

JAPAN: Kingdom of Characters
An Exhibit for Anime and Manga Fans

Among the many colorful elements that make up Japan's popular culture, anime and manga are two of the most celebrated not only among the Japanese. With the immense popularity of Japan's many animated works and comics extending to a worldwide audience, the Japan Foundation, Manila, together with the Embassy of Japan, celebrates the Philippines-Japan Friendship Month this July with the traveling exhibition, "Japan: Kingdom of Characters."

The exhibit, to start on July 7 (Thursday) at the Tall Galleries in the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, focuses on the characters that fill the world of anime and manga and how they have come to permeate into the daily landscape of Japanese life. Beyond Akihabara and Harajuku, ground zeroes for anime and manga geekery in Tokyo, one can find the characters even on bank passbooks and train passes, in supermarkets and vending machines. "Japan: Kingdom of Characters" gives Philippine anime and manga fans a chance to closely examine the cultural and historical background behind the Japanese love of characters and the future of characters in contemporary Japan.

Divided into three sections, the first part of the exhibit examines the changes in Japanese society from the 1950's (when Astro Boy made his manga debut) to the present and the characters that have emerged in each decade—from the classic geek favorites Ultraman, Masked Rider and Mobile Suit Gundam to more recent beloved children characters Chibi Maruko Chan, Pokemon and Tamagotchi, among many others.

The second section showcases the bond the Japanese have with characters from a faithful reproduction of a high-school girl's room completely filled with Hello Kitty. A final section, dubbed "The Future of Characters," looks at the emerging forms of characters. It also gives a glimpse on some of the factors that play a vital role in their future development, such as the rise of new Internet and computer software and the prevalence of anime-based cosplay.

"We hope that through this exhibition, the viewer might come to better understand the close and extremely futuristic relationship that the Japanese people have with characters," says Aihara Hiroyuki, President of Character Research Institute Co., Ltd in Japan.

Other activities included in the Philippines-Japan Friendship Month are the 2011 Eiga Sai, which will screen several acclaimed Japanese movies in Metro Manila, Cebu, and Davao; and a free concert and workshop featuring Japanese acoustic instrumentalists Aki & Kuniko in the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium in RCBC Plaza, Makati City, College of Music in UP Diliman and at the Conspiracy Garden Bar in Quezon City.

For inquiries and more information on the Philippines-Japan Friendship Month activities, please contact JFM through telephone numbers (+632) 811-6155 to 58 or visit the website at www.jfmo.org.ph.

The exhibition is organized with the Metropolitan Museum of Manila and supported by Toshiba (Philippines) Inc.

Japan: Kingdom of Characters is open to the public on July 8 and will run until August 20 at the Tall Galleries. The Met Museum is located at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Complex, Roxas Blvd., Manila. Museum hours are from Monday to Saturday, 9am – 6pm. Closed on Sundays, Holidays and every first Monday of the month. For inquiries, call 523-0613 or email info@metmuseum.ph. Visit us www.metmuseum.ph and at www.facebook.com/met.museum.manila

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