

ARTS & CULTURE

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Girl power, Japanese comic style

Burnaby exhibit looks at the dreams and aspirations of Japanese women after the Second World War through the power of manga, Japanese comics

Shojo Manga! Girl Power! Art Exhibit

Dates **September 19 to November 9**

Venue **National Nikkei Heritage Centre**
Open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free admission
6688 Southoaks Cres., Burnaby

Information **604-777-7000**

<http://www.jcnn.ca>

BY LESLIE DICKSON
NewsLeader

Though the upcoming art show at Burnaby's Nikkei Centre features Japanese comic books, the exhibit is far from child's play.

That's because *Shojo Manga! Girl Power!* uses the visual art of 23 different mangaka, or Japanese comic artists, to explore how shojo manga, girls' comics, uniquely reflects women's hopes and experiences in Japan as manga is an integral part of the country's popular culture.

Masami Toku, the curator of the exhibit – which has also been shown in L.A., Washington, D.C. and Toronto – said she put the show together to explore how the male-dominated reality of women's lives in post-Second World War Japan was expressed in shojo manga, and also how changes to this reality were explored first in comics.

"Manga itself has the power to change girls' taste and society," said Toku, adding female manga characters had careers before real Japanese women.

Toku said she also wanted to look at how shojo manga developed differently from shonen manga, boys' comics. While shonen manga focused on a boys' often violent journey to become a man, shojo manga usually focused on love and how to get and marry the right man.

But as Japanese society evolved, so did the comics' subject matter.

"Now shojo manga has changed, from happily ever after, to how do women find their own identity?" said Toku.

And right now, boys' love, or relationships between men, are a popular subject in shojo manga, as a way to explore the possibility of women's full equality with men in society, added Toku.

Shojo manga also often don't have the uniform frames found in shonen manga and American com-

ics, and have more in common with the characteristics of traditional Japanese art, said Toku.

Aside from appreciating the beauty of shojo manga, what Toku hopes the audience takes away from the show is the impact it has as part of Japanese popular culture.

"I want the audience to feel how manga has the power to reflect women's desire," Toku added.

National Nikkei Heritage Centre interim manager/curator Timothy Savage said the museum is thrilled to be the last North American stop for the show before it travels to Japan.

Savage said *Shojo Manga!* looks at manga as a pop culture phenomenon with a global appeal and an enormous impact on North American culture, from film to graphic novels, while also including valuable historical context for the visual medium.

"There is something about it that has a real grasp on the popular imagination ... It's like eye candy. It's incredibly visually striking and it's extraordinarily, beautifully, rendered," said Savage.

Savage said *Shojo Manga!* is part of the centre's recent efforts to broaden its gallery program to include a wider range of Japanese culture, including the specific experiences of women growing up in post-Second World War Japan.

"[Manga Shojo!] shows a side of Japanese culture that isn't largely represented," said Savage.

Savage said he hopes the show will bring in a younger audience and introduce them to the services offered by the museum.

• Masami Toku will be giving a talk at the opening of the *Shojo Manga! Girl Power!* exhibit Sept. 19 at 7 p.m. at the National Nikkei Heritage Centre.

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Details from three Japanese comics that are part of the *Shojo Manga! Girl Power!* exhibit that opens at the National Nikkei Heritage Centre in Burnaby Sept. 19.



AROUND TOWN

ONGOING: The Scandinavian Dancers of Vancouver present folk dance evenings at the Scandinavian Community Centre, 6540 Thomas St., Burnaby. Drop-in fee is \$5.00. Novice instruction begins 7:30 p.m., Sept. 19. Contact Wendy at 604-685-7405 or wcutler@telus.net

ONGOING: Masabo Music and Dance Studio open for fifth season, offering belly dance, west African drumming, and hip hop classes among others. Classes began Sept. 11. Call 604-521-4225 for info

NOW-SEPT. 16: Award-winning prints from Burnaby Print Biennials 1961-1977, Bob Prittie Library, 6100 Willingdon Ave., Burnaby, 604-436-5400

NOW-SEPT. 17: Purchase award winners from the Burnaby Print Show - 1986, McGill Library, 4595 Albert St., Burnaby, 604-299-8955

NOW-SEPT. 17: Vancouver artist Barry Cogswell shares his vision of environmental and wildlife destruction at the Amelia Douglas Gallery at Douglas College's New West campus. 604-527-5327

NOW-SEPT. 30: Carol Pan exhibits her unique traditional Chinese and non-traditional paper cut-outs and 3-D model houses on the third floor of the New Westminster Library, 716 6th Ave. Info: 604-527-4660

NOW-SEPT. 30: Andrea Pratt shows her colourful collection, *Primal Landscapes*, at Gallery Fourteen, 614 Columbia St. Open Mon. to Fri. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday 12-5 p.m.

NOW-OCT. 21: Doug Biden's *Visceral Allegories*, a printmaking and multimedia exhibit exploring political and social issues, at the Burnaby Art Gallery, 6344 Deer Lake Ave. Opening reception Sept. 15, 1-3 p.m. www.burnabyartgallery.ca

SEPT. 13: The Douglas College Arts at One presents *When Love Is Kind*, the opening show of its fall season at 1 p.m., featuring soprano Carolyn Sinclair, baritone Riley McMitchell and pianist Karen Shumka. Show at the college's Performing Arts Theatre, fourth floor north at 700 Royal Ave. All Arts at One concerts free and open to the public

SEPT. 14-NOV. 5: Photographs taken by Herbert Spencer Grade 5 students on display in the Plaskett Gallery at the Massey Theatre, 735 8th Ave. Opening reception Sept. 14, 7-9 p.m. Proceeds raised by sale of prints to benefit the West Coast Children's Charity. For information, call 604-517-6168

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