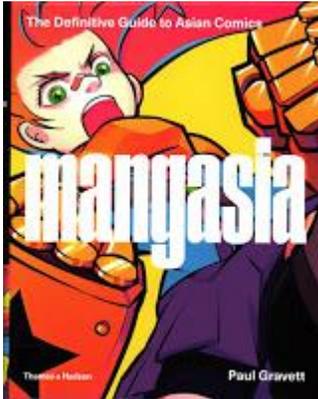


Spotlight on Books



The graphic novel and manga sections of Yellowknife Public Library has become one of our popular collections. While I am well-versed in Canadian and American comics, I am less knowledgeable on manga. I welcome patrons to share their ideas for new titles but in the meantime I have turned to Paul Gravett's *Mangasia: The Definitive Guide to Asian Comics*.

While Gravett doesn't touch upon Russian comics or anything west of Pakistan, *Mangasia* was nonetheless very enlightening. While I've come to easily recognize a typical style of Japanese manga, for instance, seeing different styles from across Asia was particularly interesting.

I also found it fascinating to compare to North America in terms of themes; in Asia there seems to be more examples of historical themes, overt propaganda, folk stories and religion. While we certainly have examples of those in North America (I've found, for instance, that North American indigenous comics tend to have more folklore and historical themes), there is more of an emphasis in our part of the world on superhero stories and for older readers, travelogues and memoirs. Again, you'll find superheroes, travelogues and other memoirs in manga as well, but the balance is different.

Some of the similarities are also compelling. Both regions, for example, have dealt with censorship and with misconceptions about comics being just for kids.

A more subtle discovery for me was the independence of the Asian comics scene. A lot of what I've read prior has suggested, or outright declared, that manga was highly influenced by American comics. Gravett doesn't for one second pretend that American comics didn't have an impact on manga, indeed giving some illustrative examples, but I began to better understand that Asia has fostered its own manga art-forms, dependent more on local histories, cultures, and relationships with Asian neighbours than on America.

For pre-existing manga fans or those hoping to get into Asian comics, *Mangasia* can provide a very solid foundation.

John Mutford, Library Manager

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