

Yokote Masuda Manga Museum

Located just a short walk away from Masuda's historic district, the Yokote Masuda Manga Museum is a mecca for fans and connoisseurs of Japanese comics. The museum was established in 1995 as a gallery of *genga*, the original, hand-drawn pages used in manga publication. Today, the museum's collection contains hundreds of thousands of *genga*, including many by well-known artists, such as Goseki Kojima (1928–2000), illustrator of *Lone Wolf and Cub*, Takao Saito (1936–2021), creator of *Golgo 13*, and Akiko Higashimura (1975–), creator of *Princess Jellyfish*. Starting as a collection of work by Yokote manga artist Takao Yaguchi (1939–2020), the museum now features original pieces from over 180 Japanese and non-Japanese artists. The museum's mission is to share and promote manga culture through the preservation of the original covers and panels created by generations of manga artists.

The Manga Culture Exhibition on the first floor gives a brief outline of manga culture in Japan, the focus of the museum, and an explanation of how manga are created. A display of original artwork winds along the walls of a sloped walkway that guides visitors up to the second floor, where a rotating selection of *genga* are displayed. In the Permanent Exhibit, visitors can get a rare look at the pencil marks and corrective ink that show alterations made by the artists before the artwork was submitted for publication. The second floor of the museum also features an exhibition of manga from artists born in Akita, a walkway with famous quotes from Japan's most popular manga titles, a workshop where guests can learn from contemporary manga artists, and a manga library where visitors can browse a selection of some 25,000 titles.

Entry to the museum is free, but there is also a special paid exhibition area on the first floor. This space is used for temporary collaborations with manga artists, including unique displays of original artwork. The museum also has a café space where renowned artists have left original sketches on the walls. Across from the café is the Manga Kura Exhibition Room, a large, state-of-the-art storage facility that houses the museum's collection of over 400,000 *genga*. The room is temperature- and humidity-controlled to prevent damage to the fragile pieces of original artwork. Only a handful of *genga* are put on display, but visitors can use the exhibit's central terminal to browse extremely high-resolution images of the museum's entire archive. Each piece is carefully scanned and catalogued by the museum staff, along with information on paper size, possible damage, and any notes written on the edges or the back of the piece. Through these

efforts, the museum hopes to ensure that even the smallest details of this important heritage will be accessible to future generations of artists.