

“Art of the People:”

Manga Defined through History, c. 1920

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Different definitions of manga tend to clash around narratives of origin. Today scholars reach back to late 18th century popular illustrated fiction *kibyōshi* or even further back to the 12th century *chōjū-giga* scrolls, while fans seeking familiar stylistic conventions and formats will insist that modern manga began with Tezuka—and usually emphasize his borrowings from Disney. Almost never are the forms that arose during Meiji and Taisho brought into play. Yet “manga” (called such) began to be published in a variety of periodicals, newspapers, and soft and hard-covered books from about 1900. Between art and literature, reportage and poetic fantasies—manga was defined by the influential Okamoto Ippei in 1924 as an “art of the people” (民衆畫) and a way “to dig at the times and human emotions” (世態人情を穿つ). Manga histories, by means of their lineage of antecedents, helped articulate the ideals by which the new medium anticipated the future. My paper interrogates two of the earliest histories—by Okamoto Ippei and Hosokibara Seiki published months apart in 1924—for what they say about emotional expression, humor, satire, contemporaneity, freedom, and resistance. Most crucially, it asks about the Demos (common people) during the time that came to be known as Taisho Democracy.

Miriam Wattles is Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art & Architecture at University of California, Santa Barbara, where she has taught since 2004. Her publications have ranged from an exploration of the turning point of Yokoyama Taikan, “The 1909 Ryūtō and the Aesthetics of Affectivity” *Art Journal* 55:3 (1996) to, most recently, “A Multi-Gendered Scandal: The Survival of the Prostitute Meme, Asazuma Boat” in Belli, ed, *Women, Gender and Art in Asia, c. 1500-1900* (2016). While an ICC Visiting Scholar, she has researched her coming book project, “Drawing Relations: From Kyōga to Manga, circa 1870-1930.”