



Universität
Zürich^{UZH}

Zurich Lectures in East Asian Art History

Thursday, April 11, 2024
18:15–20:00

University of Zurich
Rämistrasse 59
Room RAA-G-15

Ecce homo: the Japanese Male Body in Pain in WWII Visual Propaganda

Prof. Sharalyn Orbaugh
University of British Columbia





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Abstract

Graphic depictions of the painful injuries and deaths of soldiers are common in one of the most widely disseminated and widely viewed forms of Japanese mobilization propaganda in World War II: *kamishibai* (literally, paper plays). The realistic style and vivid colors of the illustrations of *kamishibai* plays make the sufferings of Japanese soldiers and munitions factory workers painfully clear, raising questions: how could such depictions be intended to encourage soldiers to enlist, or to encourage those on the home front to continue their backbreaking labor to support the war effort? How did these depictions in *kamishibai* compare with images of the male body in fine art of the same period? This presentation will explore the strategies of persuasion that relied on depictions of male bodies in pain for the purposes of mobilizing the Japanese people to support the war effort.

Sharalyn Orbaugh is Professor of modern Japanese literature and popular culture at the University of British Columbia, where she is currently Head of the Department of Asian Studies. One of her primary research topics is the visual and narrative culture of wartime and Allied Occupation era Japan (1930s to 1950s), particularly prose fiction, popular magazines, and *kamishibai* (paper theatre).

She has published on the censorship of cultural products during this period, as well as on the nature and function of propaganda in a comparative context, examining visual and narrative propaganda media produced by the governments of both “totalitarian” and “democratic” participants in World War Two. Publications in this area include: *Propaganda Performed: Kamishibai in Japan’s Fifteen Year War* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); “*Kamishibai and the Art of the Interval*” (*Mechademia* 1.7, 2012); “How the Pendulum Swings: *Kamishibai and Censorship Under the Allied Occupation*” (Tomi Suzuki et. al. eds., *Censorship, Media and Literary Culture in Japan*, Tokyo: Shin’yōsha, 2012).