

Perspectives

The Japan Foundation London Newsletter

Manga in the UK

Manga: Short Comics from Modern Japan January & February 2002

Japan 2001 continued apace into its closing months with the London showing of the Japan Foundation's *Manga: Short Comics from Modern Japan* exhibition at the London Institute Gallery in January and February. It provided a unique opportunity to hold a number of ancillary events on the general theme of *manga*. Impact was further enhanced by the visit to the UK of the exhibition's curator, Fusanosuke Natsume, himself a *manga* author and critic, and grandson of the famous novelist of the Meiji period, Soseki Natsume.

It was Fusanosuke Natsume who was responsible for drawing up the basic plan for the *manga* exhibition which first opened in Paris in October 1999, proceeding to Rotterdam in January 2000 before showing, with minor changes, in the UK as part of Japan 2001. Mr Natsume had been invited to London to participate in a one-day seminar and symposium on 1 February, *Manga & Art: Visual Culture in Contemporary Japan*, organised by Chelsea College of Art and Design and the Japan Foundation London Office, and he gave a further talk on the history of *manga* at the Japan Foundation on 30 January.

The exhibition itself, which ran from 9 January to 8 February, had already toured 4 other venues in the UK with enormous success. Mindful of the difficulties in presenting *manga* within the restricted parameters of an exhibition format, Natsume had focused it on short *manga* works so that the each narrative could be better appreciated as a whole. It succeeded where many *manga* exhibitions in the past had failed in demonstrating that in the *manga* idiom it is the final printed product that is important, not the intrinsic merit of each individual picture. This concept was strengthened by exhibiting high quality copies rather than original works in order to bring out the idea of mass production so inherent in *manga* culture. Further devices towards greater authenticity were in the use of screen panels, a

right to left reading sequence of the frames and characters and a concentration of works that made extensive use of colour. The exhibition in London was attended by over 4,000 visitors.

Manga Comics Happening

One of the highlights of the exhibition was a special Saturday opening on 2 February. Organised by Paul Gravett, just under 200 people were able to meet practising *manga* and comics artists from London and the South East. Fusanosuke Natsume joined nearly 30 invited cartoonists to draw a giant, wall-sized *manga* of four pages, drawn live from ideas suggested by the audience. Visitors took the opportunity to draw their own characters on flipcharts around the gallery and another room was filled with displays of books, comics, paintings and T-shirts by the guest comics creators, including the British-based Japanese women cartoonists Toko Uchiyama and Mitsuba Wajima. The day was filmed by NHK TV as part of their programme on Fusanosuke Natsume's visit to London.

Manga and Art Symposium

The symposium on 1 February, *Manga and Art: Visual Culture in Contemporary Japan*, attended by an enthusiastic audience of over 100 and organised by Chelsea College of Art and Design and the Japan Foundation, explored the relationship between *manga* and contemporary Japanese art. Its purpose was not to 'elevate' *Manga* to the level of 'art', rather to look at both *manga* and art as a one element of the visual culture of contemporary Japan.

Fusanosuke Natsume began by giving a lucid analysis of the relationship of the picture, the word and the frame in *manga* and how, fascinatingly, these elements interact in a most creative way. On the other hand, Professor Jaqueline Berndt of Yokohama National University highlighted problems in the relationship between *manga* and fine art and discussed the highly contentious use of *manga* in art textbooks in schools. This most



Photograph: Fusanosuke Natsume at work at the *Manga Comics Happening*

stimulating paper elicited the largest number of questions from the audience.

The afternoon session began with a thoughtful paper from Professor Yukio Kondo of Keio University in which he explained the exceptional and highly complex nature of Tezuka's *manga*. It was Professor Kondo who was involved in curating the Osamu Tezuka exhibition at the Tokyo Museum of Modern Art in 1990, the first *manga* exhibition at a national museum in Japan. Roger Sabin of Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design followed with a highly informative paper on the impact Japanese *manga* has made in the UK and USA. This was a particularly valuable contribution as it touched upon the issue of *manga* as a cultural commodity and examined its consumption in the UK and USA.

However, the star of the day was the artist Makoto Aida and the frank and witty way in which he presented his work captivated the audience. Although international fame is beckoning, he made it clear that his art is

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grappling with Japanese domestic issues and is for the home audience. As an artist, his strong-mindedness and his yearning towards *manga* was a good example of the ambivalent relationship between *manga* and Japanese contemporary art. It was illuminating to hear him say that in Japan artists cannot use *manga* in the way Lichtenstein used American comics, because the barrier between *manga* and art is not as clear cut as that between comics and art in the USA. After a fruitful and stimulating discussion we finished the day enjoying the *manga* exhibition over a well-earned drink.

Professor Toshio Watanabe

Head of Research at Chelsea College of Art and Design

Talk by Fusanosuke Natsume 30 January

Fusanosuke Natsume gave a talk to a packed hall of nearly 100 people at the Japan Foundation on 30 January on the theme *Manga: Past and Present*. Illustrating his talk with a range of slides he explained how the earliest Japanese *manga* had been influenced by the political caricatures in European newspapers. *Manga* developed with the new print media in Japan around the time of the Meiji Restoration, when traditional Edo period cartoons were gradually evolving into a more modern, satirical style. Further evolution of *manga* into its present form owed much to the comic strip, which developed mainly in America. It was, however, after the Second World War that the real *manga* boom arrived acquiring a bona-fide status in adolescent culture and creating a mass market for itself. He went on to discuss the structure of *manga*, *manga* as mass-market entertainment, and, in terms of expressive form, how it is characterised by a combination of various elements (pictures, words and frames). Pictures and words are made to converge, interfere, and combine with each other. The distinctiveness of Japanese *manga*, he maintained, stemmed from the undercurrent of traditional elements which unconsciously inform the modern forms and styles mainly borrowed from the West, and from the curious interplay of domestic and international culture.

London is hosting another *manga* exhibition, entitled 'Za Manga', presenting five thousand *manga* books on show until 12 April at Magma Bookshop, 117-119 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1. For details see the websites: www.zamanga.com and www.magnabooks.com or ring 020 7242 9503.

Nihongo Centre Celebrates the Launch of Class Acts

"A language that gives them experience of a different culture, a different script, a new challenge, a totally non-European style grammar."

Harry Blyther, Dinnington School

A lively video, providing a window into the experience of Japanese language secondary teaching and learning, was launched on 11 February at our London Nihongo Centre. *Class Acts: Success Stories from the UK Japanese Classroom*, a major Japan 2001 education initiative, is the biggest project undertaken by the Nihongo Centre to date, and the result of a year's filming in 19 secondary schools. Funded and produced by the Japan Foundation with a generous grant from Japan 2001, it provides a snapshot of the current national secondary scene, with 33 teachers demonstrating a range of successful teaching techniques and approaches to the teaching of Japanese.

More than 100 teachers, pupils and distinguished guests from the Anglo-Japanese and wider languages world attended the launch where young learners from Hendon School, Tavistock College, Whitgift School, Queen Mary's High School and Wolverhampton High School for Girls proudly unveiled a 20 min show reel of highlights from the video.

Tsuenyuki Osato, Director of the Nihongo Centre, said the video revealed 'the current sense of confidence amongst schools teaching Japanese,' demonstrating that 'Japanese is popular with students, can be taught to the same rigorous standard as other languages and is enormous fun at the same time.'

Sally Lewis, Head of Programmes and one of the producers of *Class Acts*, outlined the filming and editing process and explained the aims behind the video. 'We wanted to document and disseminate the excellent practice currently going on in the secondary Japanese, to produce something which would be of practical benefit to practising and trainee teachers of Japanese. Secondly, we wanted to inform headteachers and curriculum planners about the planning issues associated with teaching Japanese and inspire them with models that work. Finally, we wanted to brief colleagues in the wider languages world, in other sectors and overseas about the secondary scene.'

Schools invited to appear in the video were selected on the basis of the school curriculum model, the experience of the teacher, the balance of ages taught and the school's location.

The video contains a mix of classroom practice, advice on planning issues, and teacher



Ben Stainer in action at Tile Hill Wood School



Year 7 pupils at Whitgift School

and pupil comments on the teaching and learning process and at a mammoth 150 minutes in length, is not meant to be viewed in one sitting. Rather, it is hoped that teachers will find it useful to dip in and out of the different sections in much the same way as one might use a reference book.

One of the strengths of the video is its rich source of comments from learners and teachers reflecting on their classroom experience. During the project, 178 interviews were conducted and the video features clips from these interviews where pupils talk candidly about their motivation for learning Japanese and what they hope they will be able to do with it in the future. As Will Smith, 18, from County Upper School in Suffolk remarks, "It's just led to so many things that I couldn't imagine doing otherwise."

Copies of the video are being distributed to UK schools currently teaching or thinking of introducing Japanese; to teacher training institutions as well as other educational and language-related bodies. For further information, contact Sally Lewis at our Nihongo Centre on Tel: 020 7838 9955.

Japan Foundation Secondary School Teachers' Annual Study Tour to Japan

A Glimpse into Japanese Life

The run-up to the tour was, of course, both exciting and hectic. Just as the new school term began, I found myself organising my classes with a view to two weeks absence. The orientation in London was both informative and helpful. I met my selected colleagues for the first time, and was pleased to find that we were a mix of age, sex and experience.

A feature throughout the tour was the excellent organization. We were thoughtfully guided and there was a consistently high level of care and attention to detail. What a treat, for example, to be met at Heathrow Airport by the Japan Foundation and the Japan Airlines representative. Teachers in the UK often feel undervalued but this was the start of a special time, when I felt respect was shown to us for being members of the teaching profession.

Japan Airlines provided impeccable attention to detail throughout. I travel abroad fairly regularly and can honestly say that in all respects their service was second to none. Cleanliness and punctuality introduced us to two principles we would meet again and again.

We followed a tight schedule packed full of historical and cultural experiences. Our guide throughout was excellent combining humour with information. She kept us all strictly in line. Of course, the green umbrellas issued to our group helped!

The standard of accommodation was excellent. You can only guess at how very special and valued we felt to be feted in such a way. All hotels were of a standard infrequently experienced on British teaching salaries. We were spoiled and appreciated it!

The itinerary, although relentless, was also comprehensive. Lectures given by approachable experts gave us a background briefing that enabled us to better understand our visits. History and culture were integral. I shall always remember Hiroshima Peace Park, a sad and moving experience. Given the terrorist attack in New York and subsequent mounting international tension, our visit was all the more poignant. We all folded an origami crane and placed it, together with our hopes for a peaceful future, at the foot of a statue dedicated to the memory of all children who were victims of the atomic bomb dropped there.

Kyoto was steeped in history and culture.

I tried hard throughout the trip to record information and take photographs for colleagues in other departments, working consistently to gather relevant material, from shogun castles to kabuki theatre.

Of course, it helped the UK group's cohesion that almost all members were practising geography teachers. I think some colleagues from different specialisms were dumbfounded to see us taking photographs of roads, pedestrian overpasses, reclaimed land, packed subways and students in (for us) unusual school uniforms! I gathered an immense amount of useful information to take back to my students and colleagues. I feel buoyed up by the very positive experience. A geographer's dream come true.

My account would be incomplete without a reference to the wonderful opportunity given to meet international colleagues. Our Japanese associates were welcoming and open to discussion. We learnt that teachers throughout the world meet similar difficulties in the classroom and we shared experiences and ideas. This was of immense benefit and I have already begun to e-mail and to write to many colleagues to set up links.

The visits to schools were an invaluable insight into a changing system. I saw much of interest – and always felt welcomed. I have never before met such respect for my profession.

Our homestay visits were a highlight and I was fortunate that my hostess spoke super English. Living with the family for one night I was privileged to meet four generations. Face to face, culture to culture, friendship grows.



A night at a Japanese Inn

It was both exhausting and exhilarating but what an educational and personal experience to treasure! I have talked much to my students and colleagues over the past months about my glimpse into Japanese life and will continue to do so in the coming years. The memories will remain with me forever. I hope some day to return to Japan.

Maureen P. Ferguson
Chipping Norton School

Applications are now invited from full-time secondary school teachers or from those who work in the administration of secondary education to this year's Study Tour. The Tour, which runs from 7-20 November 2002, offers a valuable introduction to Japan's education system, society and culture, aiming to deepen participants' understanding of the country and to enhance their teaching resources. It is designed for those who have never visited Japan before.

The Tour includes visits to schools and places of educational and cultural interest in Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and to a local prefecture. There is a one-night home stay. An interpreter/escort accompanies throughout.

The Tour is fully funded by the Japan Foundation with assistance from Japan Airlines and organised in co-operation with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Overseas Educational Society of Japan and local Prefectural Boards of Education.

Priority is given to humanities and social studies teachers, who teach about Japan; to Japanese language teachers *who have never visited Japan*. Applicants should have at least 3 years' experience and expect to remain in teaching for at least a further 10 years.

The deadline for application is **Friday 19 July 2002**.

Further information and application forms can be obtained from this office (in writing only): *The Japan Foundation, 17 Old Park Lane, London W1K 1QT.*

Dates for your Diary

1 March to 12 April	Za Manga Exhibition: A comprehensive history and celebration of Manga that includes 5,000 manga comic books and magazines. Come and browse! MAGMA, London EC1 Tel: 0207242 9503 www.magmabooks.com
28 February to 13 April	Izima Kaoru: New York: First Exhibition of this Tokyo-based photographer of the latest works from his ongoing series. Landscapes with a Corpse. FA Projects, London SE1 Tel: 020 7928 3228 www.faprojects.com
2 March to 28 April	The Peach Child: Return of this acclaimed multi-media version of a famous Japanese folktale about the adventures of a miracle boy and his friends. For everyone over 4. At the Little Angel Theatre, Islington, London 11:00am & 3:00pm Tel: 02 7226 1787 www.littleangletheatre.com
4 March to 26 April	Japan Influences: Exhibition: Glass, furniture and ceramic exhibition by keynote speakers from the University of Central Lancashire's Japan Design Week 2002. Department of Design, University of Central Lancashire, Preston Tel: 01772 893372 www.uclan.ac.uk
4 March to 26 April	Japan Influences: Installation: Textile installation by influential designer, Junichi Arai, as part of the University of Lancashire's Japan Design Week 2002. Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston Tel: 01772 258248 www.preston.gov.uk/harris
20 March to 20th April	Colourful Melodies of Edo – Musical Themes in Traditional Japan: An exhibition of woodblock prints giving a glimpse into the popular pastimes of Edo, in the little known world of music, dance and entertainment. Also a lecture and workshop concert on 22 March and gallery talk on 6 April. Japanese Gallery, 23 Camden Passage, Islington, London N1 8EA Tel: 020 7226 3347 www.japanesegallery.co.uk
25 March to 19 April	Golwg ar Siapan – Window on Japan: A collection of books and music CDs reflecting life in Japan today. Dolgellau Library, Fford y Bala, Dolgellau LL40 2YF Tel: 01248 353479 Shan Jones
8 June to 3 August	Naoya Hatakeyama Exhibition: New work by photographer Hatakeyama who was resident in Milton Keynes. Depicting the night rain and new 'faceless' housing estates in Milton Keynes. Impressions Gallery, 29 Castlegate, York YO1 9RN Tel: 01904 654724
10 August to 28 Sept	Mt Fuji Photographic Exhibition by Chris Steele-Perkins: Images of Contemporary Japanese life set against the backdrop of Mr Fuji. Impressions Gallery, 29 Castlegate, York YO1 9RN Tel: 01904 654724

Rakugo in English

The Japan Foundation played host on 11th December to a performance in English of *rakugo*, the traditional art of Japanese comic storytelling, given by a group from Osaka. English *Rakugo*, headed by Masaaki Yamamoto, one of the Group's founder members, was performing for the first time in this country.

Mr Yamamoto opened the evening by outlining the basic concept of *rakugo*, how, apart from the power of the language itself, it relies on gesture, voice inflection, facial expression and the use of a fan and a towel as simple props. He was assisted by Kaishi Katsura, the 19th apprentice of Bunshi Katsura, who acted out the explanations with humour and enormous skill.

Prize winning Asakichi Katsura, apprentice to Beicho Katsura, a Living National Treasure, delighted the audience with a lively rendition of a typical traditional *rakugo* sketch around a man's attempt to cheat at an *udon* stall. It combined impeccable sense of timing with masterly command of gesture and sound reproduction, as the different kinds of noodles were described and noisily consumed.

Diane Orrett, originally from the UK, and who now lives in Japan, followed with the tale of a samurai who thought he had found a quiet Japanese inn in which to spend the night. Her use of asides in Osaka dialect to pepper her flawless narration as she slid in and out of the imaginary characters on stage, showed that no amount of training in this difficult art can make up for natural ability.

But it was Kaishi Katsura's sketch "Hurried Man" that provided the piece de resistance. Moving from driver to passenger with effortless skill and evoking a sense of ominous foreboding as he drove the sketch on to its inexorable close, this was as near as non-Japanese speakers could ever hope to come to *rakugo* at its most authentic.

The evening, enhanced by the professionalism of Kazume Hayashiya, one of *rakugo*'s leading shamisen players, was a collaboration between the Japan Foundation and HOE International, with support from Japan 2001 and the GB Sasakawa Foundation.

Did it work? Can *rakugo* successfully export itself into another language? Given that *rakugo* depends so much on the power and idiom of the Japanese language, the use of pun, homonym, cultural and social innuendo, the answer has to be a qualified 'yes'.

Editor

4th International Translation Competition 2001/2002

Applications are invited to the 4th International Translation Competition that is being held by Shizuoka Prefecture. It is open to entrants from any age group or nationality provided they have not had a previous translation published and that the entry is the work of one person only. Joint submissions are not accepted. Translations should be from Japanese into either English or Korean and the deadline for submission is 16 December 2002.

Applicants can choose one piece from one of the following categories:

1. Fiction (short stories)

- *Bocho* by Murata Kiyoko (*Bocho*, Bungei Shunju)
- *Oboreru* by Kawakami Hiromi (*Oboreru*, Bungei Shunju)
- *Ganka no Gemu* by Ebisawara Yasuhisa (*Supa Suta*, Bungei Shunju)

2. Criticism

- *Karyu Shosetsuron Noto* by Maruya Saiichi (*Hoshimegane*, Shueisha)
- *Janarizumu* by Hayashi Tatsuo (*Hayashi Tatsuo Chosakushu Vol 6*, Heibonsha)
- *Utsukushii Kotoba towa* by Ibaragi Noriko (*Kotono Ha Sayage*, Kashinsha)

Grand Prize:

¥1,000,000 and a grant for a one year study in Japan (one winner for each target language)

Distinguished Translation Award:

A certificate and a ¥300,000 prize (two winners for each target language)

Distinctive Merit Award:

A certificate and a ¥100,000 prize (two winners for each target language)

The Chairman of the Judges' Committee is Donald Keene. For more information and application forms please contact: **The Secretariat for the Executive Committee of the Izu Literature Festival**, Culture Department, Shizuoka Prefectural Board of Education, 9-6 Ote-machi, Shizuoka-shi, Shizuoka-ken, 420-8601, Japan.

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