



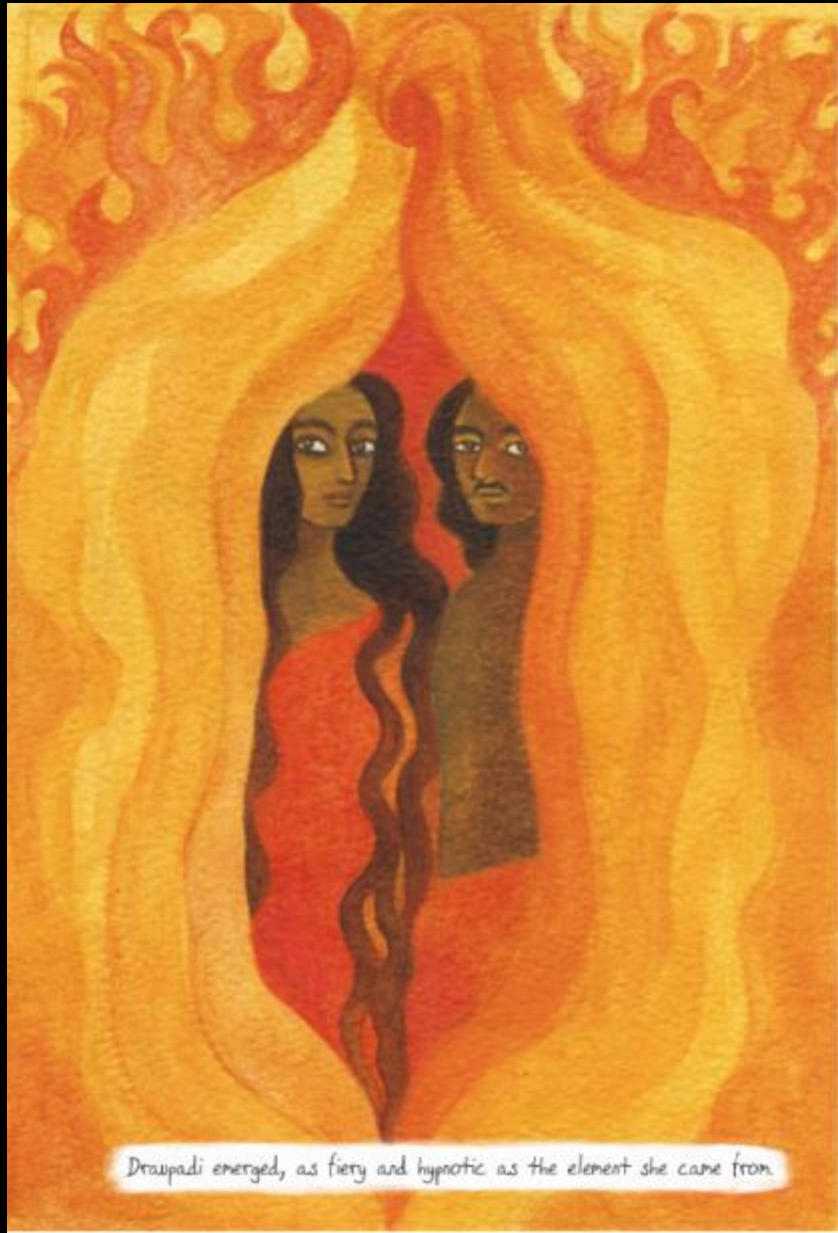
# **MANGASIA**

**WONDERLANDS OF ASIAN COMICS**

# INTRODUCTION

Mangasia presents a vivid journey through the art of visual storytelling across Asia. The exhibition looks beyond popular Japanese 'Manga' to explore a unique range of graphic narrative artforms from across the wider Asian continent. The thriving contemporary comics cultures of countries including India, Indonesia, Korea and Japan are featured, alongside the more historical traditions and roots of visual storytelling. This exhibition also highlights how this endlessly inventive medium influences cinema, animation, fashion, visual art, music and videogames.





Delve into an anthology of diverse stories, from fantastical folklore, key historical moments, revealing memoirs, and challenging expressions of freedom. Discover acclaimed and influential creators from Osamu Tezuka, Miyako Maki, Hur Young Man and Lat, to genre innovators and under-represented artists including Abhishek Singh and Miki Yamamoto.

Curated by Paul Gravett with a team of more than twenty international advisors, Mangasia features over 500 works - the largest selection of artworks from the continent - including Japanese wood block prints, Hindu scroll painting, digital media, printed comics and contemporary illustrations. This unique exhibition is a passport to an unexplored world of graphic storytelling and its artistic value.

# SIX THEMATIC SECTIONS

## 1. MAPPING MANGASIA

Graphic geography

## 2. FABLES AND FOLKLORE

Traditional myths and legends

## 3. RECREATING AND REVISING THE PAST

Historical memory

## 4. STORIES AND STORYTELLERS

Artist biography

## 5. CENSORSHIP AND SENSIBILITY

Freedom of expression

## 6. MULTIMEDIA MANGASIA

Beyond the printed page



# 1. MAPPING MANGASIA

## GRAPHIC GEOGRAPHY

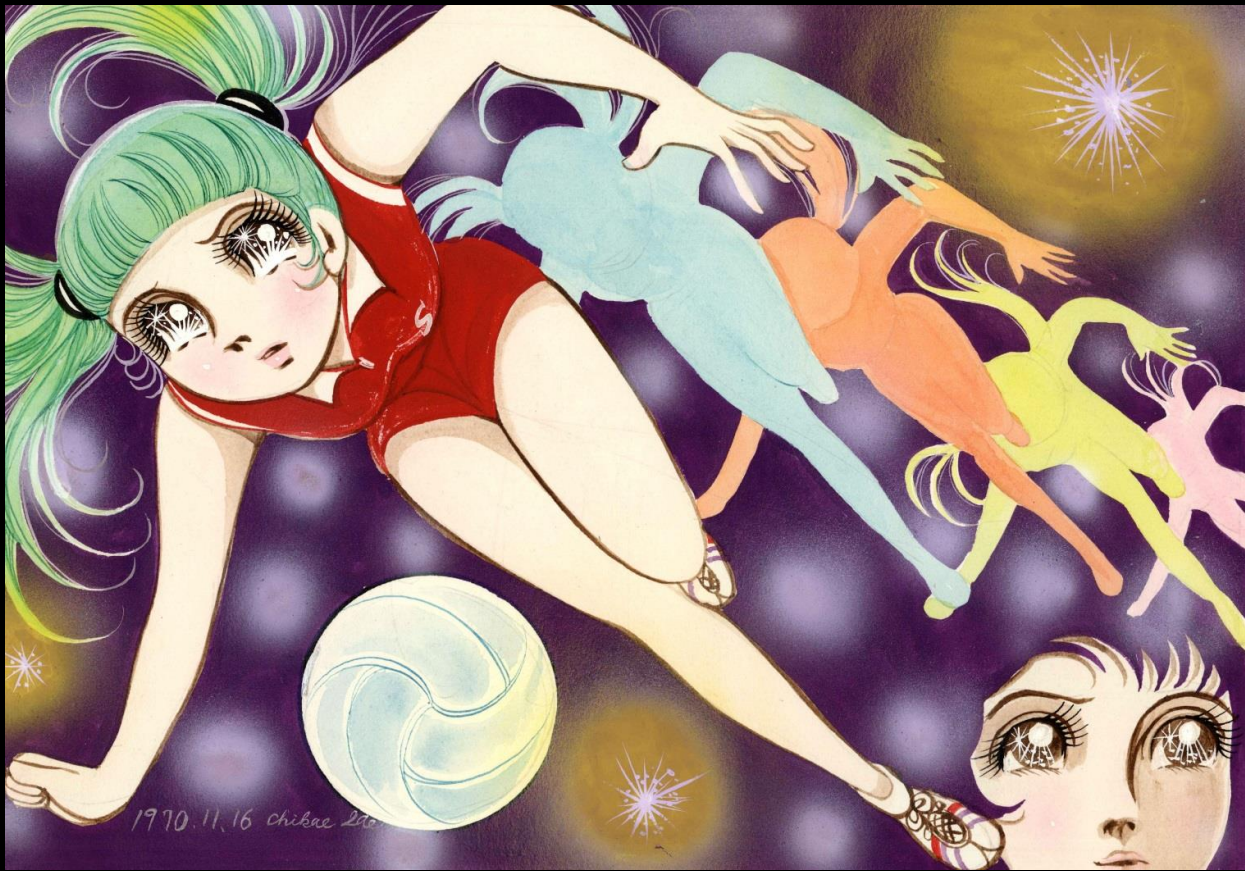


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- **Mangasia explores a world of Asian Graphic Storytelling beyond well-known Japanese comics, known as Manga.**
  - **Although Manga has influenced comics across the continent, there are unique aesthetics and tropes that define different countries approaches to the medium.**
  - **The continent of Mangasia is a fascinating and varied web of artistic approaches and themes.**



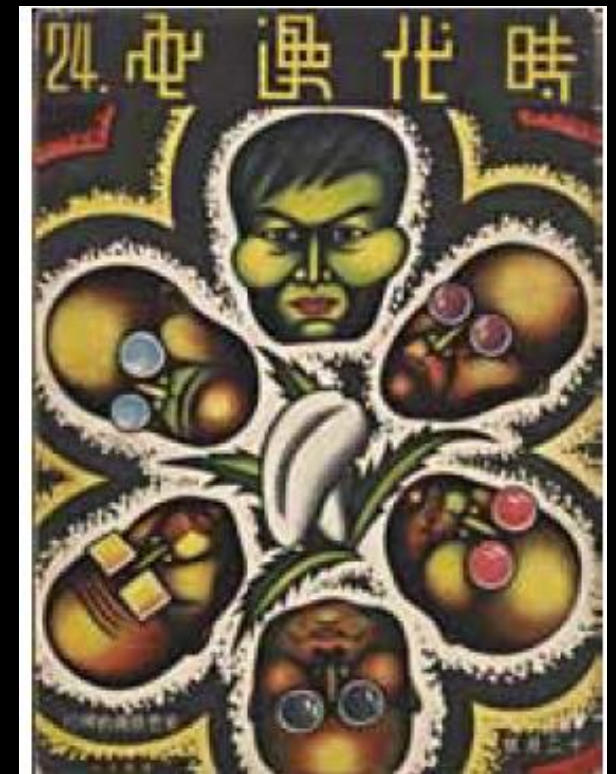
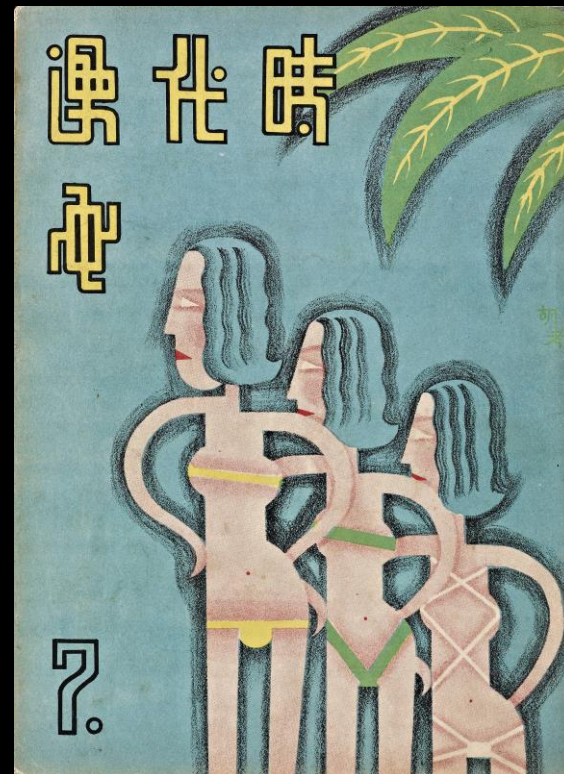
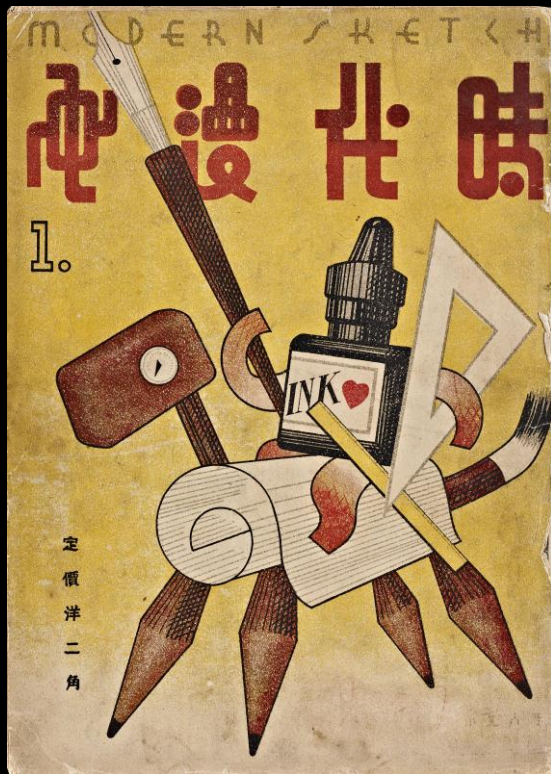






Chikae Ide, *Viva Volleyball* (1970)

Some of the most recognisable iterations of manga flourish in the genres of *shōnen* for boys and *shōjo* for girls, which, fuelled by the post-war baby boom. Frequent graphic devices include bursts of intense lines to convey energy and movement, and enlarged, scintillating eyes – especially in girls' comics – to project feelings, and instill empathy in the reader.



Asian artists developed topical stories responding to world events informing the emergent audience for mass media. Like comics in the West, Asian artists kept pace with the latest international art styles, such as Cubism and Surrealism, and drew influence from the iconography of America's jazz era.

Unknown Artists, *Covers of Modern Sketch Magazine*, courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries

# 2. FABLES AND FOLKLORE

## TRADITIONAL MYTHS AND LEGENDS



- **Regional fables, folklore and mythologies are traditionally transmitted through forms such as scrolls and 'kaavads' which in their sequential pictorial style are predecessors of modern comics.**
- **Authors play a vital role in keeping alive a nation's traditional stories and reinterpreting them for each new generation.**
- **Comics have offered to many their first exposure to the key ideas and figures of Hinduism, Buddhism and the region's other belief systems.**
- **The supernatural remains very much a part of everyday 21st-century Asia and its remarkable comics.**







The two greatest Sanskrit tales of Hinduism, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are epic poems about Krishna and Rama, avatars of the deity Vishnu, whose stories have been retold in traditional Indian arts down the centuries. The stories have been depicted on the surface of traveling shrines known as 'Kavads' carried by storytellers from village to village in Rajasthan.

Mangilal Mistry, *Traditional Kaavad* (2017)  
Installation Shot

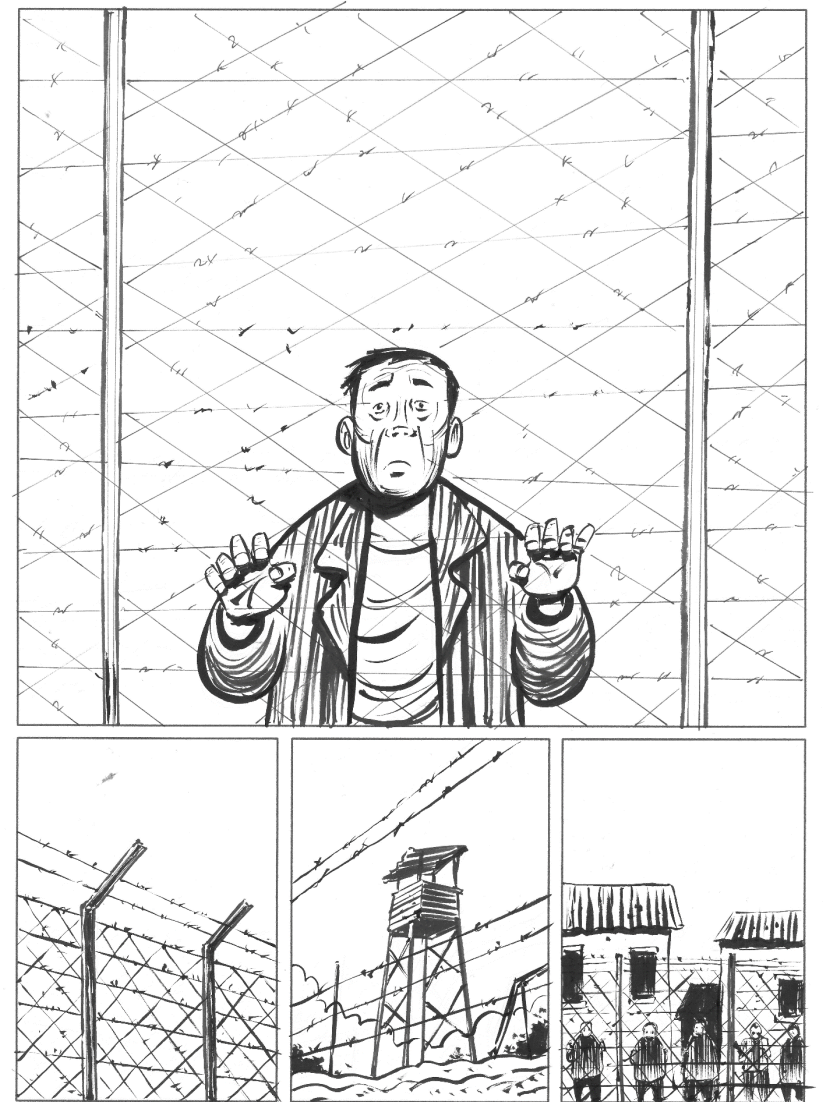


Of China's four great classical novels, *Journey to the West* has attracted the most interpretations, including the well-known manga *Dragon Ball* – The story has been endlessly re-interpreted for new generations and new cultures far from its Buddhist roots. *Wajang Purwa* featured here is a popular comic retelling of The Monkey King inspired by the traditional Indonesian shadow puppet version of the epic.

S Ardisoma, *Wajang Purwa* (1956-1959)



# 3. RECREATING AND REVISING THE PAST HISTORICAL MEMORY



- **The Asian continent's 20<sup>th</sup> Century history was incredibly tumultuous, including periods of occupation, war, regimes of communism and capitalism, and colonial aggression. Comics have been an important storytelling device bringing a rich plethora of stories to light, especially from survivors and eye witnesses.**
- **This section includes storytelling from unquestioningly patriotic to outspokenly critical, depending on their market and levels of freedom of expression.**
- **Through propaganda, criticism, diary or commentary. Authors are active as citizen journalists and are disseminating stories ignored or buried by mainstream media. The result is a spectrum of accounts which are contrasting, sometimes contradictory, and never wholly objective.**



**WORLD WAR II 1939-1945**

**BECOMING BRITAIN 1939-1945**

**LES HOMES DE CHANGEMENT 1939-1945**

**WHEELS OF CHANGE**

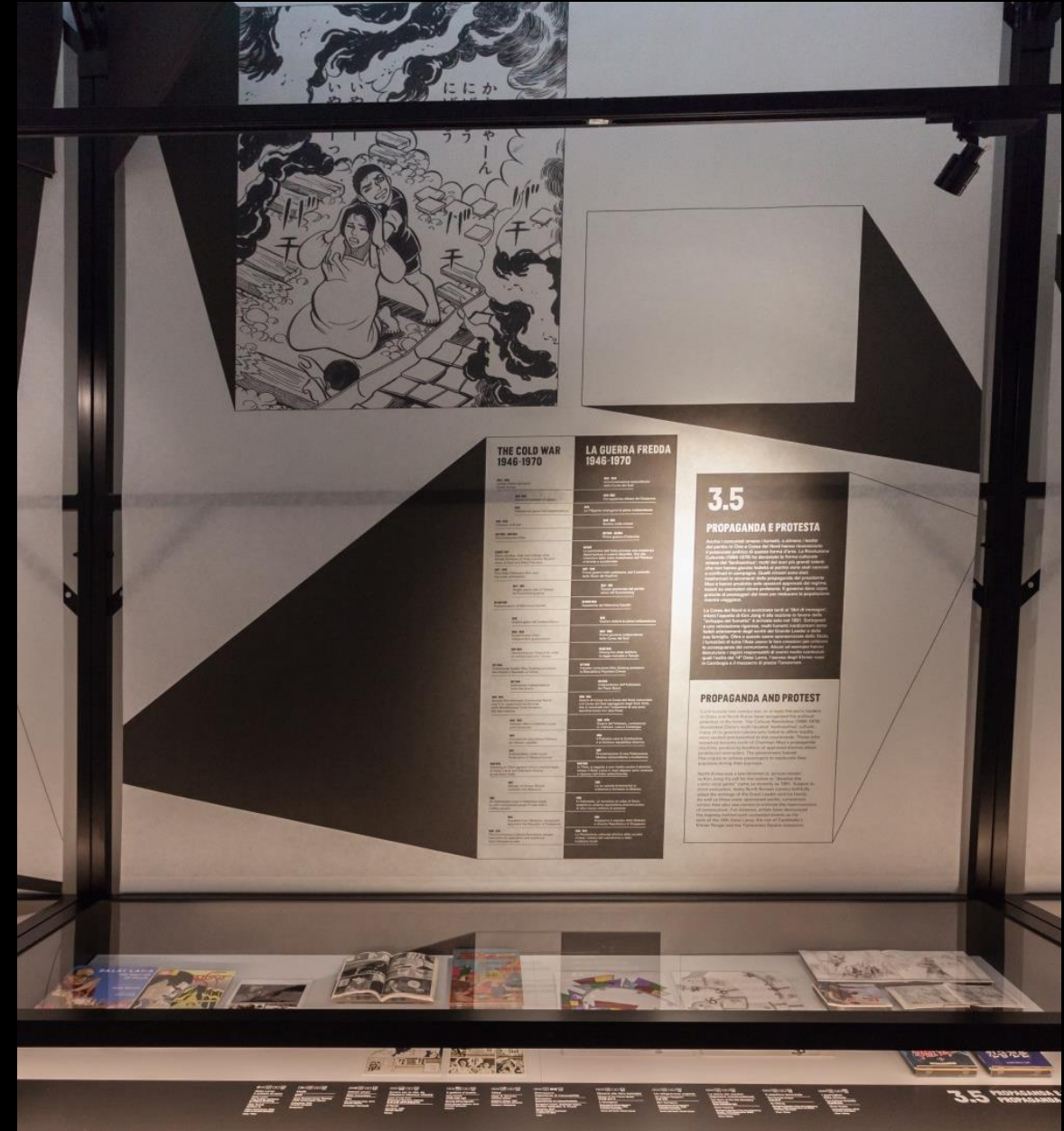
**DIALE 1939-1945**

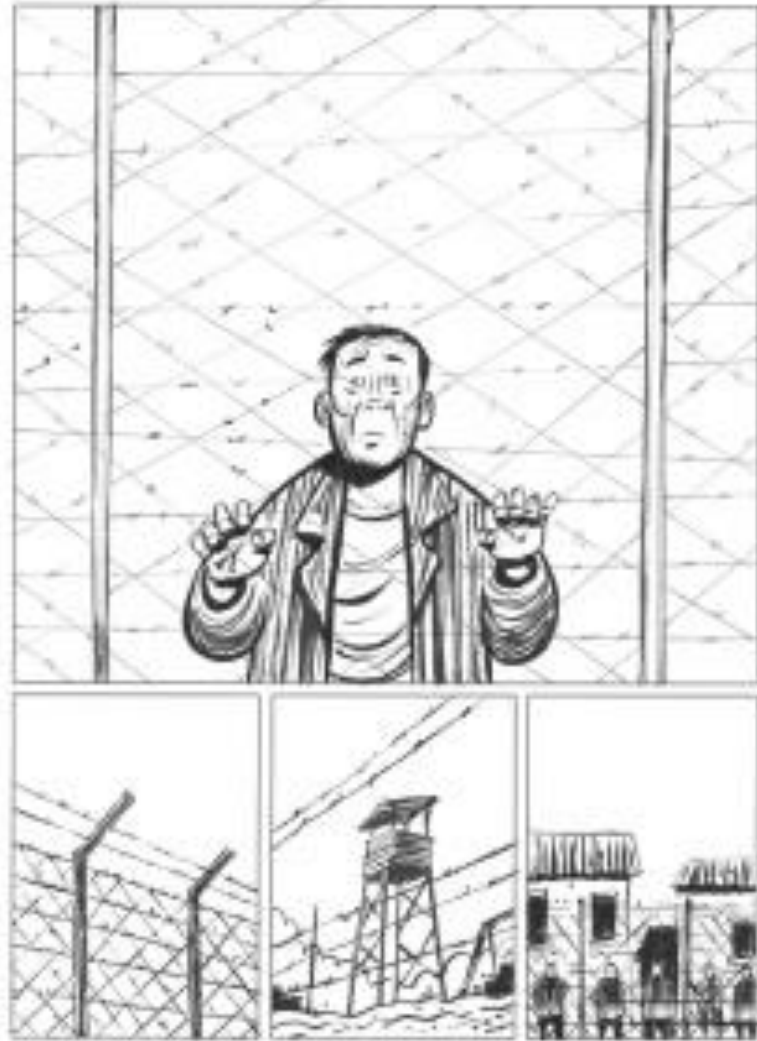
**RICREARE E RIVISITARE IL PASSATO**

**RECREATING & REVISING THE PAST**

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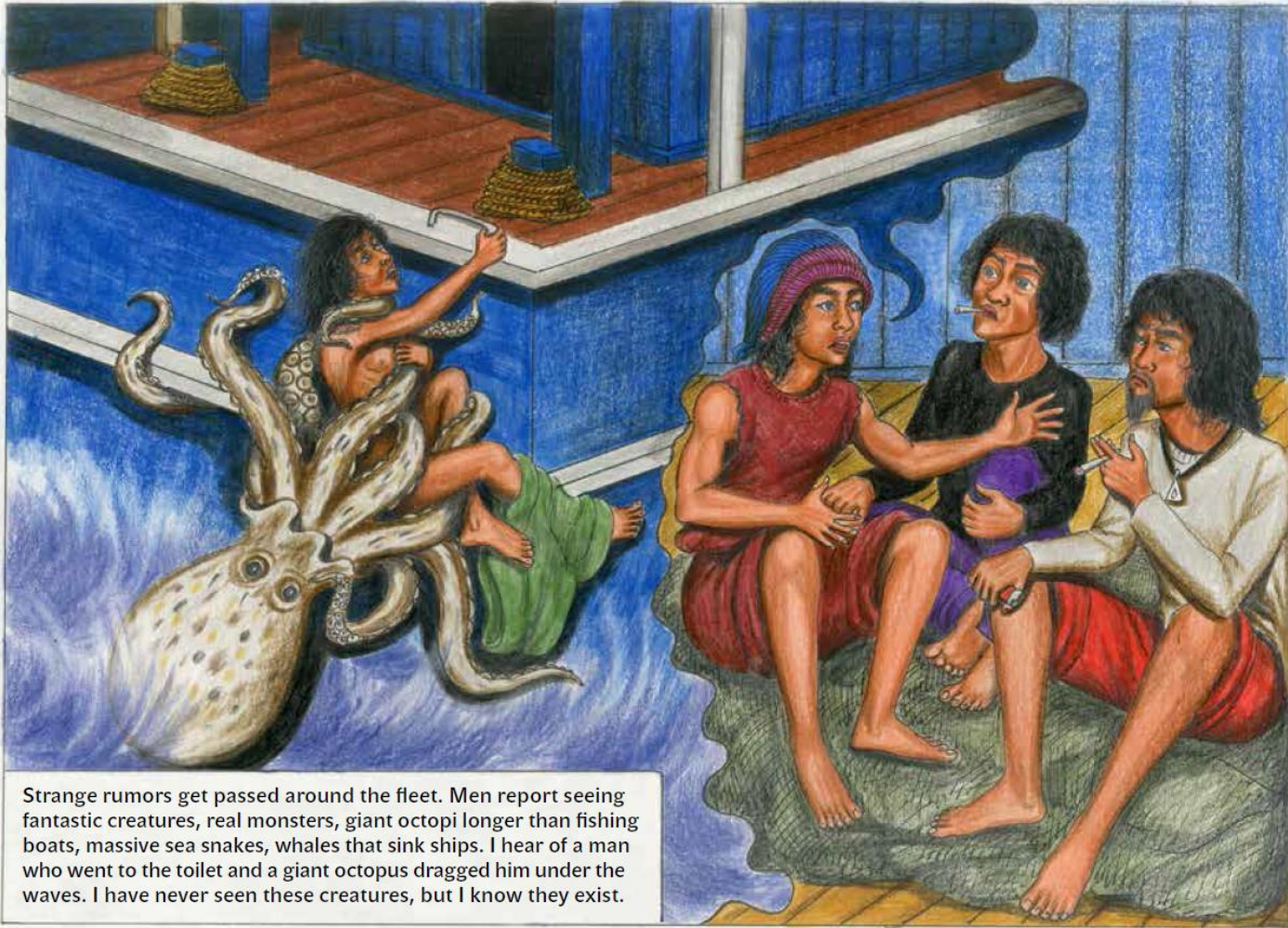




Historical events cannot always be condensed into a single simplified cartoon, and the lengthier form of the graphic novel lends itself particularly well to capturing the complexities and nuances of the past.

With *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* Sonny Liew has drawn together a myriad of genres to create a thoroughly ingenious and engaging work, where the line between truth and construct may sometimes be blurred.

Sonny Liew, *Trust from Charlie Chan Hock Chye* (2015)



Strange rumors get passed around the fleet. Men report seeing fantastic creatures, real monsters, giant octopi longer than fishing boats, massive sea snakes, whales that sink ships. I hear of a man who went to the toilet and a giant octopus dragged him under the waves. I have never seen these creatures, but I know they exist.

Documentary comics have also exposed the profiteering and exploitation of workers. In her indictment of corporate denial, Cambodian Vannak Prum, desperate to find a job, ended up sold as a slave on a Thai fishing boat. After nearly four years trapped on board, Vannak escaped and published his ordeal as a graphic autobiography to highlight this human trafficking.

Prum Vannak, *The Dead Eyes and the Deep Blue Sea* (2013)

# 4. STORIES AND STORYTELLERS

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



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- **This section focuses on the artists and storytellers lives, creative processes, and their auto-biographical works.**
- **Story and Storytellers surveys the entire spectrum of creators from masters of iconic franchises, who oversee a studio of assistants, to solo auteurs, sometimes uncredited and anonymous.**
- **See how the expansion and experimentation of the field has been spearheaded by visionary creators.**
- **The emergence of more self-publishing opportunities and receptive audiences means that now, more than ever, Asian graphic storytelling can be by and for everyone.**





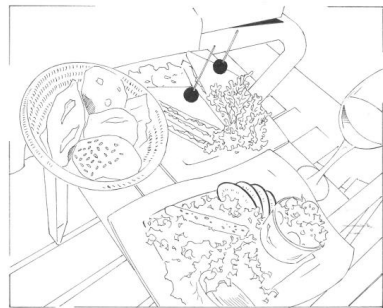
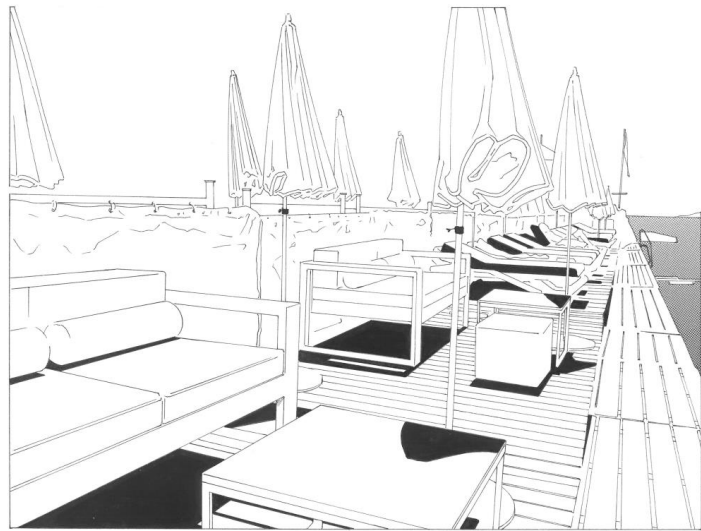




Fukutani Takashi Asano Inio, *Artists Desks* (1980s-2017) Installation Shot

Shown here is the original drawing desk of solo mangaka Takashi Fukutani, who overcame his troubled youth and lack of qualifications to find some success with his series *Dokudami Tenement*.

In more recent years, technology has transformed how comics are made and look. Asano Inio, for example, usually requires no more than two assistants because of how he uses computer software to produce his work. Asano blends traditional pen-and-ink renderings of his characters into highly detailed digital backgrounds.



Kusumoto Maki has works to subvert what she sees as the sexism, stereotyping and patriarchy still common in Japan's mass media, even in the manga produced by women.

Working since 2009 on her serial *Akashirotsurubami* for the mainstream women's magazines *Chorus* and then *Cocohana*, Kusumoto, Maki operates without assistants or editorial constraints, and creating with exquisite precision and nuanced characterisation.

Maki Kusumoto, *Akashiro Tsurubami*  
(2014)

# 5. CENSORSHIP AND SENSIBILITY

FREEDOM AND EXPRESSION



- **Comics are often some of the first and most formative reading so it's no surprise that they are strongly associated with childhood, but that's not a full portrait of the medium.**
- **Subjects involving politics, violence, sexuality and other adult contents have resulted in some extraordinary works. These comics and graphic novels have stirred ongoing debates about taste and acceptability.**
- **More complex or controversial artworks are regularly banned or destroyed and are plagued with censorship.**
- **Self-published 'Doujinshi' includes unique genres by and for women to question their gender roles and societal constraints; comics of sexual explicit nature; same-sex storytelling; and politically charged narratives.**







Another genre in Japan's tradition of wood block prints is muzan-e, 'atrocities' pictures, which began to appear in response to the turbulence of the 1860s.

Yoshitoshi Tsukioka is one of the most notable practitioners of the form. These illustrations of bloody killings from both plays and real-life have lost none of their shock value. Their meticulous, unflinching portrayals of cruelty live on through the most extreme imagery of current mangaka like Umezu Kazuo, Maruo Suehiro.



Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, *Yubin Houchi Shimbun* 589 (1875-76)



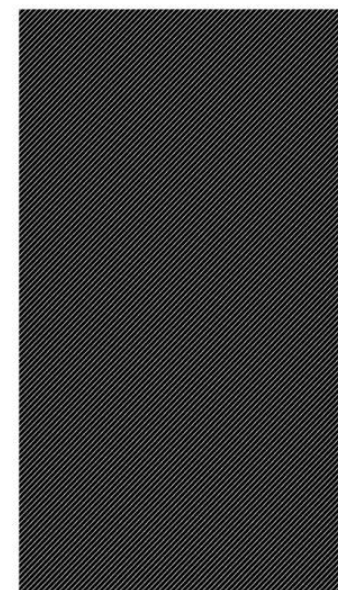
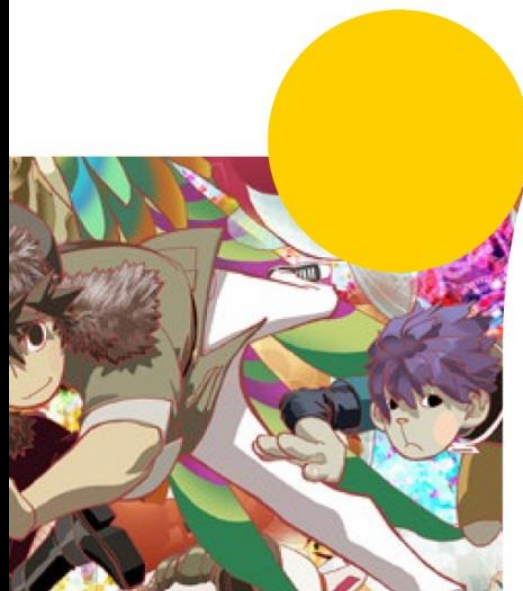
Yaoi's are gay love romantic comics written by and for women. Yaoi encompasses a variety of genres and forms including Est Em's sensuous twists on the minotaur and centaurs from Greek mythology. Boy Love manga is an expressive playground in which female comics artists are able to question and customise alternatives to oppressive heteronormativity. The genre has been exported and adopted throughout most of Asia, even across Muslim Indonesia and Malaysia.

Totempole, *Love is Blind* (2013)

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# 6. MULTIMEDIA MANGASIA

BEYOND THE PRINTED PAGE



- **In Multimedia Mangasia we trace the influence of comics and graphic narratives across other popular mediums, from cinema, tv and animation to fashion, music, and videogames.**
- **The link between comics and animation is deep rooted as experienced cartoonists were among Asia's founding animators.**
- **Comics also foster large, inventive communities of fans who recreate and re-invent the characters and costumes as cosplay.**
- **Comics are finding their place in the art world, since the advent of Pop Art in the Fifties and its successors, such as Japan's postmodern Superflat movement.**





In their ubiquity and abundance, comics and other visual narratives every other cultural medium in Asia. Imagery and narratives ripe for adaptation have played a central role in the birth of cinema, animation, television, and the striking characters and costume designs inspire innovators in the fashion industry such as Miko Sakabe



Mikio Sakabe Kera Hirofumi, *Dress and Wig* from  
*S/S2012 Collection* (2017)

In the Philippines since the 1950s, numerous 'novelas' that began life as serials in komiks anthologies — involving a wide array of genres, from social realism to fanciful escapism — have been swiftly adapted into locally produced live-action films. In order to build an audience for their upcoming releases, some movie studios have colluded with the magazine industry to first convert their scripts into komiks



Ruben Yandoc, *Cover Manila Klasiks* (1956)





**KEY MARKETING  
IMAGE & TEMPLATE**

# MANGASIA

**WONDERLANDS OF ASIAN COMICS**

# INSTALLATION SHOTS



**“The exhibition is more than that (referring to the list of comic books and comic book’ artists just mentioned). Through its different sections, it is a journey into the anthropology of a cultural phenomenon that, embracing all ages with an incredible varied offer, have had the ability to deal with social and gender themes by winning (sometimes) the censorship battle.”**

La Repubblica

**“An exhibition like this was never seen before”**

Beaux-Arts Magazine

**“Mission Accomplished!”**

Les Inrockuptibles



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# WHO WE ARE



A person is shown in profile, wearing a VR headset, looking into a virtual environment. The environment is a lush garden with various flowers, including large yellow ones and clusters of pink ones, set against a clear blue sky. The person's face is partially obscured by the VR headset.

Barbican International Enterprises is a world leading creator of exhibitions and experiences that aim to reframe visitors understanding of familiar subjects and explore some of the most challenging and inspirational topics in the world today.

With a focus on contemporary culture, emerging technology and digital creativity, BIE create holistic environments in which contemporary art, immersive experiences, historical artefacts, design, videogaming and music can provide the platform for a creative exploration of essential narratives

A woman with her hair in a bun is looking at a large digital display in a gallery. The display shows a grid of small images. In the background, there are various art installations, including a large colorful abstract painting on the wall and a large digital display showing a grid of small images. The gallery has a modern, industrial feel with exposed pipes and a dark ceiling.

Through our programme visitors explore contemporary art, design, film, animation, music and videogames

We create unique collaborations across art, science, technology, and popular culture providing an unparalleled platform for new voices and perspectives

Our exhibitions offer an immersive and experiential experience to actively engage broad audiences

We seek out opportunities to collaborate, developing joint ventures and working with major partners across the arts and creative industries

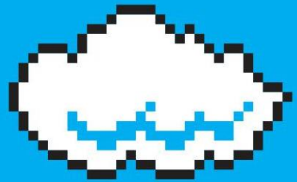
# OUR PROGRAMME

## VIRTUAL REALMS

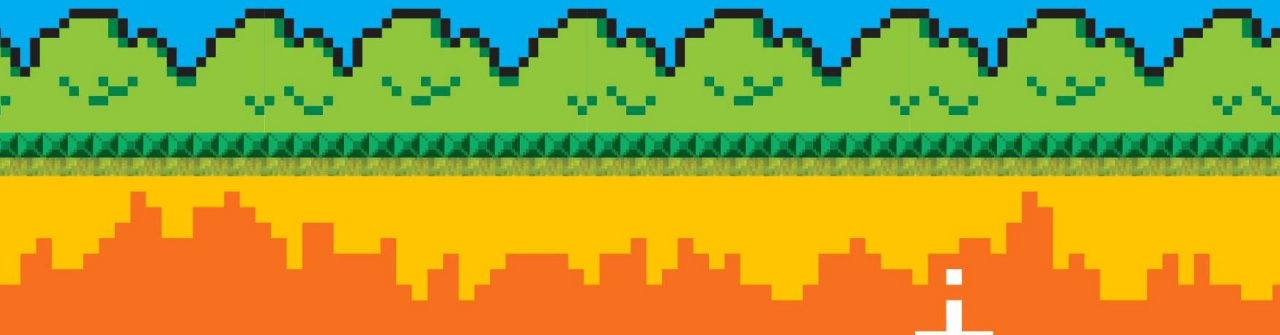
Videogames transformed



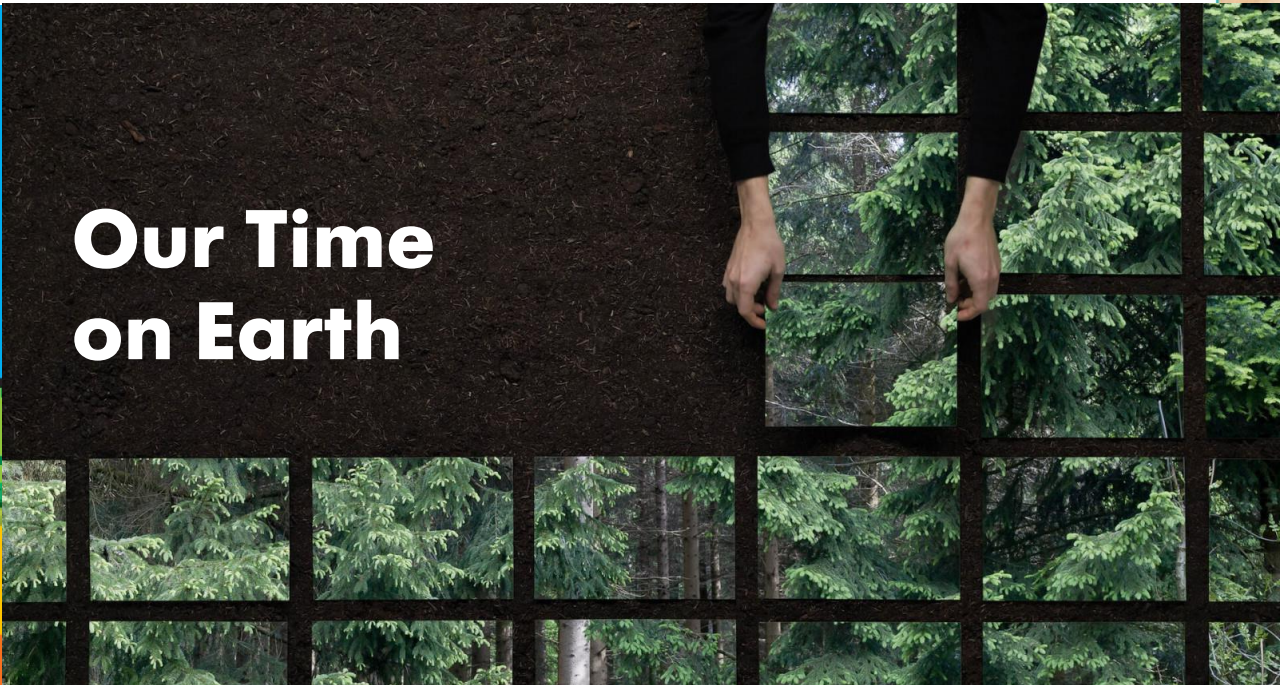
# AI • more than human



# GAME ON



## Our Time on Earth



# 5 million visitors in the first ten years

- Worldwide - Over 4,973,035 visitors have visited a BIE exhibition in the world since 2010/11
- At Barbican, 329,342 have visited a BIE exhibition in the Barbican Centre, London
- Since 2010/11, BIE has been to 54 venues across 27 countries and still growing...
- A BIE exhibition occupies between 700m<sup>2</sup> and 1500m<sup>2</sup>



# Some of the many institutions we have collaborated with:

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**Thank you**