

# Manga and Comics: Inspiration and Isolation

To mark the 150 year anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Denmark, Viborg Animation Festival cordially invites you to participate in a one day seminar on Japanese comics (manga) and the ways in which they've inspired and been inspired by Western comics!

The organizer of the seminar, The Animation Workshop, is the leading Nordic school for animators and comics artists. We've witnessed first hand how manga has become the universal language of young Western artist everywhere: A clear majority of everyone applying to the school – from near or far – are heavily inspired by the dynamic pen strokes of Japan's finest mangaka.



Some even give the strong female characters of the world of manga most of the credit for turning the female to male ratio of young animators and comics artists upside down: These days, the majority of our and other animation and comics schools' applicants are female whereas 10 years ago, the opposite was true.

In other words, Japanese comics have made a profound impression on Western popular culture. "Manga and Comics" will show why manga has had such an impact here and exactly how. The contemporary state of the art form will be traced back to its Japanese and Western roots, and comics artists and mangaka will discuss how inspiration from Japan and the West enriches their own work.

The seminar will be moderated by Danish TV personality Jakob Stegelmann and offer lectures from prominent researchers on manga – two from Japan, one German and one American – and "Manga Talks" with Western and Japanese artists.

Meet Keiko Takemiya, a legend of shojo manga – that is, manga for girls – who paved the way for frank depictions of homosexual love in manga form; Atsushi Kaneko, whose hallucinatory manga is pure pulp and rock'n'roll; Danish Karoline Stjernfelt, who tells stories of Danish royalty in a Japanese style; and more.

As for researchers, Kyoto Seika University lecturer Sookyung Yoo will discuss the international conquest of manga in the last 20-30 years, while Duke University teacher Ryan Holmberg will dig down to the roots of modern manga and find surprising links to the West in the form of, among other things, classic Mickey Mouse comics. Jaqueline Berndt, a Professor at Stockholm University, will give a big-picture account of the development of comics and manga together and apart, and Akiko Sugawa of Yokohama University will explore the role of anime as an extension of and gateway drug to Japanese comics.

**Place:** Parolesalen, Arsenalet, Kasernevej 8-10. **Time:** September 27 9:30 – 16:00. **Entry:** Free



# Manga and Comics: Schedule

- 9:00 – 9:30 *Light breakfast*
- 9:30 – 9:45 **Jakob Stegelmann**  
Introduction and practical info
- 9:45 – 10:30 **Jaqueline Berndt**  
Lines of Affection: Comics and “Japan,” “Europe” and Manga
- 10:30 – 11:15 **Ryan Holmberg**  
Butter-Stinking Manga: The American Influence on Japanese Comics
- 11:15 – 12:00 **Sookyung Yoo**  
European manga artists: Is there a place for them in Japan?
- 12:00 – 13:00 *Break*
- 13:00 – 13:45 **Keiko Takemiya**  
Interview on the Year 24 Group, Western influences and manga sexuality in the 70s
- 13:45 – 14:15 **Karoline Stjernfelt**  
Interview on depicting Danish history through the lens of shojo manga
- 14:15 – 14:30 *Coffee break*
- 14:30 – 15:15 **Atsushi Kaneko**  
Interview on channeling Western pulp and excess in manga form
- 15:15 – 15:45 **Matt Forsythe**  
Interview on manhwa, manga and “Adventure Time”
- 15:45 – 16:00 **Jakob Stegelmann**  
Final remarks



# Brief bios of speakers and interviewees

**Dr. Jaqueline Berndt** is Professor of Japanese Language and Culture at Stockholm University. Specialized in visual arts and media aesthetics, she served as Professor of Comics Theory at the Graduate School of Manga, Kyoto Seika University, Japan, 2009-2017. Her publications include the co-edited *Manga's Cultural Crossroads* (2013) and the monograph *Manga: Medium, Art and Material* (2015).

**Ryan Holmberg** is an arts and comics historian. After receiving his PhD in Japanese Art History from Yale University in 2007, he taught at the University of Chicago, the City University of New York, and the University of Southern California. He is a frequent contributor to *Art in America*, *Artforum*, *Yishu*, and *The Comics Journal*, and has edited and translated a number of books of Japanese comics for publishers like Picturebox and Breakdown Press. He is currently a postdoctoral associate at Duke University.

**Sookyung Yoo** is a researcher at International Manga Research Center of Kyoto Seika University (KSU), and a Manga instructor at KSU. Studied manga at KSU (2004-2014), Ph.D in Arts (manga). Her main research themes are visual expression of manga and manga for women.

**Keiko Takemiya** Keiko Takemiya is a Japanese manga artist and the current president of Kyoto Seika University. She is part of the Year 24 Group, a group of female authors in the early 1970s who helped change shoujo manga from being created by male authors to being created by female authors. As part of this group, Takemiya pioneered a genre of girls' comics about love between young men; in December 1970 she published a short story, "In the Sunroom", in *Bessatsu Shōjo Komikku*, which is possibly the first shōnen-ai manga published and contains the earliest known male-male kiss in shōjo manga. Among her most well-known works are the manga *Toward the Terra* and *Kaze to Ki no Uta*, which are noted for being pioneering series of the 1970s and 1980s.

**Karoline Stjernfelt** is a Danish comics artist known for "I morgen bliver bedre", a historical comic on the Danish monarchy, the first part of which debuted in 2015 to great critical acclaim.

**Atsushi Kaneko** is a Japanese manga artist. Two of his works, *Bambi* and *Her Pink Gun and Soil*, have been published in French. *Bambi* and *Her Pink Gun* has also been published in English. *Soil* has been adapted into a Japanese television drama series.

**Matt Forsythe** is a Canadian illustrator and comics known for his wordless Korean-inspired comics *Ojingogo* and *Jinchalo*, for illustrating childrens' books like *The Gold Leaf*, and for acting as Lead Designer on the animated TV series *Adventure Time*.



# Abstracts

## **Jaqueline Berndt**

*Lines of Affection: Comics and “Japan,” “Europe” and Manga*

The global spread of manga—Japan-based comics, in the narrow sense—has drawn critical attention mainly with regards to (popular-)cultural change in the age of globalization and digitalization; suffice to point to the interest in non-Japanese artists employing ‘manga style’ and fan communities which excel in transmedial activities, facilitated by the industry’s ‘media mix’ strategies. Not rarely premised on a unidirectional model of intercultural exchange, discussions tend to foreground ‘influence,’ for example, by Japanese manga on European artists. In actuality, Japan and Europe have affected each other’s comics in multiple and multilateral ways since the late 19th century, stretching from artists’ exchange and users’ practices, and including the industry’s occasional receptivity to ‘foreign’ comics, to representation—recognizably Japanese, or European, characters and settings—and techniques of graphic storytelling such as pertaining to page layouts. My talk will draw a line from Japanese woodcut prints and Western Japonisme to European (and North American) comics and further on the reappropriation of initially Japanese stylistic features by female manga artists in Japan, in order to illuminate the complexity of European-Japanese encounters, to provide a framework for the following talks, and to pay tribute to the festival’s special guest, Takemiya Keiko.

## **Ryan Holmberg**

*Butter-Stinking Manga: The American Influence on Japanese Comics*

While many in Japan still like to think of manga as a purely homegrown thing, this talk will offer a survey of the central influence of American entertainment upon Japanese comics. Covering the 1920s to the 1980s, it will show how American animation, comic strips, comic books, magazine illustration, erotic photography, and movies have shaped the trajectory and form of manga at key point in the medium’s history. In addition to famous works, this talk will also present weird and wonderful items from the past barely known even to Japanese scholars.

## **Sookyung Yoo**

*Influence of European manga artists: Is there a place for them in Japan?*

Japanese manga and anime began to gain popularity in Europe in the 1990s. This led to an influx of manga and anime titles until around the 2000s. At that time, some teenagers mimicked work of their favorite manga and occasionally published fanzines on their own, similar to the practice of some Japanese manga fans. Accordingly, it is not surprising that a small number of the fans have become, or aspire to become, professional manga artists.

However, to make a living only by drawing manga in European countries is not easy, since markets to publish Japanese-style manga are very limited and small in Europe. Due to complex reasons such as this, certain European manga artists would rather work in the Japanese manga market.

In fact, some manga artists from European countries, like Åsa Ekström from Sweden, and Carolin Eckhardt and Davi Nathanael from Germany, have published their manga in Japan, and have often



been focused on by the Japanese media in recent years, which was uncommon even ten years ago. Their books often highlight their nationality and culture, or how Japanese culture and society appear to them, unlike works of Korean or Taiwanese manga artists in Japan. In this way, it seems that themes available for European manga artists in Japan may be limited, at least for now.

In this presentation, I will introduce manga artists from European countries and analyze the visual expressions and themes of their works in Japan. Moreover, we will look at trends in the promotion of foreign manga artists and consider the reasons why they might have started their careers in Japan with their identity as a foreigner emphasized.

