

Kofi Bazzell-Smith
Artist | Educator | Professional Boxer | U.S.- Japan Bridging Scholar
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Future Faculty Fellow *The Rochester Institute of Technology* 2024-

First Professor of Japanese Manga practice in the United States
Faculty-led study abroad course to connect students with the manga industry in Japan

University of Illinois *Master of Fine Arts in New Media*; 2021-2024

Created an international residency for Japanese Artist Kazuo Maekawa via a \$15,000 grant 2023
Curated an international manga exhibition via Mellon Humanities fellowship 2023
Independent Research in Japan 5/2023-6/2023 and 8/2022-9/2022
Kate Neal Kinley Memorial Fellow 2023-24 (\$10,000)
Humanities Research Institute Mellon Foundation Interseminars Fellow 2022-23 (\$35,000)
FLAS Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow – Japanese 2021-22 (\$15,000)

Eastern Illinois University 2021; *BA in Studio Art, Asian Studies Minor*

Magna Cum Laude; Founder/President Japanese Culture Club; Independent Studies in Japanese, Mandarin, Drawing, Painting, and Digital art; Completed Chinese language program; Study Abroad Student of the Year; Two Studies Abroad in Japan
Virtual Study Abroad; Advanced Japanese 2021 *Osaka Gakuin University*
Study Abroad; Japanese Language Courses, Manga Course; Hirakata, Japan 2019 *Kansai Gaidai*

Parkland Community College *Associate's in General Studies*, August 2018

Publications

"Karasu" in "Interseminars: Speculation and Imagining Otherwise." An academic book produced during the interdisciplinary fellowship sponsored by the Mellon Foundation
University of Illinois Humanities Research Institute 2023
4 Pages | 16 Bars: A Visual Mixtape *Black Comics Anthology* 2021
Azuki Self-published Children's Book Series 2018-2020
Jiyu manga anthology with *Kansai Gaidai University* 2019

Courses Taught

Manga Production (Studio) *Rochester Institute of Technology* 2024
Manga Production (Studio) *University of Illinois* 2024, 2023, 2022
Illustration: Composition and Storytelling *University of Illinois* 2023
Art for non-majors (Studio); Instructor *University of Illinois* 2022
English as a Second Language *Teaching Internship* 2019 *TLC (The Language Company)*

Selected *Visiting Lectures*

Commencement Speech *Kansai Gaidai University Asian Studies Program Graduation 2024*

Speech to US-Japan Bridging Foundation Donors *International House of Japan 2024*

Manga as Interdisciplinary Research *Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University 2024*

Artist Talk *Kyoto University of Foreign Studies 2024*

Intersecting Art and Science *Illinois Center for Advanced Studies of the Universe 2024*

Artist Talk Comics Studies Society *2024*

Developing a Global Practice *Musashi University (Japan) 2023*

Networking Between the US and Japan *Aoyama Gakuin University (Japan) 2023*

Visual Communication *University of California Los Angeles 2023*

Historical Context and Idiosyncrasies of Japanese Manga *Auburn University 2023*

Intersections between art practice and engagement *Auburn University 2023*

Art Composition (*In Japanese*) *Middlebury College Advanced Japanese Course 2022*

Introduction to Manga *Illinois Wesleyan University 2022*

Conveying movement in Sequential Art *University of California Los Angeles 2022*

Networking in Japan Central *Connecticut State University 2022*

Manga as a Tool for Global Engagement *Murray State University 2022*

Networking Lecture for Art Education Ph.D. students *University of Illinois 2022*

Creating a Global Career *Parkland College 2022*

TEDx Talk *University of Illinois at Chicago 2021*

Artist Talk *Edison Middle School 2021*

Artist Talk for Black History Month, Black Joy *Metcalfe Middle School 2021*

Workshops

Manga Drawing and Storytelling Workshop *High Museum of Art Atlanta 2023*

Manga and Boxing Workshops (*in Japanese*)

Middlebury College Summer Intensive Language Program Japanese School 2023

Manga Drawing and Storytelling Workshop *University of California Los Angeles 2023*

Comic Paneling & Composition Workshops *Auburn University Art Department 2023*

Public Manga Workshop *Auburn University 2023*

Manga Storytelling Workshop *University of Texas at Austin 2023*

Manga Drawing and Storytelling Workshop *Museum of Design Atlanta 2022*

Public Manga Workshop University YMCA *University of Illinois 2021*

Small Press Fest! Manga Storytelling Workshop *University of Illinois 2021*

Manga Workshop for ELL students *Urbana High School 2021*

Manga Storytelling Workshop 2019 *Urbana Free Library*

East Asian Languages Workshop *Eastern Illinois University 2018*

Manga Storytelling Workshop *Eastern Illinois University 2018*

Manga Storytelling Workshop *Parkland College 2018*

Panel Discussions

Global Trends in Manga *Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University 2024*
National Collegiate Honors Council Conference Chicago 2023
[Melanated and Animated](#): Black and Japanese Cross-Cultural Connections
Japanese Arts Foundation & Logan Theatre in Chicago 2023
Discussion on the Japanese manga industry with Kazuo Maekawa *C2E2 2023*
Guest Speaker Japanese Language Festival for *Japan-America Society of Washington 2023*
"I-as-We" Comics 2023 BIPOC POP Comics and Multimedia Symposium *UT Austin 2023*
Global Forms and Ancestral Identities BIPOC POP Symposium *UT Austin 2022*
Anime and Manga: Black Intersections with Japanese Culture
US-Japan Bridging Foundation 2020
Panel on James Baldwin with Dr. Eddie Glaude Jr. *2020 University of Illinois*
Artist Talk *University of Illinois East Asian Languages and Cultures Department 2020*
Poetry reading and discussion *UNESCO Center for Global Citizenship 2020*
Sounds Like Community; Artist Talk *Urbana Independent Media Center 2020*
James Baldwin Commemoration Panel *Champaign-Urbana 2020*
International Engagement *UIUC International and Area Studies Library 2019*

Residencies

McGuire Artist in Residence at The Blake School, Minneapolis MN 2024
Summer Art Camp High Museum of Art Atlanta 2023
Visiting Faculty Residency Middlebury College Intensive Summer Japanese Program 2023
Artist in Residence Auburn University Art and Art History Department 2023
Visiting Faculty Residency Middlebury College 2022

Service to the University of Illinois

Manga Workshop at Main Library 2024
Organizer, host, and Japanese-English interpreter for multiple lectures and workshops
Kazuo Maekawa Visiting Artist Residency 2023
Curated student Illustration Exhibition *Playful By Design Symposium 2024-23*
Organizer/Exhibitor/Panelist: Interseminars Initiative Interdisciplinary Symposium
University of Illinois Humanities Research Institute 2023
Graduate Student Advisory Representative *Art&Design 2022-23*
Artist Talk, Manga as a Tool for Global Engagement *University YMCA 2022*
Panel Discussion, Decolonizing Art Education and Professional Development
Krannert Performing Arts Center 2022
Public Artist Talk/Critique, Azuki Manga Series *2022*
Artist Talk, *Asian American Cultural Center 2021*
Artist Talk *Japan House at University of Illinois 2021*
Artist Talk *University of Illinois Graphic Design Department 2021*
BIPOC Liberation Fest *University of Illinois 2021*
English Conversation Partner Volunteer 2010-15 *Intensive English Institute*

Service to Eastern Illinois University

Founder/President Japanese Culture Club 2018-2021
International Education Committee member 2020-21
Artist Talk; Power Talks: Visual Storytelling 2020
Asian Studies Conference Presentation 2019
Global Cultural Night (International student performances and awards) Emcee 2018
Public reading in Mandarin for Christmas at Tarble Center 2018

Press

[Illinois Global Institute Newsletter Spotlight 2024](#)
[Illinois Public Media Interview 2024](#)
[University of Illinois News Bureau 2024](#)
[Black Experience Japan Interview 2023](#)
[Fuji Television Japanese National TV interview 2023](#)
[Auburn University Residency Interview 2023](#)
[HYFIN Interview Anime, Art, Beats & Sake: The Intersection of Black and Japanese Culture 2023](#)
[WCIA Channel 3 Artist Interview 2022](#)
[Fuji Television Japanese National TV interview 2022](#)
[Shining Otaku Podcast 2022](#)
[Subsume Media Black Futures Month 2022](#)
Comics Talk podcast 2022
[Professor LatinX Comics Scholars Channel 2020](#)
[Japan Station Podcast 2020](#)
[Harukana Show \(Japanese radio station\) 2019/2020](#)
[Young, Gifted and Abroad 2020](#)
Smile Politely Artist Interview 2020
Unity in Action Magazine 2020

Exhibitions

Pending Solo Exhibition *Cary Library The Rochester Institute of Technology 2025*
Solo Exhibition *Illinois Center for Advanced Studies of the Universe 2024*
MFA Show *The Krannert Art Museum University of Illinois 2024*
Turning To The East: Intersecting Afro-Asian Connections in a Multipolar World
Amelie A. Wallace Gallery SUNY Old Westbury 2024
Group Show at *The Blake School, Minneapolis MN 2024*
Curator/Participant in group show: Drawing Bridges: An International Manga Showcase
University of Illinois Humanities Research Institute -funded by Mellon Foundation 2023
Solo Animation Exhibition *Design Festa Gallery Tokyo, Japan 2023*
Solo Animation Exhibition *Anime Central Convention in Chicago, Illinois 2023*
Solo Digital Exhibition *Auburn University Technology and Innovation Center 2023*
Art Show *Analog Wine Library Urbana, Illinois 2023*
Solo Exhibition *Uncanny Juxtapositions McKinley Foundation Champaign, Illinois 2023*
Solo Exhibition; *Azuki the Rock Paper Scissors Champion University of Illinois YMCA 2022*
Future Spaces in Community Places group exhibition *Murray State University 2022*

Future Spaces in Community Places group exhibition *Illinois Wesleyan University 2022*
8 to Create Live Drawing Exhibition *University of Illinois Art + Design 2021*
Research and Creative Works Conference *Eastern Illinois University 2020-21*
Black Lives Matter Outdoor Installation *Common Ground Food Co-op 2020*
Illinois Board of Higher Education Annual Gallery 2019
Solo Exhibition for Asian Heritage Month *Booth Library Eastern Illinois University 2019*
Solo Exhibition *Eastern Illinois University Passage Gallery 2019*

Awards

Fulbright Semifinalist 2024
Coyne Family Foundation Illustration Award *AIGA Scholarship 2023 (\$3000)*
Inaugural Frederick Luis Aldama Leadership Award *Comics Studies Society 2023 (\$500)*
Future Faculty Career Exploration Program Fellowship *Rochester Institute of Technology 2023*
Kate Neal Kinley Memorial Fellowship *Fine and Applied Arts University of Illinois 2023 (\$10,000)*
George A Miller Visiting Artist Grant 2023(Kazuo Maekawa from Tokyo)-
University of Illinois Center for Advanced Studies (\$15,000)
Visiting Artist Grant 2023 (Maekawa residency) *Art&Design University of Illinois (\$500)*
Graduate Spring Event Travel Competition *University of Illinois \$500*
Mellon Foundation Interseminars Initiative Fellowship, 2022-23
Humanities Research Institute, University of Illinois (\$35,000)
Teachers Ranked as Excellent by Their Students 2024-2023-2022 *University of Illinois*
Fulbright Semifinalist Japan 2023
Fulbright Alternate Japan 2022
Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship 2021-22
Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures University of Illinois (\$15,000)
Graduate Image of Research Award Honorable Mention 2022 *University of Illinois*
Fulbright Semi-Finalist Japan 2021
AIGA Worldstudio scholarship 2021 (\$500)
Magna Cum Laude EIU 2021
All Student Show Digital Art 1st Place 2021/2020 *Eastern Illinois University*
Undergraduate Research Grant 2021/2020 *Eastern Illinois University*
Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship 2020 *Eastern Illinois University (\$5000)*
Study Abroad Student of the Year 2020 *Eastern Illinois University*
Talented Student Award Art Department 2019/2020 *Eastern Illinois University (\$1000)*
U.S.-Japan Bridging Foundation Scholarship 2019 (\$2500)
Freeman Asia Scholarship 2019 (\$2500)
Talented Student Award Study Abroad 2019 *Eastern Illinois University (\$1000)*
Asian Studies Leadership Award 2019 *Eastern Illinois University*
Asian Studies Research/Creative Work Award 2019 *Eastern Illinois University*
Manga Award *Midwest Animation Promotion Society 2019 (\$3000)*