

Mutual  
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ISSUE 6

SPRING 2019



MEDIATISED IMAGES OF JAPAN IN EUROPE:  
THROUGH THE MEDIA KALEIDOSCOPE

MUTUAL IMAGES

ISSUE 6 – SPRING 2019

# MUTUAL IMAGES

## A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

FOUNDED BY

AURORE YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, MAXIME DANESIN & MARCO PELLITTERI

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ISSUE 1 – *Between Texts and Images: Mutual Images of Japan and Europe*

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MEDIATISED IMAGES OF JAPAN IN EUROPE:  
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EDITED BY

MARCO PELLITTERI & CHRISTOPHER J. HAYES

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## A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

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*Mutual Images'* field of interest is the analysis and discussion of the ever-changing, multifaceted relations between Europe and Asia, and between specific European countries or regions and specific Asian countries or regions. A privileged area of investigation concerns the mutual cultural influences between Japan and other national or regional contexts, with a special emphasis on visual domains, media studies, the cultural and creative industries, and popular imagination at large.

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## ***The Citi Exhibition: Manga* マンガ -**

**Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere & Matsuba Ryoko (Eds)**

London: Thames & Hudson, 2019, 352 p.

Review by Bounthavy SUVILAY | University of Montpellier III and University Paris-Ouest, France

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The catalogue of *The Citi Exhibition: Manga* マンガ, held at the British Museum from the 23 May to the 26 August 2019, is a mix between a “coffee table book” with coloured illustrations and detailed panels, and a reader’s digest about manga written by scholars and the curators of the exhibition. It provides a complete initiation to manga, its creative process, formats and genres.

Edited by two of the three curators, Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere and Matsuba Ryoko, the six sections of the book mirror the exhibition zones. The first one shows the manga production from drawings to the final book through interviews with artists, editors and publishers. The second section examines the medium’s evolution from its historical roots to present reality with an emphasis on female audience manga in order to challenge the assumption that comic storytelling is solely for males. In Section 3, different manga genres are featured to show the wide range of themes of these narratives. The fourth section explores the manga’s interrelations with society through fandom and museum collections. Section 5 displays the relationships between modern manga artists and the works of ukiyo-e artists, 19th century political cartoonists. The last section focuses on the influence of manga on modern artworks, American graphic novels and *anime*.

The interviews are all the more interesting in that they are conducted with artists who have marked manga history (Chiba Tetsuya, Hoshino Yukinobu, Takemiya Keiko) or who have novel approaches of the narratives (Kōno Fumiyo, Nakamura Hikaru, Inoue Takehiko, Yamazaki Mari). But because the target audience is mainstream, the questions are often identical and do not sufficiently emphasise the artists’ differences.

In order to highlight the editorial process and the collaborative works, four interviews with professionals from major publishing companies are also featured: Furukawa Kōhei (Kodansha), Nakaguma Ichirō (Shogakukan), Suzuki Haruhiko (Shueisha) and Torishima Kazuhiko (Hakusensha).

Most essays from scholars are shortened versions of their book or previous research. For example, in “The power of manga in comparative historical perspective” Adam L. Kern restates what he wrote in *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan* (2006). He describes the 18<sup>th</sup> century massive woodblock-printing industry and the early comic book. Co-author of *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction* (2014) with Jan Baetens, Hugo Frey examines the manga influence on Frank Miller, Chris Ware and other artists in “Manga and the Rise of the Graphic Novel”. Rayna Denison, who published *Anime: A Critical Introduction* (2015), explains how manga and *anime* are interwoven in “Anime’s Trajectory”. The essay “Garo Magazine and Alternative Manga” is written by Ryan Holmberg, who is also in charge of the occasional series “What is Alternative Manga?” for *The Comics Journal*.

The essays written by the curators may be more interesting for scholars: they provide insights into the history of Japanese graphic art. In “Did Hokusai Create Manga?”, Matsuba Ryōko explains why manga are not really related to *ukiyo-e* beside the name “manga”. Sadamura Koto links the drawing technique of ancient artists and contemporary authors in “Return of the Demons: The Power of Kyōsai’s Brush”. Ishigami Aki explains the evolution of sexually explicit art in print and book form from Edo period till modern manga in “Sexual Expression in Printed Form”. Takemiya Keiko’s interview focuses on the Genga’ (Dash) technique, which exactly replicates manga manuscripts in order to create an archive in the Kyoto International Manga Museum. Since the drawings are not created for display, even short-term exhibition can lead to deteriorations. Genga’ (Dash) is a way to reproduce the original artwork as a whole, including the creation process and technological history of printing that could be observed through the different textures and techniques.

Two papers are especially interesting because they highlight the international influence of manga. In “*Captain Tsubasa: Soft Power*”, Thomas Lamarre explains how the heroes of a soccer manga somehow acted as a diplomatic intermediary in 2004 when Japanese troops were deployed to Iraq. He insists on the fact that “the transformation of manga into an interactive medium, however profitable to certain parties, was not first

and foremost the result of marketing strategies or editorial authority. It did not advance in a top-down fashion. If a source of energy is to be located, it lies in the passionate creativity of readers.” (Lamarre, 2019: 157). In the last essay, the Japanese critic Itō Gō wonders what the Westerners call the "manga style" and why drawings can be so compelling for the readers. He establishes that duality of expression is the key concept that distinguishes Japanese comic, since manga “maintain values that are fantastic, multiform and inverted, while simultaneously allowing the possibility of a realism that reflects actual reality. On the basis of this duality, lines assemble to form faces and bodies: this is the special form of expression that is manga.” (Itō, 2019: 327).

Richly illustrated, this exhibition catalogue published by Thames & Hudson, Limited may not be really attractive for academic researchers, but it is an essential work for any comic book lover wishing to understand how this artistic medium has developed in Japan.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Bounthavy SUVILAY** is a PhD candidate in University of Montpellier III. Her research is focused on the transmedial adaptations of narratives (manga, anime, video games, toys) and their transnational circulation. She uses the Dragon Ball IP as a case study of Japanese media mix that is transformed according to different editorial policies over time by French content industries. Her research interests also relate to video games and she is the author of *Indie Games: Histoire, artwork, sound design des jeux vidéo indépendants*.