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SYNOPSIS

From award-winning director Keiichi Hara (*Colorful*) and Japanese powerhouse Production I.G (creators of *Ghost in the Shell*) comes a remarkable story of the daughter behind one of history's most famous artists.

As all of Edo flocks to see the work of the revered painter Hokusai, his daughter O-Ei toils diligently inside his studio. Her masterful portraits, dragons and erotic sketches – sold under the name of her father – are coveted by upper crust Lords and journeyman print makers alike. Shy and reserved in public, in the studio O-Ei is as brash and uninhibited as her father, smoking a pipe while sketching drawings that would make contemporary Japanese ladies blush. But despite this fiercely independent spirit, O-Ei struggles under the domineering influence of her father and is ridiculed for lacking the life experience that she is attempting to portray in her art. *Miss Hokusai*'s bustling Edo (present day Tokyo) is filled with yokai spirits, dragons, and conniving tradesmen, while O-Ei's relationships with her demanding father and blind younger sister provide a powerful emotional underpinning to this sumptuously-animated coming-of-age tale.

**“SHINES AS AN EXAMPLE
OF ONE CREATIVE SOUL
PAYING TRIBUTE TO ANOTHER!”**

A stellar example of the oft-cited principle that
animation is an art form, not a genre.”

- VARIETY

MISS 百日紅 HOKUSAI

A FILM BY
KEIICHI HARA

**“GORGEOUS!
A SMALL POETIC WONDER!”**

That an anime film can explore such complex subjects
so beautifully in what's nominally an artist's biopic
is a blessing in itself.”

- THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

**“A WORK OF BEAUTY
AND INTELLECT!”**

Yokai spirits, Buddha and dragons hiding in wind-storms
heighten the periphery of how an artist might see the world.”

- SCREEN ANARCHY

OPENS OCTOBER 14, 2016



GKIDS



MISS 百日紅 HOKUSAI

A FILM BY
KEIICHI HARA

PRODUCTION CREW

Original Title: Sarusuberi: Miss Hokusai

Original Story: Hinako Sugiura (from the manga Sarusuberi)

Screenplay: Miho Maruo

Director: Keiichi Hara

Character Designer/Animation Supervisor: Yoshimi Itazu

Art Director: Hiroshi Ono

Colour Designer: Satoshi Hashimoto

Director of Photography: Koji Tanaka

Assistant Director: Masako Sato

Editor: Shigeru Nishiyama

Music: Harumi Fuuki

Yo Tsuji

Ending Song: “¿Dónde quiere estar mi alma viajera?” by Sheena Ringo

Animation: Production I.G

Presented by: Sarusuberi Film Partners

VOICES

O-Ei : Anne Higashide

Tetsuzo (Katsushika Hokusai) : Yutaka Matsushige

Zenjiro: Gaku Hamada

Utagawa Kuninao: Kengo Kora

Koto: Jun Miho

O-Nao: Shion Shimizu

Hatsugoro: Michitaka Tsutsui

Sayogoromo: Kumiko Aso

Manjido: Danshun Tatekawa

Historical illustration captions: Francesco Prandoni

Running Time: 90 minutes

Rating: This film is not yet rated.

Format: DCP, 5.1 Surround Sound



WHO WAS HOKUSAI?

BY ELLIS TINIOS

Hokusai (1760 – 1849) is the best-known Japanese artist on the world stage and enjoys equal renown in his homeland. The appetite for his art appears to be insatiable — ‘Hokusai’ exhibitions invariably draw huge crowds. His print image *The Great Wave* is firmly established as a global icon. The *Hokusai manga* (Hokusai’s sketchbooks) are widely if erroneously cited as precursors of modern-day Japanese comics.

Hokusai was born in 1760 in Edo (present day Tokyo) and spent his entire life based in that city. The constant in Hokusai’s life was his passion for drawing. In middle age he gave himself the art name ‘Man mad about painting’; in his later years he modified it to read ‘Old man mad about painting’. He was an eccentric. He lived in disorder if not outright squalor, changing his rented accommodation 90 times in the course of his 89 years. His youngest daughter, O-Ei, lived with her father in his last years after divorcing her husband. An artist herself, she assisted him in the completion numerous commissions for paintings and book illustrations. Only in recent years have serious efforts been made to determine the full extent of her contribution to her Hokusai’s oeuvre but no reliable means of distinguishing the work of the daughter from that of the father has yet been established.

In an autobiographical note that appears in his *One Hundred Views of Fuji’s Peak*, Hokusai remarks that before his 70th year he had not really produced anything of very great note. In his seventies he had begun to grasp the true qualities of living things and the vital energy of the plant world. He expressed the hope that in his nineties he would have succeeded in penetrating into the meaning of things and that at one hundred and ten each dot, each line from his brush would possess a life of its own.

From the first arrival of his books and prints in Europe in the late 1850s, Hokusai’s art captivated Western artists, critics, connoisseurs and collectors. This love affair shows no sign of abating.



MISS HOKUSAI

BY JONATHAN CLEMENTS

Katsushika O-Ei (or Oi), Hokusai's third daughter, was known to be an artist in her own right. Ten extant works are known to be by her own hand, many of them displaying a powerful sense of light and dark, and an original sensibility with color. But O-Ei remains a shadowy figure, like the apparitions of her best-known work, *Night Scene in the Yoshiwara*, brushed out of history by very mundane concerns over attribution. However, she may have been far more prolific than previously supposed, albeit working under another name: that of her own father.

In the Afterward to her novel *The Ghost Brush*, Katherine Govier alludes to a fervid debate below the surface of Japanese academia. She points out that many appear to be in agreement, at least tacitly, that Hokusai's later works occasionally display the hallmarks of a different artist's eye and preference for certain lines or materials. The art critic Kazuhiro Kubota suggests that Hokusai in his eighties, infirm and suffering from palsy, somehow managed to crank out an incredible series of pictures.

However, the technology does not yet exist to “dust” a work for stylistic fingerprints. There might be suggestions in terms of colors of particular stylistic elements, but the evidence is merely circumstantial. Furthermore, neither Hokusai nor his daughter would have had any commercial interest in recognising her work as hers, since it was the Hokusai name that commanded the highest prices. Today, the last thing an art dealer wants to do is reduce the value of famous works by questioning the brand of a famous artist. Even if it were possible to prove O-Ei's handiwork, there would likely be substantial resistance from museums and collectors who have invested substantial amounts in the legacy of Miss Hokusai's more famous father. Although it is very likely that we should really speak of the output of a Hokusai studio, the man himself still commands the highest prices.

The debate over “Hokusai's Daughter” has received substantial attention in Japan in the only place where it is safe: the fictional realm. The most well-known treatment of her life is to be found in *Sarusuberi* by Hinako Sugiura, a story which ran from 1983-1987 in *Manga Sunday* magazine and forms the basis for this new film, *Miss Hokusai*.



HINAKO SUGIURA and the ORIGINAL COMIC BOOK

Hinako Sugiura (1958 – 2005) was a manga artist and researcher in the lifestyles and customs of Japan's Edo period. Born in Tokyo, into a tradition-steeped family of kimono merchants, she studied design and took an increasing interest in feudal Japan. Her manga *Sarusuberi*, on which *Miss Hokusai* is based, has gained cult status for the vivid portrayal of Hokusai's daughter.

Sarusuberi was originally published in the magazine *Manga Sunday* from 1983 to 1987, and then compiled into two volumes. Structured as a series of short stories, with a few digressions into the supernatural as an added spice, the manga is set in 1814, when O-Ei is 23 and Hokusai is 55, and one of the most accomplished artists of his time. Perhaps not coincidentally, it is the year Hokusai publishes the first volume of his best-selling manual series, *Hokusai Manga*. And although O-Ei's birthdate is debated, it is perhaps no coincidence that Sugiura set O-Ei's age in her comic very close to her own at the time, thus exposing her fascination for O-Ei as an artist, woman and daughter. Because *Sarusuberi*, far from being an attempt to delineate an accurate biography, is more than anything else Sugiura's personal time slip into the floating world, aimed to establish a link with a bunch of outlandish artists enjoying their transient and chaotic lives in full.



Photo © Masaya Suzuki

Sarusuberi is the Japanese name of a woody perennial tree known as *Lagerstroemia indica*, or crape myrtle in English. Originating from southern China, it is very common in Korea and Japan. It is written with three Chinese characters meaning "one hundred day-lasting red," which refers to the tree's extended blooming period. Sugiura explains that she could not find a more appropriate metaphor to describe Hokusai, who produced so many works of art, yet his creativeness seemed to never wither. She called the *sarusuberi* blooming season "a long festival," an expression that Hara transformed into a dialogue line given by O-Ei at the beginning of the film, a heartfelt homage from the staff to a most respected woman and artist.



INTERVIEW with KEIICHI HARA



This film is based on the original manga *Sarusuberi* (Crape Myrtle) by Hinako Sugiura. Could you describe which aspects of the original story were more attractive to you?

HARA As a matter of fact, I love all Sugiura's works, and *Sarusuberi* in particular. When I was working on *Summer Days with Coo*, there was this scene with a huge dragon flying in the night sky near Tokyo Tower. I recall bringing to the staff a page from *Sarusuberi*, and tell them: this is how I want it to be done! This is why this movie is a dream come true. And it was a lot of pressure, too, as I really loved this manga: it portrays reality but it is visionary, it touches various aspects of life, still the supernatural is always lurking behind the thin veil of reality. With such wonderful material, I felt I could make it into a visually entertaining movie.

Period dramas tend to be overly stylish, and yet Sugiura succeeds in delivering both a realistic historical rendering, and convincing, lively characters. This film is a story about people, rather than a biopic. We did our research, as I must confess I was certainly not an expert in the Edo period, but *Miss Hokusai* is basically an adaptation of Sugiura's comic and worldview.

What did you keep from, and what did you add to the original comic book?

HARA Sugiura's comic is a collection of short stories without any continuity from one to another. Furthermore, each story may focus on a different character. The titular crape myrtle is a reference to Hokusai, but there's no real protagonist, as Zenjiro is prominently featured, and O-Ei becomes more and more important as the series progresses. So I decided to focus on O-Ei, who is arguably Sugiura's avatar inside the comic book, and I developed the character of her little sister, O-Nao, who in the comic appears only in the last story, entitled *Nowaki* (*Autumn Gale*), which is one of the most beautifully touching of the entire series, and actually the core around which I built this movie. I used "family" as the cohesive agent to create a movie which could stand on its feet. In collaboration with scriptwriter Miho Maruo, we also added two entirely original episodes, or the bridge sequence



with O-Ei, O-Nao and Hatsugoro, and the snow sequence in the middle of the film, and basically any other part featuring O-Nao that is not adapted from *Nowaki*. The ending is original, too.

Is there any major difference between the movies you directed so far and Miss Hokusai?

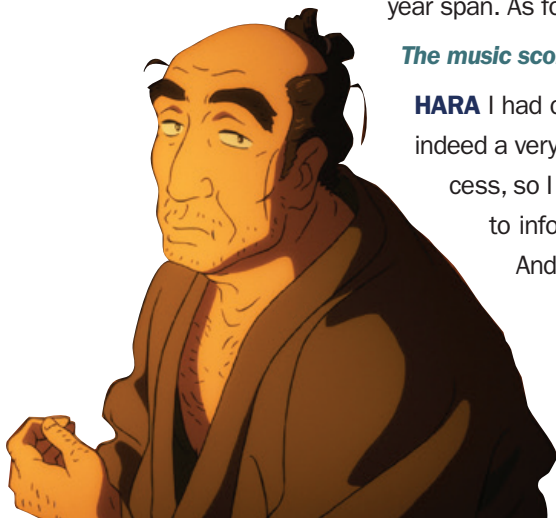
HARA I think it is the first time in years I have made a movie where nobody cries! Again, I believe this is one of the peculiarities of Sugiura's storytelling. Never melodramatic, never overdone. I would call it dry. Still, her stories convey great emotions. This is what I admire in her style and I am trying to emulate. If you think she did this when she was 24, you can only call her a genius.

Hokusai and O-Ei: who between these two proved easier to render? And who is your favorite character in the film?

HARA O-Ei was easier to work on of course. While being a historical character, unlike her father we don't really know much about her, and this gave me leverage to develop her personality, although I owe much to the source material. O-Ei feels in rivalry with her father, who also happens to be her master as an artist. She's proud, strong-willed to stubbornness, and overall a rather self-assertive person. Still, she's terribly shy and clumsy when it comes to her unspoken romantic interest. And she's as sweet and protective as a mother to her little sister, O-Nao. So I thought I could offer a complete portrayal of this incredibly intriguing woman by showing the many sides of her personality, and make effective use of the changing seasons to tell a story throughout a one-year span. As for my favourite character... I'd say Zenjiro. He's the most human in the whole bunch.

The music score for this movie is quite interesting and unexpected.

HARA I had discovered that Sugiura used to draw her comics while listening to rock music. It was indeed a very unconventional association, and I decided to pay homage to this unique creative process, so I had O-Ei walk the streets of 1814 Edo at the sound of electric guitars. It is also a way to inform the audience that what they are going to watch is not your typical period drama. And if you allow me to say it, O-Ei rocks! This film offers a very unusual image of Hokusai.





HARA Today Hokusai is celebrated as one of Japan's greatest artists. He has become a sort of revered and untouchable institution. However, when he was alive he was probably seen as a talented and bizarre craftsman, and was a commoner among commoners. In a note he left, he wrote he intended to live until 120 years, as that was the time he believed necessary to master his craft to a satisfactory degree. I love how Sugiura gave us this very human portrayal of a man as talented as somehow obsessed and selfish to the extent of neglecting his own daughter, O-Nao. We know absolutely nothing about historical O-Nao, and her blindness is Sugiura's invention. And yet another touch of her genius: a man who is dedicating his entire life to visual arts has a daughter who cannot understand his world, and represents everything he is scared of.

Do you see any connection between ukiyo-e and today's Japanese manga and animation industry?

HARA Ukiyo-e printmaking and animation do indeed share many similarities in the production process, starting from the fact they are the end result of teamwork, rather than the creative effort of a single artist. Edo period publishers were very similar to anime producers: they picked the subject, selected the staff, took care of marketing. The final product was intended for mass replication, without an "original." However, I believe that affluence of information is strictly connected with a loss in creativity. The word "ukiyo" also indicated the transient and ephemeral nature of our world. This is why that age saw an enduring creative momentum we could hardly expect to occur again today. Hinako Sugiura once described the Edo period as "beautiful, gentle and foolish." Something of that world has survived until our days, and we are standing on the same ground our Edo ancestors did, yet there is so much we have lost.



ABOUT KEIICHI HARA

Keiichi Hara was born in Gunma Prefecture in 1959. After joining studio Shin-ei Animation in 1982, he worked extensively on popular family TV shows, such as *Doraemon* and especially *Crayon Shin-chan*, for which he initially served as episodic director from 1992, and later as series director from 1996 to 2004. He also scripted ten *Crayon Shin-chan* movies, directing six. The 2001 *Shin-chan* feature film, entitled *Crayon Shin-chan: Impetuous! The Adult Empire Strikes Back* earned wide critical praise, and raised his profile. The following year's *Crayon Shin-chan: Brilliant! The Great Battle of the Warring States* was recommended by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and won five national awards. Hara then shifted to independent filmmaking, pursuing more personal projects. His first directorial effort of this new phase was *Summer Days with Coo* (2007), a bittersweet tale of a water imp awakening in present-day Japan after a 200-year sleep, and striving to cope with a new reality where his world, and his kind, no longer exist. Awarded at the Japan Academy Prizes, *Coo* gave Hara international recognition as an auteur filmmaker, particularly in France. This reputation was confirmed in 2010 with his next directorial effort, *Colorful*, a film tackling the theme of teenage suicide in a dysfunctional family. *Colorful* was greeted with the Jury's Special Distinction and the Audience Award at Annecy 2011. Hara's directing is highly praised for the meticulous representation of interaction between characters, and not surprisingly, he admires classic Japanese filmmakers such as Yasujiro Ozu and Keisuke Kinoshita. To the latter, he dedicated his first live-action movie in 2013, *Dawn of a Filmmaker: The Keisuke Kinoshita Story*. In 2015 he was awarded with the Anime d'or for his achievements in the animation industry at the Tokyo Anime Awards 2015. The same recognition was conferred the year before to Isao Takahata. His latest directorial effort, *Miss Hokusai*, depicts a troubled family relationship between ukiyo-e master Hokusai and his little-known yet highly talented daughter O-Ei. He does not own a computer or a mobile phone.

KEIICHI HARA: MAIN FILMOGRAPHY

2001 Crayon Shin-chan - The Adult Empire Strikes Back <i>(director, screenwriter, storyboard)</i>	2002 Crayon Shin-chan - The Battle of the Warring <i>(director, screenwriter, storyboard)</i>	2007 Summer Days with Coo <i>(director, screenwriter, storyboard)</i>	2010 Colorful <i>(director, storyboard)</i>	2013 Dawn of a Filmmaker: The Keisuke Kinoshita Story <i>(director, screenwriter, storyboard)</i>	2015 Miss Hokusai <i>(director, storyboard)</i>
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ABOUT PRODUCTION I.G

Established in 1987, Production I.G is one of the world's leading animation studios. For their storytelling and quality of animation, *Ghost in the Shell* (1995, Mamoru Oshii), *Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade* (1999, Hiroyuki Okiura), and *Blood: The Last Vampire* (2000), have earned critical accolades in Japan and around the world. *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, directed by Mamoru Oshii in 2004, became the first Japanese animation feature ever to compete for the coveted Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. In 2008, Mamoru Oshii's animated feature film *The Sky Crawlers* was nominated for the Golden Lion at the 65th Venice Film Festival and won 3 awards at Sitges thereafter. Hiroyuki Okiura's *A Letter to Momo* (2012), which had its world premiere at the Toronto Film Festival, was Best Animated Feature Film at the New York Int'l Children's Film Festival and at the 6th annual Asia Pacific Screen Awards. Mizuho Nishikubo's *Giovanni's Island* (2014) garnered 15 international awards, including Annecy, Fantasia and the Chicago International Children's Film Festival. Keiichi Hara's *Miss Hokusai* (2015) won the Jury Award at Annecy 2015, three awards at Fantasia 2015, and the Best Animated Feature Film at the 2015 Asia Pacific Screen Awards.



ABOUT GKIDS

GKIDS is the distributor of award-winning feature animation for both adult and family audiences. The company has received eight Best Animated Feature Academy Award® nominations – the most for an independent distributor – with these acclaimed films:

- *The Secret of Kells* (2010)
- *A Cat in Paris* (2012)
- *Chico & Rita* (2012)
- *Ernest & Celestine* (2014)
- *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* (2015)
- *Song of the Sea* (2015)
- *Boy and the World* (2016)
- *When Marnie Was There* (2016)

GKIDS also handles North American theatrical distribution for the Studio Ghibli library of films, one of the world's most coveted animation collections with titles *Spirited Away*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Grave of the Fireflies* and others.

www.gkids.com

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