

Arts Picks: Japanese pop art at Mizuma, Opera People remake getai and The Dogs at ShanghArt

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The influence of tokusatsu is clear in the works of Kenji Yanobe.

PHOTO: KENJI YANOBE



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Arts Picks 

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Art Bit Matrix – Tokusatsu To Videogame

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Japanese art has always blurred the line between high art and popular culture – think ukiyo-e prints and manga.

This deep-rooted aesthetic appreciation translates well into contemporary art, where, increasingly, the visual language has flattened across traditional “high” art and “low” mass media.

Mizuma Gallery’s new exhibition presents this happy chaos via the works of 12 Japanese artists. Tokusatsu refers to the subculture of Japanese cinematic special effects – think Godzilla and Ultraman.

The influence of tokusatsu is clear in the works of Kenji Yanobe, arguably the most recognisable in the line-up as anyone who has visited Tokyo’s Ginza Six will recognise his Ship’s Cat character, which took over the mall’s atrium with a giant installation in 2024.

The showpiece of this exhibition is The Spaceship Of Ship’s Cat, a sculpture Yanobe co-created with pixel artist Ban8ku and game designers from Kyoto University of the Arts, Osaka Electro-Communication University and Soai University.

Other artists employ the visual language of tokusatsu and video games differently. Hayaki Nishigaki’s Godzilla-inspired work reimagines traditional Japanese motifs as post-apocalyptic landscapes, while Yume Aoyama subverts kawaii and the idea of nature in The Beginning Of Spring, where twisted balloon flowers and little gingerbread men are painted on polyester fabric.



The Beginning Of Spring by Yume Aoyama.
PHOTO: YUME AOYAMA

These artists of the so-called Pokemon generation might not appeal to all, but they definitely reflect the increasing influence of mass-media products in contemporary art practice.

For parents looking to amuse their children this weekend, there is a Kids Game Jam Workshop conducted by artist Daisuke Nishijima. This full-day ticketed workshop on Aug 30 will guide participants through character creation.

Where: Mizuma Gallery, 01-34 Gillman Barracks, 22 Lock Road

MRT: Labrador Park

When: Till Oct 19, 11am to 7pm (Tuesdays to Saturdays), 11am to 6pm (Sundays), closed on Mondays

Admission: Free for exhibition, workshop \$40 per participant

Info:

str.sg/aNtg

A Date With Tradition



The Opera People reimagines Cantonese and Hokkien songs as contemporary art songs for A Date With Tradition at the Stamford Arts Centre.

PHOTO: ARTS HOUSE GROUP

Fancy listening to Western opera-trained singers reinterpret getai as serious art songs? Then pop by the Back Courtyard of the Stamford Arts Centre this weekend for a free gig by The Opera People. This home-grown opera group has been remaking opera for contemporary audiences and Getai Songs by Tan Yuting gives three getai standards in Cantonese and Hokkien the contemporary art song treatment.

If this is too experimental for your palate, then drop in next weekend on The Opera People's open studio session for a peek at its upcoming production of Christoph Willibald Gluck's Iphigenie En Tauride.

There are other more straightforward offerings next weekend too, from Bhaskar's Arts Academy's flute ensemble and Ding Yi Music Company.

These sessions are part of A Date With Tradition, an annual programme showcasing offerings from the traditional arts groups resident at the arts centre.

Where: Stamford Arts Centre, 155 Waterloo Street

MRT: Bugis

When: Aug 29 and 30, 6 to 10pm; Sept 5 and 6, 6 to 10pm

Admission: Free and ticketed

Info:

str.sg/CDrD

The Dogs



The Dogs (Burnt Hole) by Lai Yu Tong.

PHOTO: LAI YU TONG

In his works, executed in various media – from drawings on paper and plywood to a pinewood sculpture – Lai places these neglected strays centre stage and invites the viewer to contemplate the fringe and the wild.

His exploration of his relationship with these creatures extends to a collaboration with fellow artists Mark Chua, Lam Li Shuen and Wu Jun Han for live performances on Sept 5 and 6.

Drawing from their various backgrounds as film-makers, and video and visual artists, the four practitioners will use live image-making and play a collection of light- and sound-emitting instruments in their show, Fear & Love, which will look at animal-human relationships.

Where: ShanghArt, 02-22 Gillman Barracks, 9 Lock Road

MRT: Labrador Park

When: Aug 30 to Nov 2, noon to 6pm (Wednesdays to Sundays), other hours by appointment only. Fear & Love performances on Sept 5 and 6 are from 8.30 to 10pm

Admission: Free for exhibition, from \$25 for Fear & Love

Info:

str.sg/8d9h
