries, because a vaccine is being developed to prevent powers from occurring in human beings in the future. Meanwhile, due to terrorists (no, this is not a joke), Nao and one of Shunsuke's friends are being held hostage in exchange for Yuu, due to his powers. Yuu goes to negotiate, but while there, he is attacked and violently blinded in his right eye, which prevents him from time-leaping. In his pain, Yuu accidentally activates his collapse power, which ends up killing Shunsuke's friend, as well as the terrorists. Following this, Yuu notices that Shunsuke is showing a similar despair that Yuu did after losing his sister. This, followed by a heartfelt talk with Nao, prompts Yuu to go on a worldwide journey to plunder every power in the world to prevent further disaster from happening again. Because of these efforts and the aforementioned vaccine, no more powers develop again, saving millions of people.

While people balk at the decision Yuu makes, it actually makes a lot of sense given the context of his previous suffering and the state of the world at the end. He sees that powers cause death, pain, and suffering. He knows first-hand what it is like, and due to his own actions, sees how it affects others too. And, even though he knows his powers hurt others, he also knows that his powers are the only ones that could save the world. This is why Yuu decides to plunder everyone's powers in the world. This growth, from a selfish and narcissistic boy into a selfless and considerate young man, demonstrates the wonderful character writing in this story.

In the final episode, Yuu travels the world, plundering the powers of every youth he tracks down, rapidly losing his sanity due to the sheer amount of powers he has affecting his brain. Not even at the middle of the episode, he has forgotten who he is and everyone he loves, only knowing his mission. Towards the end of his journey, it's obvious that he has gotten much weaker, so much so that he has trouble defending against a bounty hunter. However, just as Yuu plunders the last power in the world, Shunsuke miraculously finds him and brings him home. The end of the episode shows an amnesiac Yuu with all of his friends and family, looking towards a much brighter future.



Final Thoughts:

So, that was *Charlotte*. The finale, like the middle, pushes away from its previous genres, leaning more into supernatural or dramatic elements. However, the large controversy from this part comes from the pacing, which is argued to be both boring and rushed, even more so than the previous parts. As a show (or any piece of media), it's important to establish an identity that a viewer can immediately detect, unless there is a deliberate reason not to, such as a narrative twist. While *Charlotte* has narrative twists, its identity does not peacefully transition through them, and this is entirely due to the pacing. However, this prompts the question: do the pacing issues take away from the show? To many people, the answer is yes, but to others, it's not so cut and dry.

Put simply, *Charlotte* is a show about broken people navigating their way through a broken world. The powers and time-travel and terrorists, all of that serves as a backdrop to tell this story and elevate its stakes. While the pacing is inconsistent, this mirrors the drastic changes in our own lives. Isn't it common for things to change overnight or suddenly disappear? A path forward isn't always consistent, and thus, neither is *Charlotte*. Was this deliberate? No, absolutely not. However, the sudden shifts in this anime may serve to make the story resonate more with its audience at times. *Charlotte* may not be the best anime, and while it may fumble the execution sometimes, it sure knows how to tell a good story.



Osamu Dazai

Bungou Stray Dogs: Dead Apple
Art By Catherine Chen





Madoka Kaname and Homura Akemi

Madoka Magica

Art By *Jasmine Zhang*

LAWYER TOKISAKI/THOU SHALT NOT SWIPE WHEN COMES OUR TURN



ALEXANDRE HAÏOUN-PERDRIX

3rd Year, Philosophy

Thought is useless. All you need is devotion to Ms Tokisaki.

Writer

Today, in the Court for way too often Misjudged Anime, Ms. Tokisaki Kurumi will be the lawyer for *Date A Live*. A position usually forbidden for one's own series but 1) who cares and 2) the usher in charge of enforcing this rule has mysteriously disappeared.

The lawyer has entered the room, and is saluting all of the jurors... She does not seem to have many sheets in her folder, despite charges being quite important. Is it that she has already forsaken? Or that she is going to deliver a tremendous speech?

MS TOKISAKI, after a little and charming cough

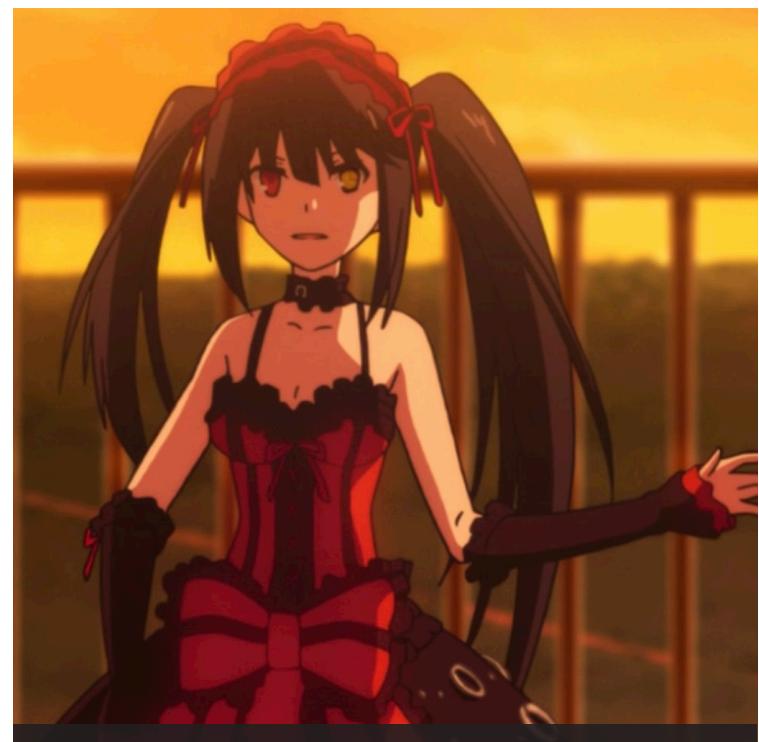
Dear all, I shall be brief. I am here to defend a masterpiece mocked by critics I cannot describe as insensitive – for they are not only so, they are also soulless, and, worse, tasteless.

Boos erupt from within the benches of the public, the usher, still absent – but quickly stopped by the deaths of two spectators, whose torsos are torn to shreds by bullet holes.

What kind of charges dare they bring upon us? Clichés, indecency, poor scenario choices, lack of intensity, lack of consistency... Charges that have not prevented major series from having great and, I must say, sometimes much less deserved success than that of *Date A Live*. Moreover, those charges, I shall prove, are perfectly unjust.

Let us first examine that accusation some might deem as the most serious, that *Date A Live* is full of clichés, especially with its characters. Perhaps surprisingly, that one I shall not reject, and barely nuance. After all, what does one who uses stereotypes? He frees space in the minds of the spectators to witness and understand a denser plot, or just helping them relax and enjoy the show. Moreover, just because your characters are a bit stereotypical doesn't mean that there isn't a variety of them. Nor does it mean that those clichés are not used with great panache and in a very creative fashion, which is twice the case in *Date A Live*. Stereotypes are a basic matter: one may, with no

setbacks, use it to get a better result than would have been possible to some others, even if those latter had dealt with much newer and unexpected material. Besides, they allow the other traits of those characters' personalities to be emphasized more heavily, for they pop out of a very conventional frame, whereas its other defining features do thus require much less attention. I have no problem to affirm that our characters are for some and possibly, if not probably, among the most interesting of the last decade of anime!



"Before the trial: Ms Tokisaki calmly explaining herself to journalists in front of the court"

Indignated yells within some of those who have courageously chosen not to desert the benches of the public. The tiresome shouters are promptly taken out of the room by Ms Tokisaki's

worshippers. Sorrowful but quickly muffled groans are heard for a little moment, then Ms Tokisaki's speech resumes.

Well, let me come to the question of the combination of magic and science, which, according to some people, whose brains I shall personally check, leads to inconsistencies and lesser quality. I shall first argue that this is so when a series has the idea to come into the details of such a combination, but not the means to do so efficiently, which *Date A Live* has the wisdom to try as little as possible. Our version of that combination is much better managed than in many, if not most, works which try to use it, for it is more its tool than its core – which is its characters and their relationships. Moreover, one may not be sure that it is truly magic that is used rather than another kind of science. One should be cautious and wait for season 5 to come before asserting with so little caution things like that, or find and read the light novels [which the author of this article confesses he has not done].

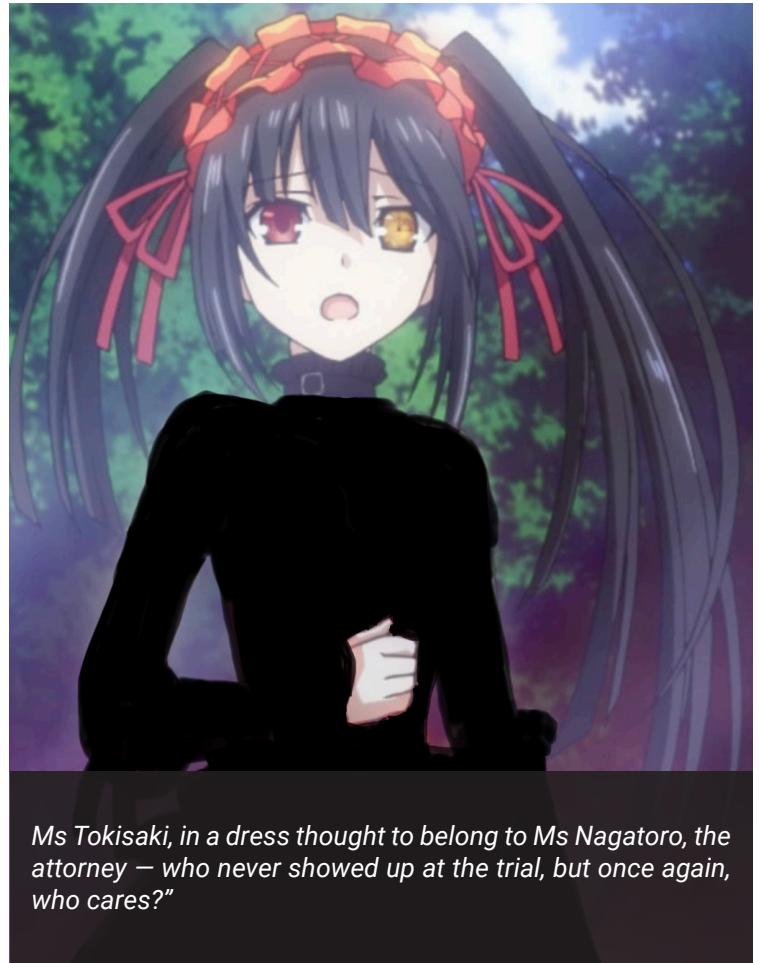
Ms Tokisaki's smile becomes more ferocious and a dangerous glimmer begins to appear behind the darkness of her pupils.

And secondly, dear jurors, let me tell you that I have made sure that fans of *Code Geass* are present and ready to ambush everywhere in that city, from the parks to the cafés – from your workplaces to your neighbourhood. Condemn the combination of science and magic, and your fate will be out of my hands and out of yours as well.

The third charge...

Ms Tokisaki sighs

...is maybe the worst, and thereby I mean the least interesting. *Date A Live*'s scenario being "flat" and "lacking intensity". Well, for sure, unlike many anime, we do not have the habit to make grand revelations or to have incredible plot twists at each episode. However, I believe that it is a compliment our enemies grant us, for does it not mean that we do not need it? That we prefer to let place to our characters, our music, and of course, our humour. Our series is funny: should we be ashamed of that? It does not make it less serious, just more appreciable and does not prevent it to be sometimes, if not often, quite intense emotionally. Is our action concentrated, or a bit repetitive? For sure, it is a background for the plot and the characters and their relationships, as was the case for *Revolutionary girl Utena*. The financial and technological means of our camps are unrealistic, and we barely know where they come from? Absolutely. I do not see the problem. Are our tragic moments too rare? Well, if you want to see or read a tragedy, I shall exhort you to go to a bookshop and buy or order *Hamlet* or *Bajazet*. That is what you need, that is not what we do propose, let alone what we need to propose. Next charge?



Oh, gods, that is the last one. We would be "too prone to show barely clothed bodies, which is terrible because it contributes to making the characters "mere objects" etc.. Well, I guess that accusation has been made by people who never saw our female characters speaking or in action, whom I shall thus urge to do so, to make them sure so it is not. And, em, let us say that... that success has its price and that...

Ms Tokisaki clears her throat and coughs a little

...em, one does not want trials against series such as *One Piece*, isn't it?

One of the three last spectators who do not belong to Ms Tokisaki's worshippers stands up and tries to argue that it does not respond to the accusation, but is stopped by the disappearance of his head following a short salvo.

Well, dear jurors, this concludes my speech which I hope shall have convinced you. If it did not, well, let us entrust your destiny to *Code Geass*'s fans!

Thunder of applause from the rest of the benches.

THE 2 CENTS

How did you first get into anime and manga? Is there anything else in Japanese pop culture that you enjoy?

I first got into anime and manga when I was really young, with media like *Pokémon* and *Digimon*. Just watching it on TV and reading the respective manga in libraries makes up a large part of my childhood. Apart from anime and manga though, I am a huge fan of JRPGs and Japanese games in general!

The first anime I think I have ever watched (notwithstanding the masterpieces of Studio Ghibli, which I regarded and still regard as absolutely different worlds from anything else) was maybe *Excel Saga*, which a YouTuber I adored had described as one of the funniest works he had ever seen. A stance with which afterwards I was compelled to agree! It comes with anime but I do love their music too: I have always considered Joe Hisaishi, Miyazaki's composer – but also such an artist besides! – as one of the greatest composers alive, but *Evangelion* and *Bleach* made it necessary that I placed Shiro Sagisu only one step lower. Those musics are incredible, be it with or without the context anime gives them. Rare are the things in that life more satisfying than to eat some daifuku with one's eyes closed, a hot cup of tea in the other hand and Rei II in the background.

I lived in Japan, so watching anime has been a habit of mine since I was a little girl. Other than that, I like Japanese female idol groups and a male idol group called Johnny's, although they are not so famous in the US.

My dad liked to watch anime, so I grew up watching them with him.



Rahm Jethani
Writer



Alexandre
Haioun-Perdrix
Writer



Mio Kurosaka
Artist



Catherine Rha
Artist

What do you hope to convey to the readers of Konshuu through your artwork/articles?

Through my Konshuu articles, I hope to convey the immense love of anime and manga we all have here. I also want to show how everyone has a different opinion about anime/manga, and that everyone's feelings about them are valid!

What I hope I can bring to them is what got me interested in the topics I will treat, be it why a manga, anime or piece of music deserves to be read, watched or listened, or a special interpretation or observation regarding those works – so, thoughts, and matter to think and enjoy.

I would be happy if people who see my drawings become interested in animation and drawing.

Hopefully I'm able to convey the essence of the characters that I make fanart of :)

ART CORNER

How did you first get into anime and manga? Is there anything else in Japanese pop culture that you enjoy?

I first got into anime in fourth grade when I came across a clip of *Fairy Tail* on youtube by chance! As for manga, I had read manhua since third grade when I picked up some in China while visiting relatives, but manga came after I got into anime. Apart from those I also enjoy playing rhythm games as well as listening to J-Pop and Utaites/Vocaloid!

I think I was in the third or fourth grade when I saw a “How to Draw Anime” book at a Michael’s—I left the store empty-handed, but I went home and Googled anime, and the rest is history. Other than anime and manga, I like a lot of Japanese music and video games.

I first got into anime during the middle of highschool, around 9th grade. Really it was more circumstance that led me to watch select shows based on relations to existing interests, and it sort of progressed and evolved from there. As for anything else in Japanese pop culture I enjoy? Hm, nothing quite comes to mind in regards to pop culture—not off the top of my head, anyways.

I first got into anime and manga in summer school, when my friend shared with me her collection of *Sailor Moon* manga.

What do you hope to convey to the readers of Konshuu through your artwork/articles?

I hope to convey that there's something for everyone in anime because of how many different genres there are, including genre blends like this issue lol!

I hope that my art inspires readers to make art of their own! I also think it would be cool if my art was the reason someone got into a new show.

To the readers of Konshuu—though I'm a new writer here, I hope to convey a sense of passion and interest in the things I recommend and enjoy. It is to my intent that articles I author display a critical eye, a hearty recommendation, or some combination between the two—the contents of each something I look forward to a response from the community at large here.



Catherine Chen
Artist



Elly Kim
Artist



Max Rothman
Writer



Jasmine Zhang
Artist

I would like to convey the feelings you get when connecting with a variety of beloved characters and settings. Art, as a universal language, has the power to excite and unite fans in sharing their love of anime.

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j.mp/konsub

Rei Ayanami

Neon Genesis Evangelion
Art By Catherine Rha