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TEZUKA: THE MARVEL OF MANGA
June 2–September 9, 2007

First exhibition of its kind illustrates vast, complex world of manga and its master

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, MAY 2, 2007:

“Manga is virtual. Manga is sentiment. Manga is resistance. Manga is bizarre. Manga is pathos. Manga is destruction. Manga is arrogance. Manga is love. Manga is kitsch. Manga is sense of wonder. Manga is... There is no conclusion yet.”

-- Tezuka Osamu, 1969

Artist, writer, and entrepreneur Tezuka Osamu (1928–1989) is regarded in Japan as the “god of comics,” and revered worldwide as an artistic master. He was the driving force behind the international phenomenon of *manga*—Japanese comics—and their offspring *anime*, Japanese animation. Creating over 700 manga titles—and drawing more than 150,000 pages—during his lifetime, Tezuka is best known in the West for *Tetsuwan Atom* (*Mighty Atom* or *Astro Boy*) and *Jungeru Taitei* (*Jungle Emperor* or *Kimba the White Lion*), both of which originated from his manga, and were serialized internationally for television in the 1960s. Today, Tezuka’s work is acclaimed for its complexity, originality, and a powerful dynamism.



Astro Boy (Tetsuwan Atom), title page for Mystery Man of the Blast Furnace, 1961. By Tezuka Osamu (Japanese, 1928–1989). Watercolor. © Tezuka Productions

Beginning June 2, 2007, the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco will serve as the only U.S. venue to present *Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga*, the first major exhibition of Tezuka’s art staged outside Japan. The exhibition not only introduces Western audiences to the extent, range, and artistic merit of Tezuka’s prolific creativity, but it also highlights his pioneering work within the post-World War II manga and anime industries. A comprehensive survey, the exhibition showcases more than 200 original artworks by Tezuka dating from the late 1940s to late 1980s, including black-and-white ink drawings, as well as color covers, posters, and designs. On view through September 9, 2007, in the museum’s Osher Gallery, *Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga* was curated by Philip Brophy, an artist, curator, writer, and Australia’s leading authority on manga and anime. The

exhibition was organized by Australia's National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in association with Tezuka Productions. The Asian Art Museum's presentation of the exhibition will include a wide array of public programs, including film screenings, lectures, demonstrations, a manga lounge, and more. For more information, please visit www.marvelofmanga.org.

Emily Sano, director of the Asian Art Museum said: "The planning of *Tezuka: the Marvel of Manga* has involved over nine years of complex negotiations to release important material from Tezuka Productions in Tokyo. This is the first time Tezuka's original drawings have been seen in the West...The NGV has produced a catalogue to accompany the exhibition that contextualizes for Western audiences the full scope of Tezuka's artistic output."

Curator Brophy stated, "Tezuka is venerated as a driving force of the manga and anime industries in Japan. This exhibition will reveal the striking originality of his manga; its technical inventiveness, extraordinary dynamic range, and its close relationship to his anime. From the people who remember *Astro Boy* on TV when they were kids to the late teens of today—who are in tune with Japanese pop culture—this exhibition will appeal to a wide audience to whom the bold and sharp sensibilities of the comic form are exciting and relevant."

Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga is presented in three main sections. The first provides a simple introduction to the manga form. Excerpts of Tezuka's work are presented to demonstrate the power and density by which manga in his hands generates heightened effects. Included are solitary frames within a single full page, pages with scintillating framing and sequencing, and three-page selections which create more complex movement and action.

The second section explores the titles by which Tezuka would be best known in the West and presents works from which he produced anime TV series and films. Many of these titles a Western audience might presume to be American productions due to their voice dubbing. In Japan, Tezuka's anime has always been viewed in relation to his manga, and this section of the exhibition will provide audiences a chance to see the origins of what became anime programs.

The exhibition's third section presents a selection of Tezuka's *gekiga* (drama pictures) produced from the late 1960s to late 1980s. *Gekiga* is a more seriously toned, adult-oriented narrative form of manga that stresses realistic effect and emotional impact, as opposed to the visual symbolism and high-keyed archetypes displayed in early postwar manga. While manga is the umbrella term for all Japanese comics, *gekiga* is often viewed as a branch within manga. This final section of the exhibition is designed to acquaint audiences with the deeper layers of manga.

Tezuka's Manga for Children

Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga features examples from more than two dozen of the artist's most popular titles, including several geared specifically for children. These works often epitomize the uniquely Japanese meld of the "cute" and the dramatic. From *Astro Boy*'s innate innocence in the face of an accelerated futuristic society to *Princess Knight*'s mix of feminine empowerment and sexual subterfuge in a classical European kingdom, Tezuka's manga expand the definition of "children's entertainment." The presentation of such works invites viewers to become aware of how effectively children can engage with rich dramatic stories. These titles were popular in Japan throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, and their grouping in the exhibition is reinforced by them also having been made into anime series, many of which were released internationally in dubbed versions.

Just as *Astro Boy* is Tezuka's summation of his views on the harmony and discord between technology and humanity, he is the opposite of all we would expect of a hero. Young and cute, he is capable of tremendous feats of strength due to his seven atomic powers. His foes, who are mostly "bad" robots and the humans who are the controlling force behind them, push *Astro Boy* into many thrilling adventures. Produced twelve years before the first *Astro Boy* TV series, the original manga remains Tezuka's seminal creation.

Acknowledged for initiating the *shojo manga* (girls comics) market in Japan, *Princess Knight* (*Ribon no kishi*) is a variation on popular European fairy tales enjoyed by young people the world over. *Princess Knight* presents all the glitter and romance of those fantasies in overdrive, creating a hyper-reality of royal intrigue, glamorous pageants, and many love-affair plots and twists. The story is centered on young Sapphire whose ascension to the throne can only be accomplished in the guise of a prince. Tragically, Sapphire must leave all feminine aspirations behind to govern the kingdom with a mix of manly confidence and feminine reserve. *Princess Knight* is a fascinating pre-feminist document from post-war Japan and represents a notable precursor to the more recent 'Girl Power' phenomenon.

Jungle Emperor centers on the life of the newly born Leo (known in the West as *Kimba* in the animated version), and follows his estrangement from family and surroundings as he is adopted by humans. Before long he returns to the jungle and struggles to attain his birthright as "king of the animals." Along the way he loses his parents and many friends, and battles greed and avarice, in both humans and other animals. Leo is yet another of Tezuka's innocent beings who discover themselves through trials and tribulations. Abundantly endearing yet powerfully dramatic, *Jungle Emperor* covers three generations, from Leo's parents to his own children, and

stands as a testament of hope for how the animal kingdom might grow despite human intervention.

Tezuka's Gekiga

In contrast, the gekiga of Tezuka's manga from the late 1960s through the 1970s make no concession to broad family appeal. *Black Jack*, *Eulogy for Kirihito*, *MW*, *Human Metamorphosis* and other titles featured in the exhibition reflect post-occupation Japan and its own take on the heady 1960s socio-political upheaval. More like contemporary modern fiction, these works are bold, incisive, and harsh. Museum visitors may be surprised by the power imparted by the "comic" medium of gekiga in comparison to the feel of Western comics. Works like *Song for Apollo* and *Phoenix* move social observations and dramatic schisms toward planes of expanded consciousness and self-contemplation. Here Tezuka's work comes into a realm all of its own, mixing popular iconography with ancient mythology to create memorable portraits of the Japanese psyche framed within a post-modern landscape.

An unexpectedly popular title which was serialized over five years, *Black Jack* (*Burakku Jaku*) is Tezuka's most brooding work—the title character is a disbarred renegade surgeon concerned with the fragility of life while ignoring all moral codes for saving lives. The storylines of *Black Jack* often follow a similar pattern: Someone is suffering from an incurable illness and all hope is lost until the rich, the powerful, and the righteous are forced to summon Black Jack. He performs the impossible on the operating table and demands inordinate payments—his exorbitant fees are a lesson to the pompous who seek his services.

Eulogy for Kirihito (*Kirihito sanku*) follows Doctor Osanai, a promising young researcher studying the rare congenital disease, *monmo*. This mysterious disease transforms humans into canine mutations. After Kirihito contracts the debilitating sickness, he leaves Japan to roam aimlessly from Taiwan to Syria. At many points a bleak survey of how negative forces can weaken even the most upright, *Eulogy for Kirihito* reflects the slow passage of self-discovery Kirihito undertakes.

In *Human Metamorphosis*, metamorphosis is not simply a theme: it is the core means of existence for the beautiful and wily Tomura, who evolves from a famous actress to a famous designer to a famous novelist. She is seductively ruthless in her exploits, discarding those around her just as she sheds each personality in her transformations. More than a femme fatale, she is a queen of destruction, intoxicating in her power and shocking in her resilience. Tezuka's portrait of Tomura is also a loving one, depicting her in a sensuously stylized manner against richly detailed backgrounds.

Political intrigue and scandal are intertwined in the hysterical plot lines of *MW (Mu)*. This sordid tale is based on actual events concerning a nerve gas developed by the U.S. for potential deployment in Vietnam, which was stored on an island off Okinawa. The real history is chilling enough, yet Tezuka creates an elaborate tale around the gas leaking and killing everyone on the small island except for two delinquent children—Michio and Iwao. Fifteen years later, Iwao is a priest, full of remorse for having survived the gas leak. Michio has become a psychotic zealot and is intent on exposing the incident to the world. Complicating this further, Iwao and Michio become lovers, united by their deadly past and tortured present. Psychological, emotional and sexual schisms abound in *MW*. Yet despite its sensationalism, *MW* clinically studies the often ignored effects of military greed and political suppression on the innocent, who manage to survive against all odds.

A mythical firebird of eternal reincarnation, the Phoenix has appeared in many cultures throughout history. Tezuka's *Phoenix (Hi no tori)* is an exquisite matrix anchored to this universal symbol of the regenerative essence of life. Covering eleven chapters and sequenced across ancient epochs and futuristic realms, this narrative suite mixes genres and styles to chart the Phoenix's existence on a plane beyond that of mortals. Abundant in cosmological contemplation, each chapter of *Phoenix* zooms in on key individuals and aligns their existence with the higher forces of fate. These connections and transitions generate powerful drama full of adrenaline, action, and emotional depth.

The exhibition positions and honors Tezuka as the most important artist of his generation in the field of manga and anime. It encourages a greater understanding of the unique power and importance of the manga form within Japanese culture, and contributes to a vital understanding of Japan through its unique artistic sensibilities.

Media Preview:

A media preview for *Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga* will be held on Wednesday, May 30, 2007, from 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM, with a gallery walk-through at 10:30 AM led by exhibition curator Philip Brophy. Complimentary refreshments will be served. Please RSVP by Monday, May 28 to pr@asianart.org or call (415) 581-3712.

Exhibition publication:

Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga by Phillip Brophy. This hardcover book, with its unique square format and colorful illustrations, offers great insight into Osamu Tezuka's prolific career and features many of his groundbreaking works, such as *Astro Boy* and *Black Jack*, and the influences behind them. This catalogue is the first substantial English-language publication about Tezuka's manga, and will be available exclusively at the Asian Art Museum Store beginning in early April through September, 2007. 156 pages, 7 1/4" x 7 3/8", 66 full page illustrations. Essays by Philip Brophy, Go Ito, Hiroshi Kashiwagi, Fusanosuke Natsume, Tetsuo Sakurai and Ichiro Takeuchi. Price: \$34.95 plus tax.

Acknowledgments:

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About the Asian Art Museum

The Asian Art Museum is a public institution whose mission is to lead a diverse global audience in discovering the unique material, aesthetic, and intellectual achievements of Asian art and culture. Holding nearly 16,000 Asian art treasures spanning 6,000 years of history, the museum is one of the largest museums in the Western world devoted exclusively to Asian art. Once located in Golden Gate Park, the museum now resides at its new, expanded facility at Civic Center Plaza. An architectural gem featuring a dynamic blend of beaux arts and modern design elements, the museum's new home is the result of a dramatic transformation of San Francisco's former main library building by renowned architect Gae Aulenti (designer of Paris's Musée d'Orsay) into a showcase for the museum's acclaimed collection and exhibitions.

- **Information:** (415) 581-3500 or www.asianart.org.
- **Location:** 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.
- **Hours:** The museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, with extended hours until 9:00 pm every Thursday.
- **Admission:** \$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors, \$7 for youth 13–17, and free for children under 12. Thursday evenings after 5 pm admission is just \$5 for all visitors except those under 12 and members, who are always free. **Target Tuesdays:** The museum offers FREE admission to all on the **first Tuesday** of every month, courtesy of Target Stores
- **Access:** The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access, please call (415) 581-3598; TDD: (415) 861-2035.

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