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About the Weatherhead East Asian Institute:

Since its establishment in 1949, Columbia University's Weatherhead East Asian Institute has been a major center for research, teaching, and publishing on modern and contemporary Asia. The Institute's mission is to train new generations of experts in the Asian humanities, social sciences, and the professions and to enhance understanding of East Asia in the wider community.

New York City and Cowboy Bebop Collide

By Andrew Scheineson, CC '09

Something Krazy is coming to New York next month.

In what they are touting as a first for New York City – a city where little that is worth doing (and much that isn't) hasn't been done before – the Japan Society is hosting a colorful, innovative, and most likely over-stimulating exhibit on the interconnected genres of manga, anime, and video games.

Organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery, the exhibit, (*KRAZY!* cont. on page 4)



KRAZY! is a thoughtful showcase for anime, manga, and video games.

Touring Japan (Without Leaving New York)

By Hannah Kim, GS '10

The Columbia Japan Society (CJS) was created to facilitate the infusion of Japanese culture into the Columbia community. Membership is not limited to students of Japanese heritage; the society welcomes anyone with interest in any aspect of Japan. CJS prides itself on offering a multitude of events, all designed to allow participants to enjoy and experience various aspects of Japanese culture.

This year, CJS is proud to launch a series of events called Japan in NY. Designed to showcase the plethora of authentic Japanese locales in New York, CJS will

host four trips.

The first trip will be to Ippudo, a Japanese ramen hotspot. Japanese ramen has a four-hundred-year history, and ramen first gained popularity in

The Columbia Japan Society will be hosting four exciting trips that let you explore Japanese culture within New York City.

the United States when Japanese expats sold ramen from street-side food stalls. Ippudo offers New Yorkers a chance to experience this authentic Japanese cuisine. The second event will be a dual trip to Kinokuniya and Book-

Off, two very popular Japanese bookstores. Book-Off and Kinokuniya offers a large selection of reads, including classic Japanese works such as *The Tale of Genji*. The trip will end with Japanese bento boxes (*obento*) and Japanese cream puffs for dessert at Café Zaiya.

The third event will be a Japanese barbecue dinner at Gyukaku. The Japanese barbecue experience is very interactive—selections are served raw and grilled directly at the table. This process of table grilling is often called *yakiniku* and is unique in that diners are free to season the grilled meat to taste with the wide range of sauces (*tare*) that the restaurant provides. The most common sauce is made of Japanese soy sauce, which consists of sake, mirin, sugar, (*CJS cont. on page 2*)



The Brooklyn Botanical Garden hosts an annual cherry blossom festival.

(CJS contd. from page 1)

garlic and sesame. Gyukaku is highly rated in Zagat's and is definitely a New York must-see.

Finally, CJS will host a trip to the Brooklyn Botanical Garden for Sakura Matsuri, the annual cherry blossom festival. Brooklyn Botanical Gardens boasts 200 cherry blossom trees. Hanami, or flower-viewing, is a long-standing Japanese tradition dating back to

the Heian Period (794 A.D. – 1191 A.D.), when Japanese nobility gathered to celebrate and enjoy the natural beauty of the blooming sakura (cherry blossoms). The Japanese people believe the cherry blossom tree symbolizes the transient nature of life due to its short blooming period. Visitors can also enjoy traditional Japanese music and dance, taiko drumming, ikebana flower arranging, and Japanese DJs, as well as various

presentations on Japanese manga art and traditional tea ceremonies.

Columbia Japan Society would love to share these exciting experiences with you. You can visit their website for more information.

Restaurant Visit to Ippudo
Thursday, Feb. 26
Ramen: \$15+

Book-Off at Bryant Park
Saturday, March 7
Books: \$1+
Café Zaiya: \$5+

Gyu-gotta come to Gyukaku!
Friday, April 3
Dinner: \$30+

Sakura Matsuri
Saturday, May 2
Entrance Fee: \$4

Columbia Japan Society
columbia.edu/cu/japansociety

About Soundings:

Published monthly by the Weatherhead Undergraduate Council, *Soundings* aims to help better incorporate undergraduates into the broader East Asian Studies community at Columbia by providing increased access to information about East Asia-related groups, activities, and events. Incorporating academic as well as non-academic news and listings, it seeks to help interested undergraduates further pursue their interest in East Asia, whatever form it may take. *Soundings* is edited by Preeti Bhattacharji. If you have any questions or comments, or would like to contribute, you can contact her at pb2205@columbia.edu.

Last Japanese Joint on the UWS

By Preeti Bhattacharji CC '09

Since Café Swish and Tomo both fell prey to the recession, there's a sudden dearth of Japanese food in Morningside Heights. So last week, I decided to take a trip to one of the last bastions of Japanese cuisine in the Columbia neighborhood: Saji's.

If you never noticed Saji's before, I can't blame you – it's the size of a walk-in closet. Nestled in a nook right next to Rack & Soul, it's a mainstay for Columbia staff on their lunch breaks. Students usually know it as a delivery and take-out joint.

I slipped into Saji's on Wednesday afternoon and pursued the lunch specials. I ended up ordering the Chicken Teriyaki Shumai Gyoza Combo, which comes

with a salad and homemade Japanese Iced Tea. I topped off my order with a Spicy Tuna Roll and grabbed a seat to wait for my order. And boy, did I wait – for a take-out place, they're remarkably slow. It was 25 minutes before I even got my brown bag. And once I got home, I discovered (to my genuine lament) that they had forgotten to pack my Japanese Iced Tea.

Luckily, I was too hungry to care much. I tore the top off my Styrofoam container and dug into my chicken teriyaki. It was nothing to write home about – relatively cheap cuts of meat, salted heavily, and a little overcooked. But considering I paid \$6 for the entire entrée – with chicken, shumai, gyoza, salad, and rice – I can't say I expected much more.

The shumai was equally vague, tasting more like the floury shumai wrapper than the actual filling. The gyoza,



Insider Tip: Check on Saji's, but skip the entrée and stick to the sushi.

however, was the highlight of the meal. Outside, it was sweet and crunchy, having been slightly caramelized in the pan. The inside burst with garlic and ginger, and was by far the most flavorful thing I had ordered.

Finally, I turned to my spicy tuna roll, which also impressed after the lackluster entrée. They clearly made it

fresh when I ordered it, which helps explain the initial delay. The tuna was actually spicy, and each piece was significantly bigger than the anemic pieces they serve elsewhere on the Upper West Side. Overall, it was a pleasant way to end an otherwise mediocre meal.

The next time I'm in the mood for Japanese food, I'll probably go back, but I'll steer clear of the chicken teriyaki and shumai. Maybe I'll try one of their noodle soups, or just ask for a bowl of gyoza. At the very least, I still want to try the Japanese Iced Tea.

Chicken Teriyaki Shumai Gyoza Combo
\$5.99 lunch special

Spicy Tuna Roll
\$4.25

Saji's
256 W. 109th St
(b/w Broadway & Amsterdam)
212-749-1834

Speechless, While Teaching English

By Christine E. Kwon, CC '10

"having attached has become
your still
the rice cracker was able to
enumerated
in the deer and to worship the
great
image of Buddha of Nara The
supper was
pasta why."

For the umpteenth time, Mariel Frank disrupted the quiet of the teachers' office with yet another burst of laughter. What could only be described as word vomit had been submitted to her ill-disguised as a student's essay, and the only logical reaction to such linguistic illogic was, well...to laugh.

Mariel (BC '07) served as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) from July 2007 to July 2008 through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, an initiative of the Japanese government that "aims to promote grassroots internationalization at the local level by inviting young overseas graduates to assist in international exchange and foreign language education." JET is one of the world's largest exchange programs and arguably the most well-known and competitive of its kind. Acting in their capacities as ALTs, JETs, as the participants are known, "become cultural ambassadors," as Dr. Fumiko Nazikian, Director of the Japanese Language Program at Columbia, describes. Dr. Nazikian is an enthusiastic supporter of the program and works closely with the Japanese Consulate in New York City, which processes the applications and interviews applicants from the New York area. "[JET] is one of the best [programs] for our students because it allows them to

bridge two cultures."

In supporting cultural exchange through the primary and secondary public education systems, JET enables its participants to impact communities on the local level. The intimacy allowed by the program personalizes the experience both for the JET and the community in which s/he is engaged. "Because JET sets you up to be hired directly by your town's Board of

"cultural bridge" through the support of both her local community and other JETs. JET is unique for the strength of its inter-program social network: "The JET network is pretty tight," Mariel reveals. The support network is "already set in place for you" when "you need other foreign friends who understand what you're going through."

The necessity of such a safety net reveals the challenges of



Original Illustration by Sonia Tycko, CC '09

Education," explains Mariel, "the entire community is literally paying for you to be there." As such, "the entire community feels responsible for you and really helps you out." Despite an intimidating language barrier, and the inevitable culture shock that inevitably accompanies adjusting to life in a rural Japanese mountain town of 7,000, Mariel was able to acclimate to life in Minabe and successfully construct a

what can be an "overwhelming" experience for JETs. The JET applicant must possess "an open mind and a willingness to both welcome and share new perspectives," Mariel says.

Dr. Nazikian, too, emphasizes the necessity of a "strong interest, a desire to come to know a new culture." It is "most important," she stresses.

"The 'e' in 'JET' is not for 'English,' it's for 'Exchange,'

Mariel offers as a reminder, "which means that as a JET, you are not simply being paid to be a native English speaker teaching English; you are being paid to provide your town with a 24/7 cultural exchange." It is only in fully anticipating, comprehending, and carrying out these duties as "cultural ambassador" that JETs can gain the full spectrum of a positive teaching experience.

Still, for Mariel, the difficulties of adjusting to life in Japan were countered by "ironically the paucity of true differences from [American] culture." Despite both her and the Minabe's expectations of the irreconcilability of the Japanese and Western cultures, Mariel's experiences and interactions with her community ultimately proved to defy this misconception. While her visible foreignness led unsurprisingly to a number of "tiresome" encounters and exacerbated the initial culture shock, Mariel's initial vision of "an experience with what [she] imagined to be the opposite sort of world from a large American city" was in actuality realized as "amazing memories of drinking with my Japanese and foreign friends on the stone beach at night and having multilingual conversations covering an array of topic," of "lighting fireworks...and parties in Osaka, Tokyo and Kobe."

More than half a year following her return to the US, Mariel speaks of her time in Japan with a passionate enthusiasm that reveals the strength which the JET Program has impressed upon her life. "Oof," she sighs. "I could write volumes on my experiences in Japan." Oof. The JET experience seems to resist verbalization. In coherent English, anyway. Just ask the student to whom "the rice cracker was able to enumerated..."

For more information on the JET Program, see their website at www.jetprogram.org.

(KRAZY contd. from page 1)

entitled *KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Manga + Video Games*, explores a cluster of Japanese mediums that have burst into the American mainstream in recent years. Once the domain of a limited subset of the population, today the artistic styles inherent in these forms have become practically ubiquitous. "This is definitely part of a large field of visual culture that surrounds us and we're engaged with hundreds and hundreds of times every day," Bruce Grenville, curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery, told CBC News.

With this exhibit, the Japan Society promises to provide an in-depth look at the common artistic foundations and influences behind these genres, and their place in Japanese society, through a collection of "200 works of art, objects, and ephemera," including magazines, movies, and even action figures. Visitors can watch excerpts of classic anime films, play table console video games, and attempt to understand the artistic progression from traditional woodblock prints to the likes of *Sailor Moon* and *Cowboy Bebop*.

Though the Japan Society is not particularly expansive, the efforts of Tokyo-based architectural firm Atelier Bow-Wow designed a gallery space meant to recreate the bustle of Tokyo inside the confines of the 47th Street facility. Within this imagined urban environment, highlights of the exhibition include an "Anime Garden," where six seminal anime films will be played simultaneously, and an attached sound room featuring the anime soundtracks of Yono Kanno, who is best known for her strange amalgamation of jazz, hard rock, blues, hip hop, and ambient techno styles. Among the films playing in the "garden" is *Akira*, the 1988

post-apocalyptic tale whose enthusiastic reception in the West presaged anime's increasing popularity over the next two decades.

KRAZY! also houses a large "Manga Pod" with roughly one thousand magazines from renowned manga artists such as Taiyo Matsumoto and Junko Mizuno. These comic books illustrate the merging influences of Japanese and American styles, demonstrating how the manga is a significant product of the "give-and-take" dynamic that Joe Earle, Director of the Japan Society Gallery, ascribes to the works in his exhibit.

While this incredible collection of video games and comic books seems to provide everything a young child could want, *KRAZY!* is "not a kids show," Grenville cautions. "The language is complicated. The visuals are complicated. The characters themselves and who they constitute are complicated."

This is not to say that kids aren't welcome, but are simply not the sole intended audience for this thoughtful examination of contemporary culture. This is an exhibition for all ages. Whether your passion for anime stretches back to a childhood devotion to *Dragonball Z* or you have a few free hours to play a little *Pac Man* and flip through a good manga, *KRAZY!* promises to be an exciting and unique opportunity to sort through the mysteries of Japan's most popular export.

KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Manga + Video Games

**The Japan Society
333 E. 47th St.**

March 13 to June 14

Admission: \$10 (\$8 with CUID, free Friday nights)

Upcoming Events at the WEAI

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2009

"Traffic in Genre" Film and Lecture Series

Tokyo Story film screening with Professor Hikari Hori

6:30pm

413 Kent Hall

Co-sponsored by the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and Center for Korean Research

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2009

WEAI 60th Anniversary Special Lecture

Co-Sponsored by the Arts Initiative at Columbia University and the Department of Art History and Archaeology

"XU BING: Recent Work"

A lecture by *Xu Bing*, Artist, Vice President, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing

Followed by a discussion with *Robert Harrist*, The Jane & Leopold Swergold Professor of Chinese Art and History at Columbia University

4:30 PM - 6:00 PM

International Affairs Building, Room 1501

Center for Korean Research Colloquium

"Hüngboga, a Tragicomic P'ansori of Economic Hardship with a Happy Ending!"

A Bilingual Storysinging

Chan E. Park, Associate Professor of Korean Language, Literature, and Performance Studies, Ohio State University

6:30-8:30 PM

403 Kent Hall

Co-sponsored by the Korea Society

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

Brown Bag Lecture Series, "Identities at Stake in Taiwan"

"Natural Heritage Conservation in Taiwan and the Construction of Identities"

Fiorella Allio, Visiting scholar at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Research Fellow at the National Scientific Research

Center (CNRS), France

12:00-1:30 PM

918 IAB

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

Brown Bag Lecture

"*Democracy Without Accountability? Indonesia's Party Cartel in the 2009 Elections*"

Dan Slater, Assistant Professor of political science at the University of Chicago

12:00 - 1:30 PM

IAB 918

"Traffic in Genre" Film and Lecture Series

Zu Warriors from the Magic Mountain film screening with Professor Weihong Bao

6:30pm

413 Kent Hall

Co-sponsored by the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and Center for Korean Research