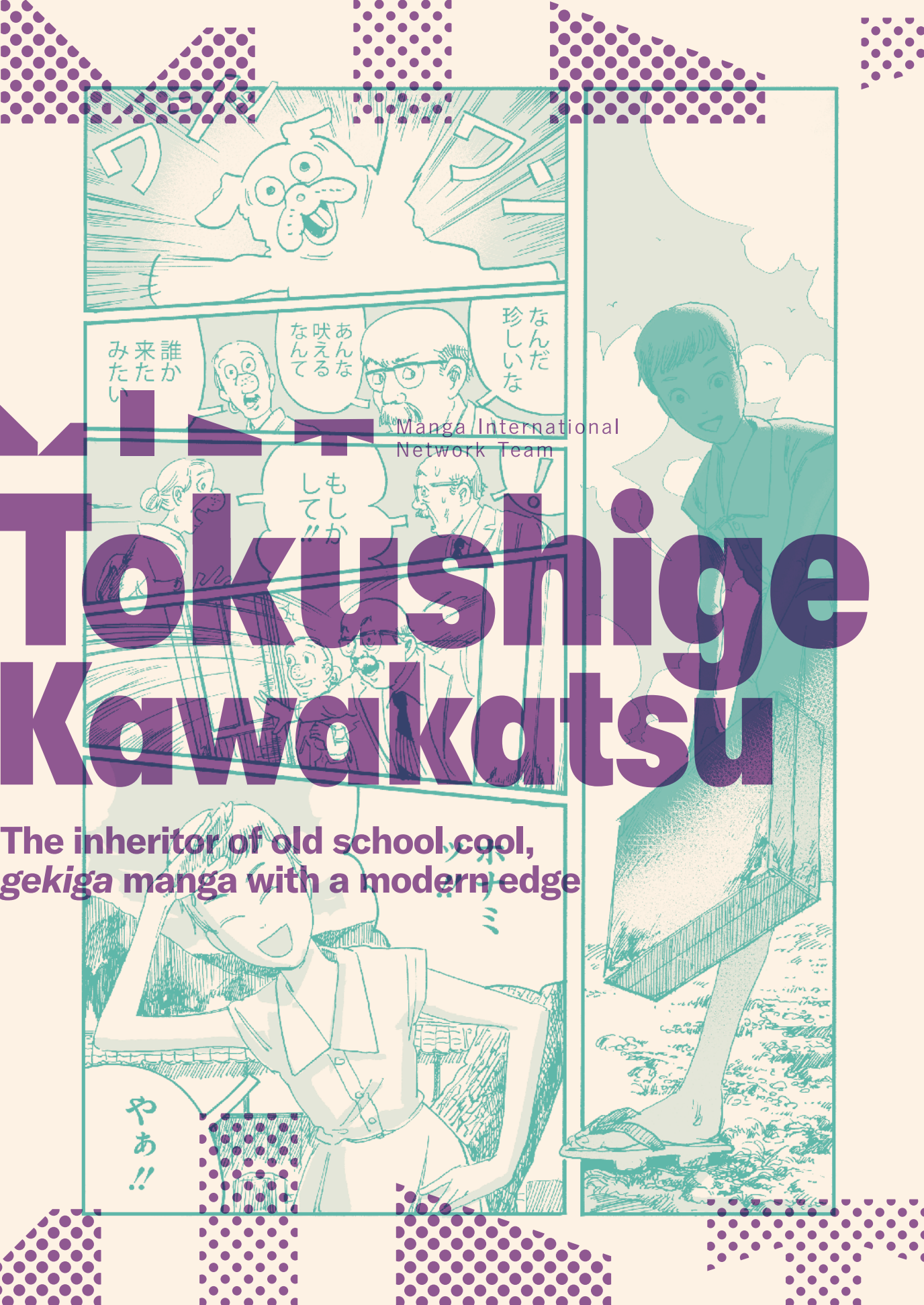




Manga International
Network Team

Tokushige Kawaikatsu

The inheritor of old school cool,
gekiga manga with a modern edge



Tokushige Kawakatsu

manga artist

Roikokuroridiumu no kyofu (The Terror of Leucochloridium)
Torch Web
Publisher: LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd.
Publication Date: Feb. 2021

The inheritor of old school cool, *gekiga* manga with a modern edge

Tokushige Kawakatsu is a master of the *gekiga* style, characterized by realistic artwork and grounded storytelling. While remaining dedicated to traditional analog techniques, he continues to push the boundaries of manga as an evolving art form.

He weaves unique narratives that oscillate between reality and dreams—sometimes with sharp insight, sometimes with a touch of the phantasmagorical. His stories follow individuals who struggle with the constraints of modern society yet persevere, navigating the delicate space between the mundane and the surreal.



Yasegaman no setsu (Grin and Bear It)
Publisher: LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd.
Publication Date: Aug. 30, 2024

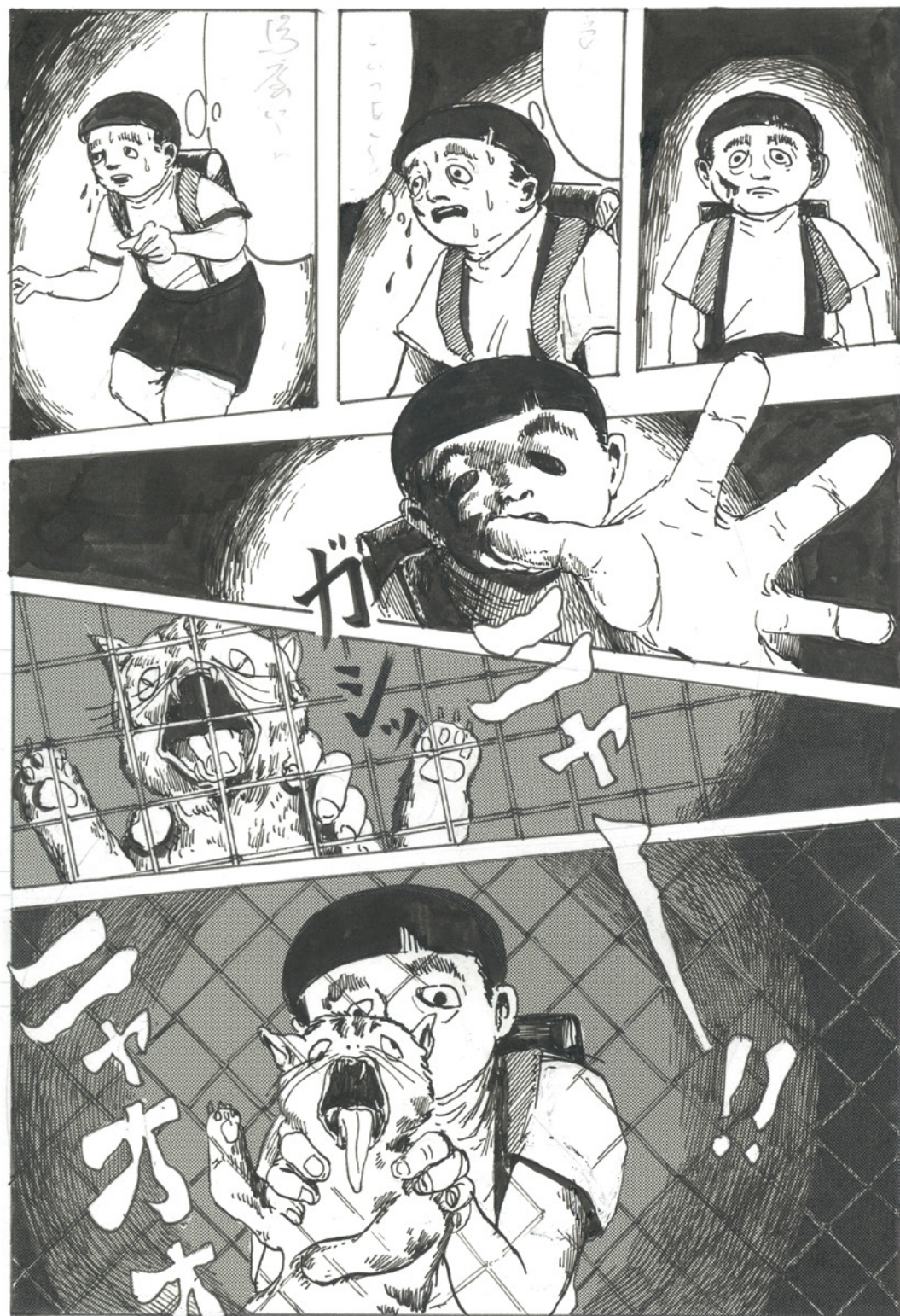


Kaiki tanpen gekigashu: Kagyu (Strange Short Story Comic Collection: Snail), No. 2
 Publisher: Semi Shobo
 Publication Date: 2020



Gurotesuku kaiki (Grotesque Mysteries) Vol. 1
 Publisher: Semi Shobo
 Publication Date: 2015





Fubin na yatsu (A Pitiful Guy)
Kaku No. 15
Publisher: Semi Shobo
Publication Date: May 2017



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留守番電話に接続します 発信音のあとに……



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Denwa, suimin, ongaku (Telephone, Sleep, Music)
Publisher: LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd.
Publication Date: Sep. 26, 2018



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電話・睡眠・音楽

TELEPHONE, SLEEP, MUSIC

Denwa, suimin, ongaku (Telephone, Sleep, Music)
 Publisher: LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd.
 Publication Date: Sep. 26, 2018



Antoroposen no inu dorobo: Kawakatsu Tokushige tanpen gekiga shusei 2021
 (Dognapper of the Anthropocene: Kawakatsu Tokushige Short Story Comic Collection 2021)
 Publisher: LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd.
 Publication Date: Sep. 10, 2021



Denwa, suimin, ongaku (Telephone, Sleep, Music)
 Publisher: LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd.
 Publication Date: Sep. 26, 2018



Kawakatsu Tokushige no ichimai-e (Single Drawing by Tokushige Kawakatsu)
 Publisher: LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd. & Semi Shobo
 Publication Date: April 1, 2025



Manga Yufuin kiko (Manga: A Journey to Yufuin), original concept by Moegara
 Publisher: KODANSHA
 Publication Date: Dec. 23, 2025

Author's Commentary

Yasegaman no setsu (Grin and Bear It)

Publisher: LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd.
Publication Date: August 30, 2024

Synopsis

This is a manga adaptation of the novel *Yasegaman no setsu* (1955) by Shizuo Fujieda. Modelled after the original author, a middle-aged doctor runs his practice in the Japanese countryside. His 19-year-old niece Honami frequently runs away from her home in Tokyo, to stay with her uncle and aunt. *Yasegaman no setsu* revolves around the generational gap between the grouchy country doctor and the optimistic, naïve young woman.

Before becoming a doctor, the protagonist came of age in the late 1920s and early 1930s—a time that was anything but bright. He repeatedly failed his university entrance exams, lived in fear of his siblings' tuberculosis, and was filled with self-loathing, mostly due to his unfulfilled sexual desires. As a student in medical school, he sympathized with Marxist ideologies. Although his activism was limited to donating money to a leftist organization, this was enough to get him arrested, tortured, and detained for 50 days.

Twenty years later, Honami, the doctor's niece is coming of age in a time under very different circumstances. Despite growing up in poverty, Honami enjoys her life as a young woman in a postwar Japan that is much more liberal thanks to the influence of the American occupation. The doctor is generally kind to his niece, but he feels lingering bitterness as he compares her carefree outlook on life with the hardships he endured when he was her age. These inter-generational conflicts and how the two resolve them are at the core of this story.

Japan's defeat in 1945 was a major shock to the Japanese people. Some, especially younger Japanese, quickly adapted to American values, while others, mostly from the older generation,



Yasegaman no setsu (Grin and Bear It)
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continued to resist these changes. Some proudly embraced Marxism, while others, haunted by the torture they suffered at the hands of wartime secret police, regretted their ideological “conversion.” Within this context, Shizuo Fujieda wrote deeply autobiographical works about his dark youth and the tuberculosis that afflicted his wife and family. *Yasegaman no setsu* (Grin and Bear It) is one such work.

When this story was written in 1955, it was four years after Japan regained sovereignty and ended the American Occupation under the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Japan's economy surpassed its pre-war GDP for the first time since the war. In 1956, the Japanese government declared that “the postwar era is over.” But not everyone could move on so easily—the doctor being a prime example of someone haunted by the past, resisting the changes happening around him with all his might.

Navigating the stark differences between prewar and postwar values was a frequent topic in Japanese literature and cinema in the 1950s and 1960s but is rarely discussed in contemporary pop culture. *Yasegaman no setsu* (Grin and Bear It) revisits this pivotal, emotionally fraught era of modern Japanese culture, and gives today's readers an opportunity to reflect on the foundations of modern Japan.

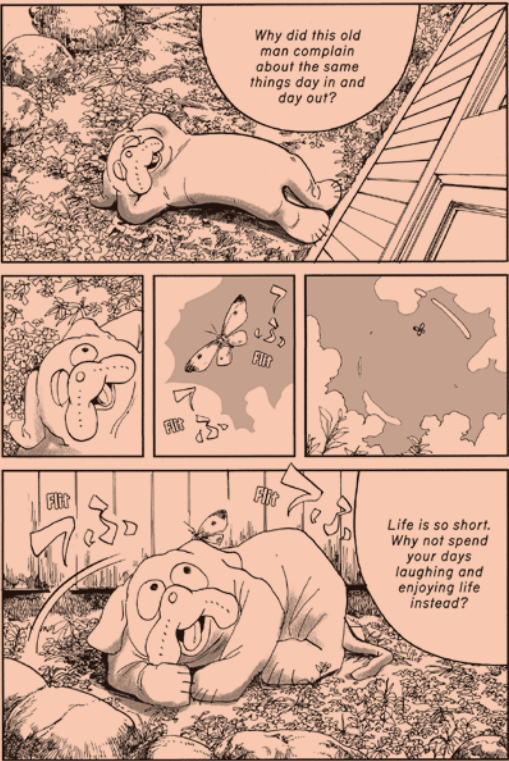
Even in a victorious country like the United States, there must have been those who struggled to fully embrace the new postwar order, left behind with unresolved emotions. Should this work ever find its way into translation, I hope its themes will resonate with those who have experienced such struggles and offer new perspectives to them.

While adapting *Yasegaman no setsu* (Grin and Bear It) as a manga, I drew inspiration from the narrative styles commonly found in alternative manga magazine *Garo*, as well as the artistic styles of wartime Japanese manga. The dog depicted in the manga is illustrated in a manner reminiscent of American cartoon character Felix the Cat and Japanese kids comics character Norakuro by Suiho Tagawa. Great care was taken in my historical research to accurately capture the atmosphere of the mid-1950s, to faithfully

recreate everyday scenes once familiar in Japan. I also insisted on using traditional analog drawing techniques to create this manga, using dip pens to maintain an old-fashioned feel.

I hope you enjoy this work.

-Tokushige Kawakatsu



Manga International Network Team (MINT)

Interview Tokushige Kawakatsu



What made you want to become a manga artist?

I never really planned to become a manga artist. I used to collect a magazine called *Garo* because I liked it. Then in college I found an independent magazine called *Kaku*.

It was sort of a fan-made tribute to *Garo*, and I submitted a manga because I wanted to be featured in it.

Before I knew it, one thing led to another, and I gradually became a manga artist.

Q1



Tell us about your experience as an editor.

The *Kaku* magazine I mentioned was edited entirely by a manga artist named Sorao Nishino. I started helping him out and learned the basics of editing just by trial and error. Later on, I joined a company called Magazine House and became an editor on the payroll. But even then, I kept doing more behind-the-scenes kinds of tasks, like designing social media posts, remastering books for reprints—endless routine, nuts-and-bolts work.

So it's not like I was doing anything particularly creative, I was just quietly doing whatever I could as an editor.

Q2

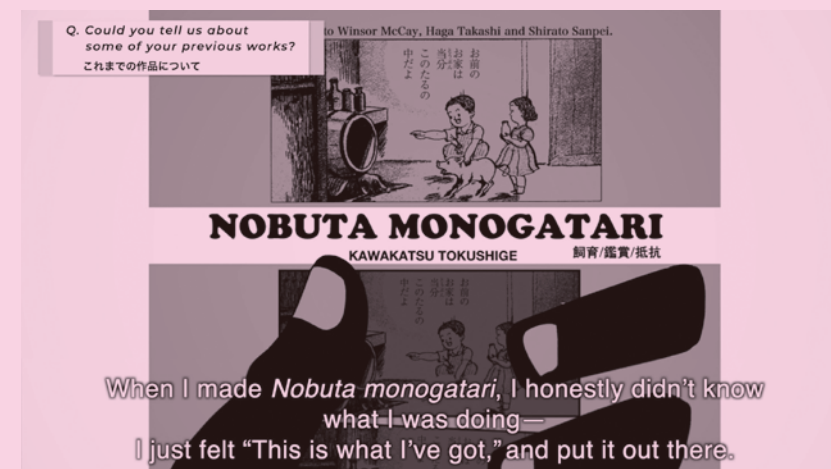
Could you tell us about some of your previous works?

This one's a manga I drew. When I made *Nobuta monogatari*, I honestly didn't know what I was doing—I just felt “This is what I've got,” and put it out there. I thought, “I've outdone myself with this story! I've made a new manga!” Well, I guess half the time I make manga for myself anyway. Of course, it feels good when something turns out well, but getting to that point is always a long struggle. Maybe I just lack the talent, who knows . . .

Then I made a manga called *Yasegaman no setsu*. When I finished the last page of that one, I really thought, “Nailed it!” Hearing that *THE BEST MANGA 2025: Kono Manga o Yome!* ranked it No. 1, I thought, “Yeah, that makes sense.”

There's a lot in that manga about movies—all those film references I went ahead and added in myself. I even included a 1930s jazz hit called “Happy Days Are Here Again” in the story. I think being unafraid to do things like that is one of my strong points.

Q3



Could you talk about *Yasegaman no setsu*'s cover design?

The cover was created under the direction of a designer named Jun Kawana. So I just drew exactly what he described. The main character, a girl named Honami, looks a lot like Audrey Hepburn—and that was intentional. Back when *Roman Holiday* and *Sabrina* came out, Audrey Hepburn's hairstyle became a massive trend in Japan. Honami is supposed to be a stylish Tokyo girl, so I gave her that Hepburn-inspired look.



What led you to adapt a novel as source material?

First off, I've always been a huge fan of movies. And a lot of films are based on someone else's original story. So I'd always dreamed of creating a manga like one of Japan's 50s “program pictures,” which is why I chose to work off a novel. Shizuo Fujieda's novel is what's called postwar literature in Japan—stories that often explore generational conflict between old and new. You don't see that theme much in today's manga, but it shows up all the time in films from those days. That really drew me to this particular story. And then, you know, after the war, America came to Japan, right? The protagonist in the story is a doctor, and doctors before the war learned German-style medicine and culture. That's why before the war he'd sing German or Austrian songs, and hearing English songs would really get to him. I wanted to draw a vivid contrast between old and new generations, and that's what this manga tries to do.

What's the appeal of the Showa era (1926–89) to you?

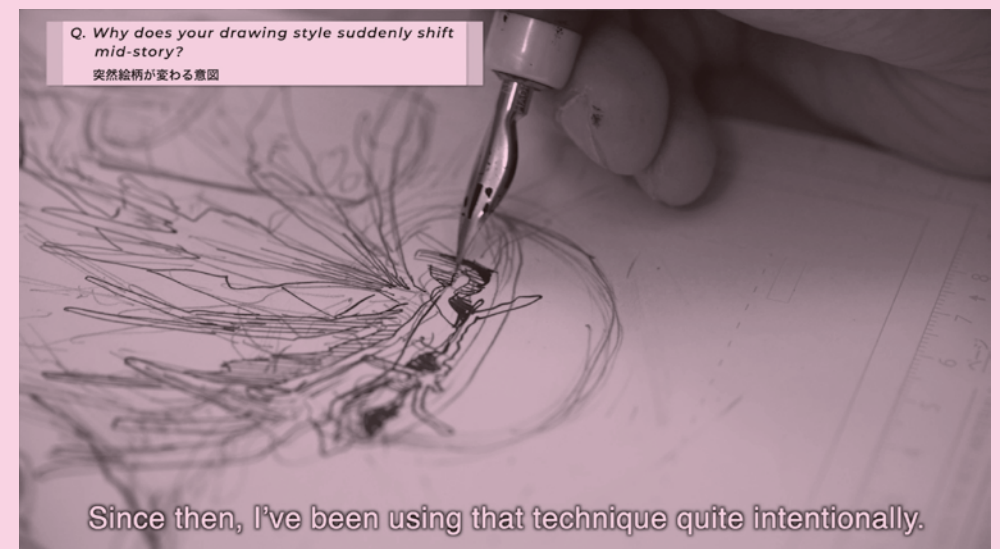
I think I'm interested in it because it connects to my family history—my grandmother, who I lived with as a child, and father and mother. My grandmother was born in the Taisho era, my father was repatriated from Shanghai after the war, and my mother was born postwar. You really feel the generational differences with your parents. I think that's why I'm drawn to the Showa era. And for some reason . . . I've always felt that in some way culture after 1973 just doesn't have anything to do with me. 1973 was the year of the Yom Kippur War, and Japan's rapid economic growth came to a stop. I feel like even manga changed after that, and I'm more interested in the manga and creative expressions that came before. The same goes for movies and music.

Could you talk about Betty the dog in *Yasegaman no setsu*?

That character is obviously inspired by the manga *Norakuro*. *Norakuro* was influenced by Russian Constructivism, so the art is very flat and stylistically draws on graphic design. But in my case, I was thinking more along the lines of Bonzo the Dog, or those dogs you see in animations by director Starevich . . . I wanted to draw something with a bit more three-dimensionality. And the exclamation and question marks above the character's head are a nod to Felix the Cat. Really I took all the good bits from manga I'd been studying and brought them together into the character of Betty the dog. Even the name “Betty” is a reference to Betty Boop.

Why does your drawing style suddenly shift mid-story?

That trick of suddenly changing art style was often used by a manga artist called Shigeru Mizuki right after he debuted. He used to draw a lot of war stories when he was starting out. Most of the time, his art had a really round, almost kids manga feel that resembled another artist, Yoshiteru Takano. But whenever a character died in battle, he'd switch to a hyper-realistic style, probably based on actual photos. Mizuki went through some really traumatic experiences on New Britain Island during the war. So I think he just couldn't bring himself to draw war deaths in a manga-like way. That realistic art feels like it's rooted in real photographs. Which means . . . when the art style changes like that, it shifts the reader's sense of realism too. That struck me as deeply truthful. And that's when I realized that by using shifts in art style you can change how readers engage with the story. Since then, I've been using that technique quite intentionally.



Which works have had an influence on you?

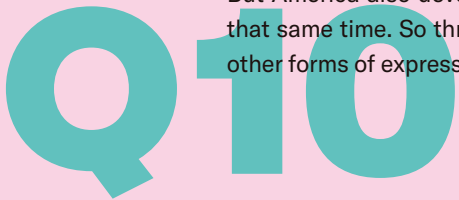
The manga that influenced me the most is this one. *Jigoku no mizu* by Shinichiro Azuma—but it's actually a work by Shigeru Mizuki. It's a pen name of his. When I was around 18, my parents gave me some money to buy a study guide for exams, and I went to the bookstore . . . but I bought this instead. And that's where everything went sideways for me.

When I saw the title *Jigoku no mizu* ["Hell Water"], I thought, "This is wild—I've never seen a manga like this before!" And it hit me deep down, "Wow, Shigeru Mizuki is pretty incredible."



What would you like to achieve overseas through the MINT project?

I'm really happy that people in Anglophone countries are reading my work. I grew up reading a lot of stuff from the English-speaking world too. Also, I'd love to get my hands on more vintage American comics and learn more about them. Sure, Japan created the *gekiga* ["dramatic pictures"] style of manga . . . That started around 1956 or '57—before the term even existed, but that's when it came about. But America also developed similar storytelling techniques around that same time. So through this opportunity, I'd love to study those other forms of expression too.



old_school00000l



@kawakatsutokushige

About Tokushige Kawakatsu

Tokushige Kawakatsu was born in Tokyo in 1992. As a child, he was inspired by *gekiga* artist Sanpei Shirato's manga adaptation of the collected works of Ernest Thompson Seton, *Shiiton dobutsuki* (Seton's Animal Chronicles). He wrote his first manga in the sixth grade and submitted a manga to the *dojinshi* (independent magazine) *Kaku*, a monthly manga anthology similar to *Garō* magazine, when he was 18. This led to his involvement with Hokuto Shobo which was founded by Shinzo Takano, a well-known researcher of *gekiga* artist Yoshiharu Tsuge and former editor of *Garō* magazine. Driven by his passion for manga and the *gekiga* style, he resolved to dedicate himself entirely to drawing.

Kawakatsu is also a fan of American comics, particularly Bob Powell's horror works and Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo*. Currently, he is especially interested in artist Bob Fujitani who started his career in the 40s. Kawakatsu made his debut as a manga artist in 2011, and since then has been active not only in manga production, but also in editing and writing for manga magazines, collecting manga from the prewar period, and conducting research on manga history. Influenced by such Showa-era artists such as Shigeru Mizuki, Kawakatsu's works have a retro feel reminiscent of the 1960s-manga magazine *Garō*.

His recent works include *Manga Yufuin kiko* (Manga: A Journey to Yufuin, KODANSHA), based on an original work by Moegara. He also co-edited *Hayashi Seiichi mangajutsu* (Seiichi Hayashi Manga Technique, Semi Shobo) with Tochika Aran. The Taiwanese edition of *Denwa, suimin, ongaku* (Telephone, Sleep, Music) is now available from Faces Publications.

Publications

Yasegaman no setsu (Grin and Bear It)
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Japan Creator
Support Fund Website



MINT Website



MINT vol. I
Sample Catalog PDF

About MINT

Manga International Network Team (MINT) aims to support early career manga artists and their editors in Japan who are working to achieve a global presence, and to increase the recognition and value of manga's diversity overseas. This project is the manga section of the Creator Support Program, a program managed by the Japan Creator Support Fund, which in turn was established by the Japan Arts Council with a subsidy from the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Organizers
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan
Japan Arts Council
Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture (JPIC)

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