

Perspectives

The Japan Foundation London Newsletter

Japanese Appeals UK learners increase and diversify

Since our establishment in the early 1970s, Japan Foundation support for the teaching of the Japanese language worldwide has always been a priority activity. Indeed, it remains a cornerstone of our work in promoting a wider knowledge and deeper understanding of Japan overseas.

In the last issue of Perspectives we explained how our London Language Centre supports and promotes the teaching of Japanese in this country through specific activities and projects. In this edition we should like to go a little further into the background of Japanese language teaching in the UK and the way in which it has developed.

Since the founding of the University of London's School of Oriental Studies in 1917 and well into the early 1980s, the study of the Japanese language, despite being firmly embedded within the UK academic curriculum, was regarded as a subject studied by a rather limited number of specialists.

Then came the period of Japan's remarkable economic success. The importance of Japan and its language to the world and the need for the UK to expand its provision for Japanese studies and the teaching of the Japanese language became increasingly plain to all and quickly resulted in regular lobbying from many in diplomatic and commercial quarters. There followed the Parker Report in 1986 and the DTI's Opportunity Japan Campaign in 1988, both good examples of this trend.

Supported at that time by a flourishing Japanese economy, the study of the Japanese language in the UK enjoyed a period of rather significant growth becoming more accessible and of greater interest to a wider number of learners. The new National Curriculum, which came into force in 1988, placed Japanese among 19 designated foreign languages to be offered at secondary schools. The first Post Graduate Certificate of Education course in the Japanese language was established in 1993



Training teachers of Japanese in our Language Centre Library at Russell Square

at the University of Nottingham and produced secondary school teachers qualified to teach Japanese. The Language College specialist status system for some secondary schools began in 1995 in England and a number of Language Colleges in the initial batch were already offering Japanese as a modern foreign language. The establishment of the Japan Foundation London Language Centre in 1997 gave strong and much needed impetus to this upward shift towards Japanese at secondary level.

Meanwhile British society was becoming increasingly preoccupied with its standard in modern foreign languages. The Nuffield Report in 2000 recommended drastic reforms in the teaching of foreign languages, and two years later the DfES announced the National Language Strategy, which encouraged lifelong language learning and the introduction of languages to primary school children. This Strategy encouraged the Japan Foundation to extend its support to primary schools, a move that has been well received in the primary sector.

If you ask primary or secondary children why they study Japanese, you will, amazingly, get the same answers: because Japanese is fun, new, and different; because it's cool. It is not Japan's economic power but its cultural appeal that appears to attract young learners. Teachers say that learning Japanese, which is quite a different experience from learning a European language, serves to open the learners' eyes to new horizons.

We know that schools teaching Japanese have a number of problems; shortage of teachers, lack of teaching materials, and the recent enforcement of making languages optional after the age of 14, which may lead to a considerable drop in language learning in schools. In the higher education sector also we have over recent years witnessed the disappointing closure of Japanese degree courses at some universities, even though the number of students nationwide taking Japanese as a module has increased.

Recently our Head Office in Tokyo announced the result of its latest survey on educational institutions overseas offering Japanese. The findings were that 2.35 million people in 127 countries and regions study the Japanese language, the three countries with the largest number of learners being Korea, China, and Australia. In Europe, the UK came out top with 16,500 learners.

In our quest to identify the most suitable way of responding to each emerging situation, the Japan Foundation will continue to offer every possible means of support in the promotion of the teaching of the Japanese language in the UK.

**Mana Takatori, Director, Japan Foundation
London Language Centre**

Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics



By: Paul Gravett
Laurence King Publishing
£19.95 ISBN:1 85669 391 0

This solidly researched introduction to manga belongs on the reading list of any student interested in Japanese popular culture. With 360 intelligently chosen illustrations, there is a real sense of allowing the strips to speak for themselves: the book's main strength is its range of material – from girls' comics to salaryman funnies. Thus, there is an implicit, and very welcome, challenge to the stereotypical view held in the west that manga are merely about sex and violence – 'tits and tentacles' fodder for Beavis and Butthead-like teens.

If the book has a drawback, then it is that it tries to do too much. The author points out in the cover blurb that manga 'account for 40 per cent of everything published each year in Japan.' So the subtitle of the book, 'Sixty Years of Japanese Comics' is a slightly worrying portent of overambition. Of course there has had to be a severe selection process,

and the cherry-picked examples are entertaining enough. But there are still too many of them, with the result that the accompanying text is often squeezed to the point of superficiality. So, if you're looking for comment on the notorious sweatshop conditions in the studios, or on alleged neo-fascist trends in some comics, seek elsewhere.

But if it's tempting to say that the book is more of a bumper-sized fanzine than a scholarly tome, this is not fair. It goes much further, and offers readers the opportunity to look closely at a side to manga they may not have previously encountered. There has been a need for a good primer on the subject for many years (Frederik Schodt's *Manga! Manga!*, 1983, has done sterling service), and this informative, engaged and above all wide-ranging compendium fulfils that role admirably.

Roger Sabin, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London



The character Maya Natsume in *TENJO TENGE (Above the Heavens, Under the Heavens)* by the creator known as 'Oh Great!'

Director's Note

Whilst writing this Note, I cannot avoid the feeling that summer has rapidly run away from us as thoughts of enjoyable holidays recede into our memories. Autumn has already wrapped us in its chilly cloak and at the same time a merry but commercial season is preparing its approach within two months. Opposite our office in Russell Square, wild life – squirrels – also appear busy preparing a comfortable hibernation.

We are delighted to announce our first programme 2005/2006 after the structural reforms, which I outlined in the last issue. Please note carefully which programmes have changed when completing your applications. Needless to say, you are welcome to contact us for guidance in choosing the programme most suitable for your project. Although the Japan Foundation is currently facing financial constraints, I should like to give my fundamental support to as many quality and competitive projects as possible. This policy will never change, however serious the Foundation's financial circumstances may be. I intend to hold more activities e.g. Japan-related lectures, workshops and Japanese-educational seminars.

I look forward to inviting you to these events and to receiving your well-prepared grant applications.

Kohki Kanno, Director General

(newly minted as well as unreconstructed) assumptions effectively undermined.

It was not just a matter of juggling with different points of view, I had to reconsider what I (or anyone else) could mean by the notion of 'experience.' And insight into that more fundamental issue came as much from contemplating nature's slow choreography in Kobori Enshu's masterpieces of garden design as it did from the latest scholarly work; gardens which in a real sense could only be called 'exceptional.'

**Dr Harvie Ferguson
Professor of Sociology, Glasgow University**

Dr Ferguson was a Japan Foundation Fellow in 2003 and his topic of research was *Identity and the Experience of War: East and West*

History's exception

When I was an undergraduate, and for many years thereafter, British sociologists were interested in Japan, if they were interested at all, as an interesting exception to their classically founded views on the character of modern society and its development. It is a measure of the transformation in the historical perspective of European and American Social Sciences in recent times that just a year ago I arrived in Kyoto to experience at first hand the historical culture of the paradigmatic case of postmodern society.

In a European context modern society emerged around 1600 and developed in large part through organized warfare among nascent states. At the other end of modernity's uncertain

trajectory, war on a world scale had broken that framework and established a new global, post-war, and postmodern civilization. From a Japanese perspective modern society had its origins in late nineteenth-century, western inspired change and now constitutes just one among an accumulating series of forms that coexist as continuously available possibilities for social life. Japan may have come late to modernity but had always been postmodern.

I wanted to understand the role of war, and particularly the 'experience' of war in both 'Western' and 'Japanese' perspectives without regarding either as an exception to the other. This was possible, of course, only because within the postmodern labyrinth of the University of Kyoto Library (Non)System such terms have little meaning, and I found sufficient material in languages I could read to have all my

Japanese Film after Mr Pink

A Japan Foundation season of post-Tarantino generation films



Adrenalin Drive Dir: Shinobu Yaguchi, 1999

Following the success of our inaugural season on the “other” in Japanese cinema, we turn our focus on the “post-Tarantino generation”. From January to March 2005 in collaboration with UK professional organisations we will present a unique season of contemporary films entitled **Japanese Film after Mr Pink**. The season will extend across the UK and will include Bristol and Sheffield.

Japanese cinema in the 1990s was marked by the clear emergence of a generation of master filmmakers who have since found their place in international cinema. They include Shinji Aoyama, Hirokazu Kore'eda, Kiyoshi Kurosawa and Nobuhiro Suwa. But the next generation has yet to emerge. This absence of a cohesive new generation has become a focus of debate in Japanese film circles, and one proposal is that what has emerged is the “post-Tarantino” generation. This season presents audiences with the opportunity to evaluate for themselves the suitability of such a provocative slogan.

The directors in this season will include **Toshiaki Toyoda, Katsuhito Ishii,**

Kensaku Watanabe, Shinobu Yaguchi and Sabu.

In a rare screening of what is arguably the missing link between the two generations, **Shinji Aoyama's** rarely seen **WILD LIFE** will also be included. It is a generation of filmmakers whose film education was filtered through video, for whom digital technology is part of their daily life, and who are comfortable to remix films from the past to create a new world of the moving image. Unlike the previous generation, it is difficult to imagine these directors expressing themselves outside the field of the moving image.

For the filmmakers – many of whom would revel in the title of “film geek” – what is central is the cinematic world on the screen. Any violence onscreen – and such violence is generally cartoonish in nature – exists comfortably outside the offscreen moral universe. The films are often about an everyman surrounded by idiosyncratic personalities in stories that are largely character-driven in the form or rites-of-passage dramas, road movies or Kafkaesque nightmares. They consistently reject naturalism to present surreal universes. These films are playful, devilish and knowing. But they also offer moments of intense poetry.

Whether this generation represents the end of something, or the beginning of something new, is for you, the audience, to decide.

Stephen Cremin

Organisations wishing to participate in the season and for further details contact Junko Takekawa.

E-mail: junko.takekawa@jpf.org.uk

Contemporary Art and the Museum in Japan

Fumio Nanjo in conversation with Teresa Gleadowe

**15th November 2004 from 6:30pm
The Japan Foundation, London**

After a brief video in which **Dr Christoph Grunenberg**, Director, Tate Liverpool, introduces the Japanese art scene, **Fumio Nanjo**, in conversation with **Teresa Gleadowe**, will give us an overview of current contemporary art activities in Japan focusing principally on museums of contemporary art. **Fumio Nanjo**,



(pictured) as Deputy Director of the privately funded Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, will also use the occasion to talk about the reasons for its recent establishment as an institution that appears

to break with many of the conventions and restrictions under which other public museums in Japan have to work. He will also look at the impact it has had on the existing system and evaluate its considerable and unique position in the Japanese contemporary art world.

During the session, comparisons with institutions and arts organisations in the UK will be made.

Fumio Nanjo is an internationally renowned independent curator, 1998 Turner Prize judge, and one of the artistic directors of the 1st Yokohama Triennale. He is currently Deputy Director of the Mori Art Museum.

Teresa Gleadowe is Head of Department, Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art.

Please contact info@jpf.org.uk or fax 020 7323 4888 to reserve a place.

General enquiries to **Junko Takekawa**.
E-mail: junko.takekawa@jpf.org.uk

Performing Arts Lecture Workshops

To raise general awareness in the UK of the performing arts in Japan, we are planning a series of lectures/workshops. They will be held approximately every month starting in early 2005: exact number is yet to be decided.

Subjects will range from a history of modern Japanese theatre to traditional dance and Butoh. Further details to follow.

out of the ordinary/extraordinary

A Japan Foundation Touring Exhibition available for loan to UK venues



Shizuka Yokomizu *Stranger No 23*, 2000

102 photographic works by 11 Japanese artists giving a new expressive form to the complexities of our ever-changing world and the instability of Japanese society behind the façade of economic prosperity. The very things in their own world and society that they have long accepted as “obvious” are questioned in their attempt to validate and reconstruct them.

Available for loan from August to December 2005.

Approx. 400m² (negotiable) required. Cost sharing scheme. No hire fee. Insurance covered by Japan Foundation. Free catalogues provided.

**Details from Junko Takekawa. Tel: 020 7436 6695
E-mail: junko.takekawa@jpf.org.uk**

Changes to our Grant Programmes

As we informed you in previous issues, the Japan Foundation has introduced a number of reforms to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our activities. As part of these changes, a new organisational structure was adopted in May 2004.

We now focus on the following three major areas of activity:

Arts and Cultural Exchange, Japanese-Language Education Overseas, Japanese Studies Overseas and Intellectual Exchange. Support for these activities are offered through our annual grant programmes, full details of which can be found on our Tokyo website: www.jpf.go.jp

The restructuring has given us the opportunity to make some positive changes to our grant programmes. All our open programmes for the UK are listed in the insert to this issue and the changes, as they affect applicants from the UK, are as follows:

2004-2005	2005-2006	Notes
Fellowship Programme	Japanese Study Fellowship Programme	Category for artists has been discontinued. New category for short-term scholars & researchers introduced
Publication Support Programme Translation Support Programme	Translation and Publication Support Programme	Were separate programmes in 2004-2005 Now combined No change to criteria
Japan-Europe Support Programme for Conferences and Symposia	Grant Programme for Intellectual Exchange Projects	2005-2006 programme wider in scope and remit

2nd Yokohama Triennale Planned for Autumn 2005

The second Yokohama International Triennale of Contemporary Art is planned for mid September to mid December 2005. Arata Isozaki is the newly appointed artistic director.

It will feature works of leading international contemporary art and will focus in particular on the connection between art and society. Yokohama 2005 is organised by The Japan Foundation in collaboration with other organisations.

For further information visit:
www.jpf.go.jp/yt2005/e/index.html

Nobody Knows

ICA Projects is proud to present Hirokazu Kore-eda's new film *Nobody Knows* (Japan, 2004, 141 min, subtitles) for which Yagira Yuya won the best actor award at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival. "Terrifying and heart-stoppingly sad" Guardian
Opens at ICA and key cities on 5th November.
Further information on screenings from the ICA Box Office Tel: 020 7930 3647

Dates for your Diary

Events organised by, or with support from, the Japan Foundation

25th September – 28th November	Real World – The Dissolving Space of Experience. This new exhibition at Modern Art, Oxford features the work of six international artists and includes a new series of monumental paintings by Japan's Hiroshi Sugito. Further details on www.modernartoxford.org.uk
until 21st November	through the surface – an exhibition about collaboration, process and outcome featuring 14 of the most innovative textile artists in the UK and Japan. Touring venues in the UK and then to National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, April/May 2005. Now until 21 November at the Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Nottingham. Full details on www.throughthesurface.surrart.ac.uk
18th September – 28th November	Takashi Murakami at the 2004 Liverpool Biennale – Artist Murakami has been invited to create new works for the Liverpool Biennale's 2004 'International Exhibition' (the showpiece exhibition). Information: info@biennial.org.uk or www.biennial.org.uk
6 November 2004 – 3 July 2005	Counter-Photography: Japan's Artists Today – a Japan Foundation Touring Exhibition at the European Illustration Collection Hull (Lincoln University) 6 Nov-11 Dec. 60 works by 11 Japanese photographers and young artists. Then in 2005 to Aberystwyth Arts Centre 15 Jan-5 Mar, Oriol Davies Gallery, Newtown, Powys 19 Mar-30 April, South Hill Park Arts Centre 14 May-3 July. Information: Junko Takekawa Tel: 020 7436 6695, E-mail junko.takekawa@jpf.org.uk
8th November	Edexcel GCSE Day – GCSE Japanese feedback and guidance meeting. For more information and to book call Edexcel. Tel: 0870 240 9800 Fax: 0845 359 1909 or visit: www.edexcel.org.uk
8th, 16th & 25th November	Twilight Workshop for Primary School Teachers – Sir Bernard Lovell Language College, Bristol (9th) Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe (16th) Trinity and All Saints' Comenius Centre in Leeds (25th) Organised by the Japanese Language Committee at ALL with support from the Japan Foundation. For more information or bookings contact Sheila James at the ALL office on 01788 546443
10-27 November	Ninagawa's Hamlet – at the Barbican. Yukio Ninagawa returns to London with his eagerly awaited new production of Hamlet. Booking www.barbican.org.uk/bite or Tel: 0845 120 7515
13th & 19th November	Exploring Japan – at Groby College, Leicester (13 Nov) and at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston (19 November). Workshops for primary and secondary teachers, including sessions on geography, art, language, food technology and haiku. Organised by Japan 21 (Education), in association with the Japan Foundation London Language Centre. Details from Japan 21 Tel: 020 7630 8696
23rd November	Getting Started with ICT in Japanese and Mandarin Chinese – a one-day hands-on course on the exploitation of word-processing, powerpoint and the internet in language teaching. Organised by CILT – the National Centre for Languages, and held at Kingwood City Learning Centre, London. Further information visit www.cilt.org.uk
3 – 6 December	Akibiyori: New Japanese Cinema – at the Filmhouse, Edinburgh. A two-week season of recent Japanese film with a mix of arthouse films, rarely seen away from festival circuit, and domestic box office successes not seen in the UK. Plus a retrospective of a contemporary director. Content and exact dates still unconfirmed. Information: Matt Lloyd Tel: 07971 820 942 E-mail: matt.lloyd@filmhousecinema.com
10 December – 11 February	Kill Your Timid Notion – Performance of a specially commissioned and developed work by Sachiko M at KYTN, a 2 month festival of cutting edge and avant garde experimental music, film and installation art. Dundee Contemporary Arts. For further information visit www.dca.org.uk
2005 24 – 26 January	Head Start – An introduction to Japanese for heads of modern foreign languages and senior managers in secondary schools, and language co-ordinators at primary level. Further details contact Japan Foundation London Language Centre, Tel: 020 7436 6698, Fax: 020 7323 4888 E-mail: info.language@jpf.org.uk



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