**ARTS & CULTURE**

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

BY LESLIE DICKSON

Through 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 manga, 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 boy’s 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 don’t have the uniform frames found in shonen manga and American comics, 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.*

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

**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.

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**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. Advance instruction begins 7:30 p.m., Sept. 19. Contact Wendy at 604-771-7014 or wcutler@telus.net.

**NOW-SEPT. 1:** Award-winning comics from Burnaby District Libraries 1961-1977, Bob Pitttle Library, 6100 Willingdon Ave., Burnaby, 604-436-5400.

**NOW-SEPT. 1:** Purchase award winners from the Burnaby Print Show - 1986, McLean Library, 4596 A.E. Designs, 604-298-8955.

**NOW-SEPT. 1:** Vancouver artist Barry Capowell shares his vision of environmental and wildlife destruction at the Amelie Douglas Gallery at Douglas College’s New West campus, 604-527-5337.


**NOW-SEPT. 30:** Andrea Pratt shows her collection of Primal Landscapes at Gallery Froeden, 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 Visual Allegories, a printmaking and multimedia exhibit exploring political and social issues, at the Burnaby Art Gallery, 6344 Deer Lake Ave. Opening reception Sept. 15, 7-9 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 McMichael 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.

**SEPTEMBER 14-NOV. 5:** Photographs taken by Herbert Spencer Grade 5 students on display in the Platek Gallery at the Massey Theatre, 735 6th 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 604-517-0168.