

### **Young V&A opens *Japan: Myths to Manga*, its first exhibition for children and families**

- From Hokusai to Sylvanian Families, Studio Ghibli, robots, fashion, film, photography and beyond, the exhibition takes young visitors on an atmospheric and playful journey revealing the influence of folklore and environment on Japan's art and design.
- Over 150 exceptional objects and artwork from the 15th century to today, drawn from the V&A's world-class collection and paired with striking loans, are on display for the first time at Young V&A.
- Visitors can play and create inside the exhibition, with a range of activities from origami and music-making to creating a growing manga installation.
- Over 1,000 paper cranes from the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Japan will be on display in the UK for the first time.

#### ***Japan: Myths to Manga***

**14 October 2023 – 8 September 2024**

**Supported by Toshiba**

**With further support from Cockayne Grants for the Arts, a donor advised fund held at The London Community Foundation**

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Today, Young V&A reveals a first look inside *Japan: Myths to Manga*, the first in a series of new exhibitions dedicated to inspiring young minds and families through art, design, and performance, opening this Saturday.

*Japan: Myths to Manga* takes visitors on a journey through Japan, exploring how popular stories have shaped art, design, and technology across the centuries. Divided into four sections – Sky, Sea, Forest, and City – the exhibition brings together over 150 historic and contemporary objects.

From visual art, animation and origami to curious creatures, robots, fashion, film, and photography, *Japan: Myths to Manga* celebrates the spirit of playfulness and imagination that lies at the heart of Japanese culture. New acquisitions and rarely seen works from across the V&A's collections have been brought together with important loans and reimagined for young people and their families, while an exciting selection of hands-on activities are set to spark creativity and imagination among visitors of all ages.

Japan has produced some of the world's most exceptional art and design. *Japan: Myths to Manga* features works by celebrated 19th century Japanese artists, such as **Hiroshige, Hokusai, Kunisada** and **Kuniyoshi** alongside precious **kimono** and cute **netsuke**. The exhibition explores how the cherished films of **Studio Ghibli**, the **video game Ōkami**, the timeless **yōkai manga** of **Shigeru Mizuki** and more have drawn inspiration from Japan's folktales to create some of popular culture's most beloved characters. It also shows how these myths and the values they embody continue to inspire generations of artists and designers including **Keita Miyazaki, Mariko Kusumoto, Noritaka Tatehana**, and **Yūken Teruya**. A poignant installation of 1,000 paper cranes, a symbol of remembrance from the **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park** in Japan is also on display.

**Katy Canales, Curator, *Japan: Myths to Manga* at Young V&A, said:** *"The same playfulness that fuels Japan's creativity sits at the heart of Young V&A. For *Japan: Myths to Manga*, we've brought together the V&A's incredible collections alongside amazing loans to explore the influence of Japan's fascinating folktales to their fullest. You can discover what connects fuzzy Sylvanian Families and historic netsuke, how a seal-shaped robot meets the needs of modern living, and why catfish signal danger. You'll get the chance to join in—whether it's making your own manga or looking out for yōkai (spirits) prowling the city streets. Japan's striking landscape and wealth of myths have sparked imaginative and innovative responses from artists and designers for centuries and we can't wait for it to inspire our young visitors and their grown-ups too."*

**Dr Helen Charman, Director of Learning, National Programmes and Young V&A, said:** *"We are thrilled to open the first in a dynamic series of exhibitions that will sit alongside the permanent gallery spaces at Young V&A. In celebrating the interplay of culture, imagination, and creativity, *Japan: Myths to Manga* reflects our commitment to engaging and inspiring young minds and families."*

### **About the exhibition**

*Japan: Myths to Manga* is divided into four themed sections, taking visitors on an exhilarating journey through Japan and across the centuries. From the sky to the sea, into the forest and through the city, the exhibition explores how these distinct environments have inspired folklore, art, design, performance, and innovation.

The exhibition begins with the **Sky**, the setting for many of Japan's most loved stories. Based around three popular myths, this section shows how artists through the ages have drawn inspiration from the sun, moon, and stars, and the stories that surround them.

Woodblock prints by 19th century artist **Kunisada** depict the story of **Amaterasu**, the Shintō sun goddess who hid in a cave, plunging the world into darkness and chaos. Amaterasu was lured out by drumming, and a set of playable **Taiko Drums** created by contemporary artist **Noritaka Tatehana** and drum making workshop **Miyamoto Unosuke Shoten**, allows visitors to get involved and immerse themselves in the legend. The exhibition also explores the story celebrated at Japan's **Tanabata** festival, in which a weaver princess and a cowherd fall in love but are separated by the Milky Way and only allowed to meet once a year on the seventh day of the seventh month. This

interstellar romance is brought to life with exhibits including an intricate 18th century **Star Globe** (1784) and Milkyway Festival edition plushies of **Sanrio's** much loved **Little Twin Stars** (2019). Visitors are also introduced to the selfless **Moon Rabbit**, busily making *mochi* rice cakes for all to enjoy, and invited to make their own **origami** rocket ship.

Epic tales set above and below the waves are explored in the exhibition's second section, **Sea**. The *Seven Gods of Good Fortune*, revered as symbols of luck, prosperity, and happiness, are shown by artist **Hiroshige** arriving in their treasure ship (1850) while a **Fisherman's Festival Robe** (1900-1930) represents wishes and thanks for bountiful catches.

The dangers of the sea are represented in some of Japan's most famous artworks, from **Hokusai's Great Wave** (1831) to the **Studio Ghibli** film **Ponyo** (2008), the story of a goldfish princess who longs to be human. Magical journeys between worlds are also the subject of the **Tale of Urashima Tarō**, where a kindly fisherman visits an undersea palace only to return and find that centuries have passed. Meanwhile, the legend of a giant mythical earthquake-causing catfish, **namazu**, is so deeply woven into popular consciousness that its image is now used as a mascot for earthquake early warning systems. Inspired to create their own stories, visitors will be guided on how to draw their own **manga**, which they can add to a growing installation within the space.

The third section delves into Japan's ancient **Forest** and the mythical stories of shapeshifting creatures and heroes with superhuman qualities it has inspired. **The Tale of The Princess Kaguya**, about a girl found in a bamboo stalk by a friendly woodcutter who raises her as his own, is represented through **Studio Ghibli's** 2013 cinematic retelling. Fuzzy **Sylvanian Families** (1985-1995) are matched with historic **netsuke** to reflect the continuing appeal of forest-dwelling critters and their stories. This section also includes **The Tale of Momotarō**, a boy born from a peach who becomes a hero, and **The Tongue Cut Sparrow**, where a man's care of a bird shows the rewards of kindness and the perils of jealousy and greed. Audio excerpts, books, and screenings will be available for visitors to explore, as will an entrancing stage model for **the Royal Shakespeare Company's** production of **My Neighbour Totoro**, which has been specially created for the exhibition.

The final section propels visitors into the **City**, introducing the culture of "**kawaii**" (cuteness) and the global phenomena that are **manga**, **anime**, and **video games**. Visitors can interact with **yōkai** characters, shapeshifting spirits from the story of the **Night Parade of 100 Demons**. The story of the **Wonderful Tea-Kettle**, in which a poor priest's purchase of an old kettle leads to a surprising encounter with a shapeshifting raccoon dog, is retold in the popular **Japanese Fairy Tale Series** (early 20th century) and an elegantly playful **sword guard** (1800-50).

Objects including **Tamagotchi** (1997), a **Hello Kitty rice cooker** (2014), and a manga inspired **Comme des Garçons** coat (2018), will be on display, alongside **Transformers** (1985-86), futuristic **robots** and **photography**. The importance of respecting the world around us is highlighted in the eye-catching sculpture **Double Spiral** (2015) by contemporary artist **Keita Miyazaki**, made from disused car parts

and colourful paper, and an outfit curated by 12-year-old fashion stylist, **Coco Pink Princess**.

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## ENDS

### Notes to Editors

For further PRESS information about *Japan: Myths to Manga* at Young V&A, please contact the V&A Press Office: [press.office@vam.ac.uk](mailto:press.office@vam.ac.uk) (not for publication).

A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from [pressimages.vam.ac.uk](https://pressimages.vam.ac.uk).

- *Japan: Myths to Manga* opens at Young V&A on 14 October 2023 and runs until 8 September 2024.
- V&A Members go free.
- An exhibition pass costs £10 per person, which gives unlimited visits to the exhibition throughout its run.
- Under 4s go free, with further concessions available.
- The exhibition is open to all ages. There's content and activities to engage the whole family, with emphasis on children aged 7-11 years.

### ***Japan: Myths to Manga* Family Programming**

Throughout the run of the exhibition, there will be a series of events linked to the themes within the show for young people and their grown-ups to get involved in. Highlights include half-term family workshops led by artists and makers, together with a series of themed "Celebration Days" focusing on Storytelling (January 2024), Games (March 2024) and Children's Day (May 2024). For more details, please visit: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/japan-myths-to-manga>.

### **About Young V&A**

Young V&A is a museum sparking creativity now and for the future. Created with 0-14-year-olds, it is a place for young people to imagine, play and design, and get inspired by a collection of 2000 toys, characters, objects, and artworks from around the world and throughout history. Rooted in its local community with a 150-year heritage as east London's first museum, Young V&A works to energise young creators everywhere, as well as empower everyone to promote creativity for the next generation and support the teaching of art and design education for all. [vam.ac.uk/young](https://vam.ac.uk/young)

## About Toshiba

For over 145 years, Toshiba has developed innovative technologies. Today, our business focuses on energy, social infrastructure, electronic devices, and digital solutions. Guided by the principles of “Committed to People, Committed to the Future”, Toshiba global operations contribute to the realisation of a world where future generations can live better lives.

## TOSHIBA

### **mused**

[mused](#) is the V&A’s new interactive website for Generation Alpha, with a particular focus on 10–14-year-olds, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies' Digital Accelerator for Arts and Culture. The content-rich website invites young people to explore the V&A’s world of art, design, performance and creativity, through over 100 [quizzes](#), [challenges](#) and [articles](#) within core categories of art & design, fashion, music, film & TV, gaming, and the audience inspired ‘random’ category. Fun, constantly changing and socially relevant content brings together contemporary culture with 5,000 years of human creativity across the V&A collection.

As the V&A transforms into a family of museums, for audiences of all ages and backgrounds, online and in person, *mused* offers a stimulating, safe and welcoming place for younger audiences to spend time online, with content that is designed to both entertain and inspire curiosity. Highlights include [Top 10 objects for surviving a zombie apocalypse](#), [Top 10 cutest objects](#), [Which fashion ‘core’ is your style?](#) [Can you match the colours to the Marvel movie?](#) and [V&A object or AI image?](#)

[vam.ac.uk/mused](http://vam.ac.uk/mused)