

ARTi

SHE SAILS WITH HER SPIRIT.

MIKO
WAS
HERE



*Proof of concept can be found at the project website:
artificialanimation.org/miko*

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Miko Was Here is an animated 160-minute fantasy adventure.

Set aboard a ghostly tankship at sea and inspired by the supernatural tales of that setting, we explore the vast depth of the extraordinary unknown.

The feeling of wonder as Chihiro crosses the riverbed in *Spirited Away*... the lonely solitude that Kiki endures in *Kiki's Delivery Service*... the dreamy other-world of *The Boy and the Heron*...

Emotional, meditative, and rooted in character, *Miko Was Here* is a love letter to the great animator Hayao Miyazaki and the Japanese folktales that inspired him.

THE TALE OF URASHIMA TARO

Sea stories have always captured the imagination of the public. We've seen the most well-known, *Moby Dick* and *Life of Pi*, represented on film and television. But the story of *Urashima Tarō*, familiar to most Japanese children, remains unexplored.

The title character, a fisherman on the Japanese coast, is rewarded for rescuing a turtle and is escorted by spirits to the Dragon Palace beneath the sea. He spends what he believes to be several days there, but when he returns to his home village, he discovers he has been gone for at least a century.

Variations of the story differ in the fate of the protagonist. Some say he transforms into an old man. Some say he transforms into a crane. **We have a different ending in mind...**





LOGLINE:

A seventeen-year-old Miko becomes a stowaway on a ghost ship and struggles to return home to the land of the living.

It's New Year's Eve.

Miko celebrates her last night in her city. Her decision to move devastates her friends, especially her closest friend, Hibiscus. We watch their tearful goodbye and follow Miko to the ocean, where she swims one last time. Alone.

Violent now, the waves clash against Miko, writhing as if disturbed by something big -

An engine
roars
and shrieks -

A colossal ship emerges out of thin air - kidnapping Miko. Taking her far, far away.

Throughout the series, the Big Ship will carry Miko deeper into another world... a universe filled with ghosts and sea dragons, wonder and loneliness. Miko will glimpse into the vast blue world and consider: how far away is home now?

To return home, Miko must venture deeper into this unfamiliar world and learn not only to survive and sail...but to keep herself hopeful.



S T R U C T U R E

Miko Was Here will be structured like a film, but broken down into four episodes. There will be a definitive beginning, middle, and end. There will be no loose ends after the finale, and our sole character will have a complete arc. The limited nature of the project will allow us to distribute as a film or a series.

EPISODE ONE depicts Miko attending a New Year's Eve farewell party thrown by her best friend Hibiscus, only to be swept away by a colossal, ghostly ship that emerges from the ocean. Alone and frightened, she explores the eerie vessel, encountering glowing spirits who offer her strange gifts. When she accepts a pair of shoes from a ghost, she unknowingly binds herself to the ship and its spectral inhabitants. As the ship sails into a vast, unknown world, Miko begins a journey that will challenge her sense of self and her connection to the home she left behind.

EPISODE TWO cuts forward three months as Miko adapts to life aboard the ghostly Big Ship, forming bonds with its spectral inhabitants while plundering treasures from floating islands. Her confidence grows, but so does her arrogance, as she takes from silent, sorrowful ghosts without remorse. But when a mysterious storm suddenly appears, Miko discovers that she was never alone on the ship. The episode will end with Miko discovering Oto, the ship's fading former captain.

EPISODE THREE will cut forward three months again, as the contentious relationship between Miko and Oto implodes. We learn that, to pass over the captaincy of the ship, Oto had purposefully abducted Miko. Reluctant and resentful, Miko abandons the Big Ship and takes refuge on an oil rig, where she encounters the Corpus, a horrifying fusion of lost souls trapped in a mechanical nightmare.

EPISODE FOUR will climax as the Corpus reveals that Miko's plundering of the floating islands has condemned the spirits to eternal suffering. Haunted by guilt and relentlessly pursued by the Corpus, Miko is forced to confront the consequences of her choices. When the Big Ship returns, she reconciles with Oto, and together they find their way back to Miko's home... only to discover that 300 years have passed since Miko's abduction. Heartbroken, Miko realizes her old life is gone forever.



TONE AND STYLE

The visuals will be stylistic, distinctive, and uniquely hand-crafted. With a combination of live-action and animation, real actors will be composited and styled against painted backgrounds.

Since *Miko Was Here* takes inspiration from Japanese maritime fiction, the style will take inspiration from woodblock prints, giving the show a pronounced “physical” feeling. While this will create a special look, the visuals must never overwhelm the story or character; Ghibli’s films have a certain timeless quality to them, and we will strive for the same.

The soundtrack should feel as whimsically haunting as the spirits aboard the ship. Inspired by the sound and philosophy of musique concrète, the music will manipulate environmental sounds, natural sounds, noises, and human voices into a symphony of sounds, blending score with sound design.



F A N T A S Y

The adventure of *Miko Was Here* is solitary—but surrounded by life. Ghosts, creatures, ships, the spirit realm... we want to use Miko's journey alone to ground the vibrance of the fantastical world.

Our perspective throughout the show will remain fixed on Miko and her emotions, finding moments of introspection through solitude. Her desperate attempt to establish a routine while at sea will be shattered by new disruptions. Following the belief that daily chores nourish the soul, we plan to represent a variety of cleaning, exercise, and work required to keep the ship afloat.

The show will also prominently feature the rare natural beauty of our world. Auroras, moonbows, mirages, broken specters... Our character will encounter these real phenomena as well as real man-made horrors. How will Miko cope with the abundance of both beauty and the grotesque? One day at a time.







MIKO is a spirited and curious seventeen-year-old, with a flair for the dramatic and a deep sense of independence. Tall and elegant, she often dresses in a mix of different styles. Her journey begins with a sense of adventure but quickly turns into a struggle for survival and self-discovery. As she navigates the ghostly world, her resilience and kindness shine, but her arrogance and guilt also surface. Despite her flaws, Miko's longing for home always pushes her forward.



HIBISCUS, Miko's best friend, is short, scrappy, and down-to-earth, often wearing the same hoodie many days in a row. Fiercely loyal and deeply emotional, she struggles to say goodbye to Miko. Though she appears only briefly, Hibiscus leaves a lasting impact on Miko. As a result of Miko's abduction, Hibiscus will never see her friend again. Nonetheless, Hibiscus keeps Miko's memory alive by living on.

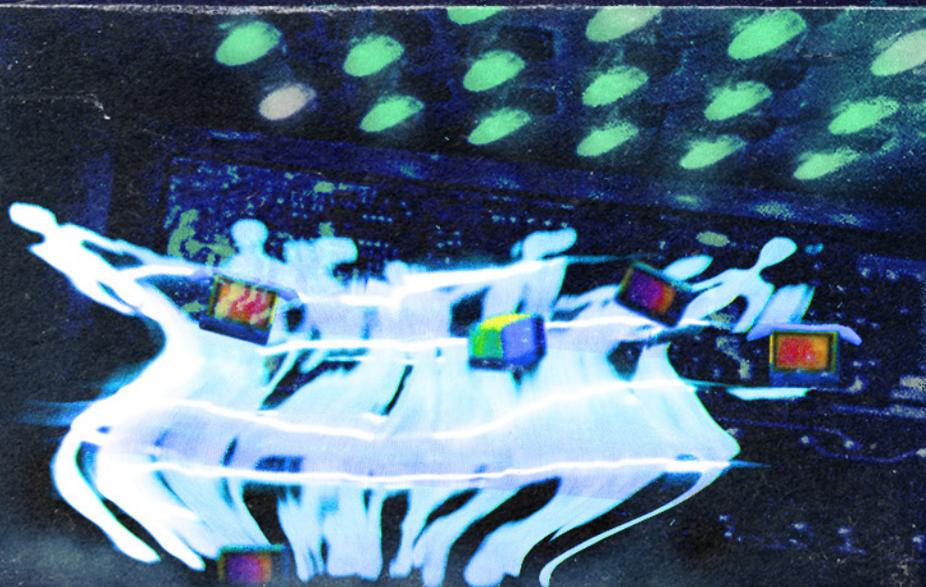
THE SPIRITS





CAPT. OTO

OTO is the ghostly captain of the Big Ship. Once a teenage girl like Miko, Oto has spent an unknown amount of time as the ship's captain, her humanity fading as she becomes more spectral. She's been searching for a replacement to take over the captaincy. While her tactics are questionable - and her loneliness and desire to move on are palpable - Oto is patient and protective. Her complex relationship with Miko evolves from one of resentment to mutual understanding, culminating in a bittersweet farewell as she finally finds peace.

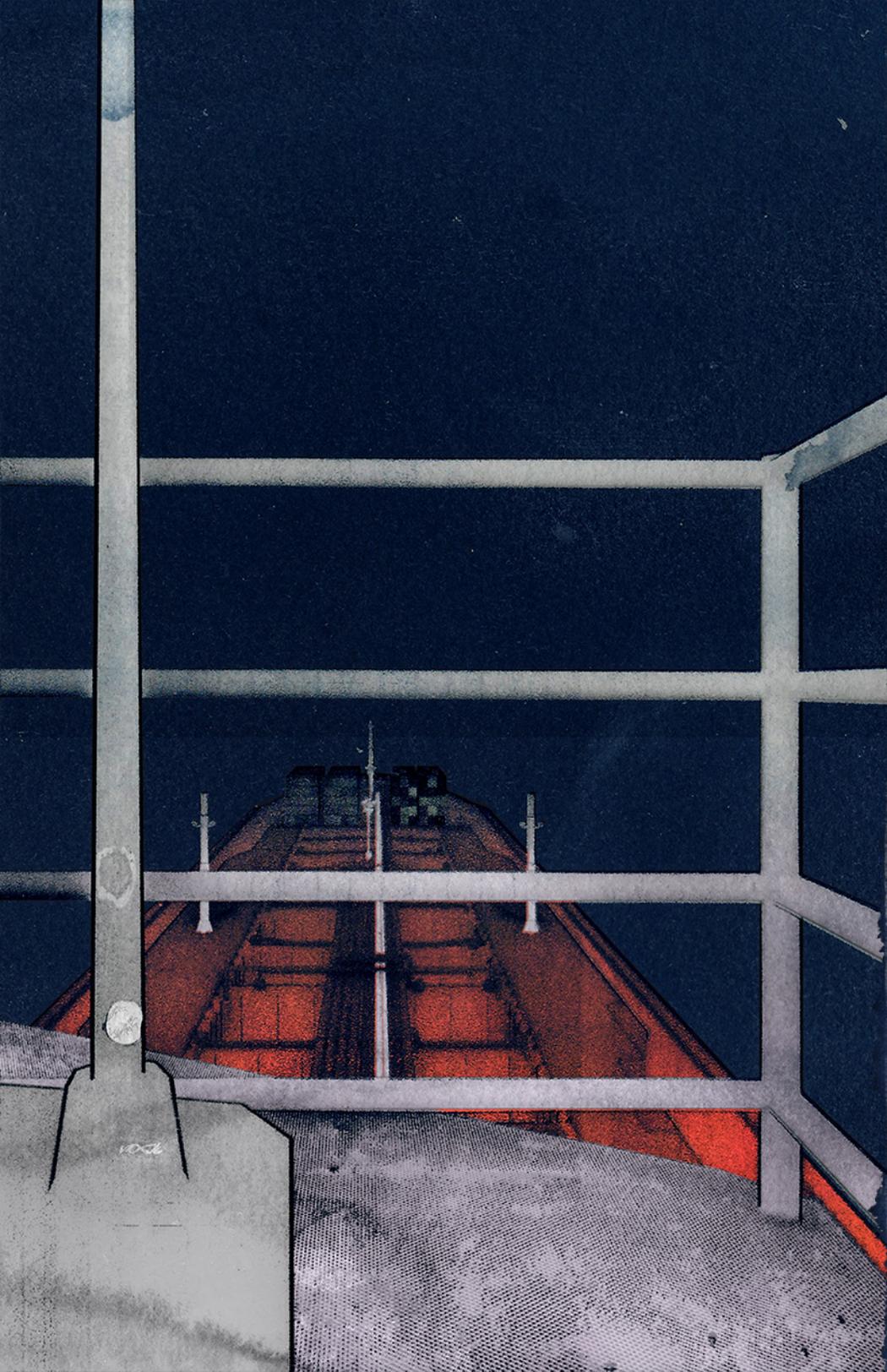


THE CORPUS

The Corpus is a horrifying and tragic creature, a grotesque fusion of countless lost souls bound together by wires, cables, and machinery. It is both a prisoner and a manifestation of the pain caused by Miko's actions, as the spirits trapped within it were abandoned by her and left to decay. Despite its terrifying appearance, the Corpus is deeply pitiable. In its final moments, it Miko finds a way to give it peace, allowing its spirits to finally move on.

THE BIG SHIP





THE BIG SHIP is a large multi-purpose tanker ship. She was converted into a floating storage and an offloading unit for trash, but drifted out to sea, never to be found again. Being adrift for so long, she became a sentient ghost ship, becoming a refuge for lost souls. She requires much daily maintenance to keep afloat. She will never drop anchor, will never take the shortest path, and will always seek adventure.



F R A N C H I S E

Even though *Miko Was Here* is designed as a limited series, the story can be exhibited as both a series and a feature.

Additionally, the story of Miko can continue in subsequent installments. The hypothetical sequel will take place on the same ship, only centuries later, as Miko seeks a captain to replace her. Our perspective will remain on Miko and she is placed in the same situation as Oto was. This will allow us to explore many of the same characters, themes, and wonder from the original series, but with a new sci-fi twist and a fresh set of faces.



Read the story treatment here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M--d--BGTGve447qy_ZHlIGo5bfIvKoVkFuOU2Hh8Bs/edit?usp=sharing

C O N T A C T

Kai Tattersall - Director, Writer
kai@artificialanimation.org