

Angouleme 2018



Angouleme is a medieval, walled town in the Southern France region of Bordeaux. The old town dates back to Roman times where it was a regional capital. Now it is home to about 50,000 inhabitants and another 60,000 spread out over a 15 km region surrounding the main city. It is also home to the most famous comic convention in Europe.



I attended the convention for the first time this year and hope to share with you my impressions and experience.

First of all, here is a bit more information about the city



and its culture of comics. Angouleme is home to the Angouleme Comics Festival which was celebrating its 45 anniversary this year (2017). It is the main event in European comics

and collecting fandom and for publishers. Unlike larger US conventions there is no sign of movie productions, wrestlers, movie stars and the likes, it is all just comics (Bande-Dessinee – BD for short), publishers, art

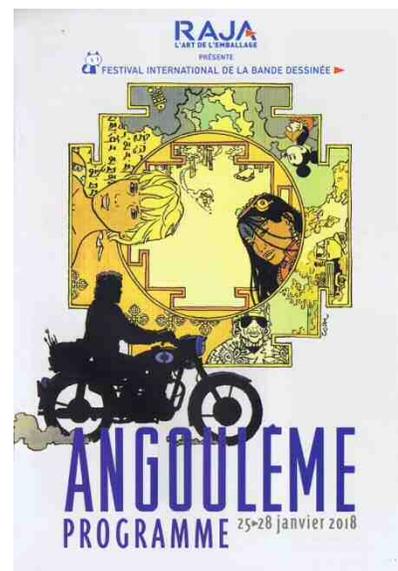
exhibitions, fans and artists. Angouleme is a city that lives comics 365 days a year. The main streets are named after comic creators like Herge and Goscinny. The street signs are made in the design of comic word bubbles.



A giant bust of Herge dominates the main street and many pieces of street art with comic themes are scattered throughout the city.

Many large murals and paintings of comic related themes painted are scattered around the city and even simple things like garbage cans, utility boxes, mailboxes and guard rails are painted with comic themes

Like Lucca, there is the juxtaposition of the new comics against a mediaeval background. The city boasts a large museum dedicated to comics and comic art which has a great permanent exhibit as well as multiple changing exhibits.



There is a comic artist's school, a school for manga and a school for video game design within the city. The main body that registers comics published in France also resides in Angouleme. Although the city hosts many festivals over any given year, the comic

festival is the largest and is embraced by the city and its citizens.



I had always heard it was hard to attend this convention because hotels were all booked up and transportation was not easy. It is true that the hotels in the main comic area are all booked and even for several miles around the city. I don't know if I just got lucky but I started looking 4 weeks before the convention and found several rooms and flats available on AirBNB. I ended up in a room in a family home a short 8 minute walk from the main area of the convention for 50 euros a night. Getting to Angouleme was incredibly easy too. There is a direct train from Charles DeGalle airport in Paris to Angouleme. It is a high speed train that travels at 300 km/h and so the trip takes just under 3 hours. Tickets for the festival were easily available on line even a month before the show. I don't know if they sold out later but it didn't seem to be an issue. So, every barrier that I had imagined that would prevent me from attending was easily overcome and I was set.



The impetus for me to go this year included a few things. The first was that I had some friends going. While in Tokyo and hanging out with the TCAF (Toronto Comics Art Festival) guys, they had mentioned that two of them might be going to Angouleme. The second was that this year at Angouleme there was to be a large Osamu Tezuka exhibit, the first of its kind outside of Japan. If that



wasn't enough, a large Naoki Urasawa exhibit was being arranged for the first time anywhere. As soon as I got back from Tokyo in December I started thinking about the January trip. Also, the CFA-APA discussion board helped push me over into going with a talk about getting together in Charlotte for Heroes. I was lamenting that travelling to Paris was cheaper at times than travelling to Heroes. That got me thinking about Paris and then I just said I am going to do it and I did.



My modus operandi is to usually try and avoid the busiest days at conventions and I have found this approach has

worked well in the past. I arrived on the Wednesday



midday with official opening on the Thursday. Like Lucca, the festival is spread all over the old city. There



are multiple large Pavilions and a dozen other venues including Museums and theatres that are utilized. Things were not open on the Wednesday and lots of last minute preparation was going on. There was a palpable excitement in the damp

January air. It was sunny that day although the festival is notorious for the rain that is typical of this time of year in the South of France. It rained more on than off for the rest of the festival. I walked the city, spotted locations I wanted to return to when the Festival was running, saw the sights, walked the city walls and down to cross the river to the Comic Art Museum. The river had flooded its banks and the comic museum is along the river bank but was safely above the water level although the surrounding parks and walkways were all underwater. The museum was still setting up for the festival and so I decided to come back another day during the festival. I went back to my room and got some



rest for an early start the next day. I had lovely dinner with the host family which I didn't expect.

I only had a regular badge/pass until later in the show when my TCAF friends got me an exhibitor badge. So this meant standing in line with everyone else to get into pavilions. The only place they check badges is entering the actual pavilions and exhibits, the rest of the city is free to



roam in. Lucca was similar to this although there were gated entrances to the main city there. I choose to start in the Manga Pavilion only because it was close to where I entered the festival and I knew I wanted to get in and out of that one quickly. I stood in line for about 45 minutes before going in and

then once inside I saw a line for Urasawa. I knew he had a big exhibit at the festival but I didn't think he would actually be in attendance. Not only that, he was signing later. I got in line for the signing as this seemed like a once in a lifetime opportunity... the kind of things you tell grandkids about. As the



number of people who lined up for a signing outnumbered capacity, they capped the line after an hour and had a lottery system so 50 people could get a

dedication. I go lucky. I got to meet Urasawa, shake his hand, get a dedication, say domo arigato in person and get a picture with him. He was like a rock star there. He



came with entourage of 2 people carrying heavy filming cameras, another with a sound boom, another carrying other equipment and 3 or 4 handlers/guards. When he walked in, there was more fanfare than I had ever seen given to any other comic artist. Meeting Urasawa was enough to make the whole trip worthwhile. There were a few other Manga artists in attendance but not the things I had read.



I moved on to the Urasawa exhibit which was nearby in a gallery. I spent about 2 hours there looking at what I would estimate as about 300 pages of his artwork. The exhibit was well curated and set up, unlike any other comic art

exhibit I had seen before. This is the hallmark of Angouleme exhibitions, the brilliant and meticulous curation. I'll discuss that more with examples later on. In addition to going over his career with examples from his most important Manga, there were parts of the exhibit exploring themes in his works. There was also a very nice catalog produced which I bought despite it being in French. Another common theme with Angouleme exhibits are the beautiful catalogs that are produced. I came home with 4 this time and I hope that I will be able to get some friends to help me acquire more in the future for the years I am not able to attend.



After the Urasawa exhibit I went on to several other Pavilions and then to one of the main city art galleries to see the Tezuka Exhibit. I spent 3 hours here and returned the next day for a second time. This was truly the most outstanding presentation and retrospective I have seen of any artist in any art gallery anywhere in the world. Truly an inspired curation and one that I will likely talk more about in a future CFA-APA article as it has further inspired me to write about Tezuka and his genius. As great as I thought Tezuka was going into this exhibit, it changed my way of thinking about him but suffice to say he is unparalleled by any European or North American comic artist ever in terms of



design and pushing the medium. The catalog from this exhibit is probably my favorite item I returned with. I spent a lot of the day on my feet and forgot to have lunch.

I visited with Fredric and Marc Mokken in one of the dealers tents for some time. I have met Marc a few times



and so it was catching up with him but Frederic is a Belgian dealer I had only spoken to on line and so this was our first in person meeting. These were the only two original art dealers at the entire show and I am told that



many of the bigger galleries stopped setting up about a decade ago. The dealer pavilion was filled with booths selling toys, figures, posters, prints, vintage comics and



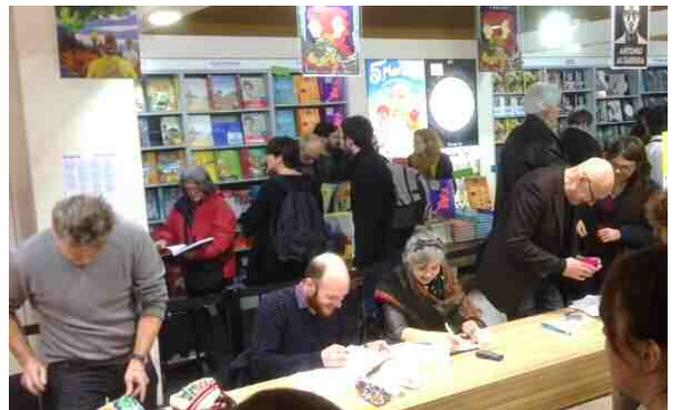
the likes. It was fun to see so many Herge related items I had not seen before. I also went to the International Pavillion and saw the scores of publishers from around the world promoting their comics and books. It was really



eye opening to see so many creators from all over. A bit of a funny story. I was to meet up with an online friend Germund who said he would be at the Finnish/Nordic comics booth some of the time. When I was there, I stopped to ask for him but with too much of a language barrier, they kept sending me to the Deutch/German comic booth. This happened twice and finally I gave up and meeting up with Germund will have to wait until another time.



I went and had a beer after that as the day was coming to a close. I then met up with the TCAF guys and had two more beers. French beers are served large and have higher alcohol content than the beers I am use to. I was drunk for the first time in decades and so was miserable for dinner which I didn't touch and I called it an early night.



On the Friday, I got up early to have breakfast with another French friend and collector. We met in a little

bistro, Le Chat Noir, which is a local landmark just across the street from one of the main pavilions. After that, I went and saw the rest of the exhibits. In total there were



over a dozen large exhibits in all the galleries, historic venues and at the main comic art museum. In the main history museum they had 3 exhibits including one called



Casanova which featured art by many artists including Liberatore, Manara and others on display with relics and old masters painting next to each other in one exhibit. On other floors they had other exhibits. I think that was truly the thing that was most impressive was the quality and number of exhibitions.

Last year's Grand Prix winner was Cosey and they did a stunning exhibit of his work. I was not previously familiar with his work but I quickly became a fan. Even at the train station, they had large billboards celebrating Cosey and it is his art that is on the cover of the program for Angouleme this year. The Grand Prix winner this year is Richard Corben and so next year there will be a large exhibit and catalog of his work. Perhaps for some of you, this might be a reason to attend. I did make it down to the main comic art museum there and enjoyed their regular collection which was set up in display cases that wind through a large room like a snake. Several special exhibits were also pretty cool to see. I saw easily over 2000 pieces of artwork in those 2 days. I think I took as many picture and you have seen and will see more in this article. I met up with my TCAF friends again for dinner and went back



to my room while they stayed out to meet up with some publishers at a party. I am getting old and I had a busy next day planned.

I got up early the next morning and caught the first train to Paris. It was Saturday morning and I managed to get myself to three of the more than half dozen comic art galleries in the city. I started at Daniel Maghen's near the flooded Siene River. I spend most of the morning here before rushing off to Gallerie Octopus just up the street. I then took a subway trip up to Montmartre where



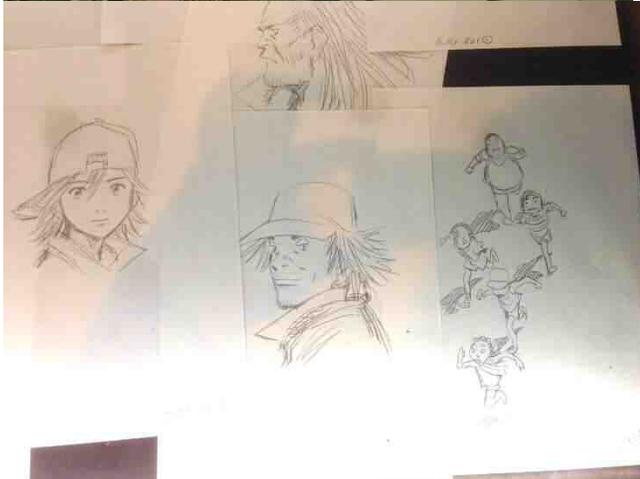
I was staying and meeting up with two French collectors for a nice lunch. From there I went with one of the collectors to Galerie 9eme and then on to another collectors apartment. We had a great time looking at their collection and just talking about art. I met a kindred spirit in that we both collect everything and he is the first person I have met that collects strip art, North American comic art, indie art, manga and some illustration art. We were instant friends. After a few hours there I headed back to the Moulin Rouge and the hotel I was staying at. That evening I walked up to Sacre Couers to look over Paris at night and then went back to my hotel for an early trip to the airport and home the next day.

I packed light on purpose, only a backpack and a carry on size suitcase so that I would not be able to buy too much. I still managed to come home with the 4 catalogs I bought and few B-D tomes. If I could read French better, I'd have loaded up on a lot more material that has never been published in English. Every one of these trips and encounters with other collectors opens my eyes to whole new parts of the hobby and broadens my horizons. I learn about new artists and get to meet new collectors who are open to sharing their collections. I have decided that is how I am going to augment my collecting of comic art by collecting experiences and friends around the world. I have already started to this in some ways by flying to Chicago for 2 days and during that time setting up time to hang out and look at several local collectors collections including those of former, possibly new future and current CFA-APA members. While in Croatia, I met up with collecting friends for d

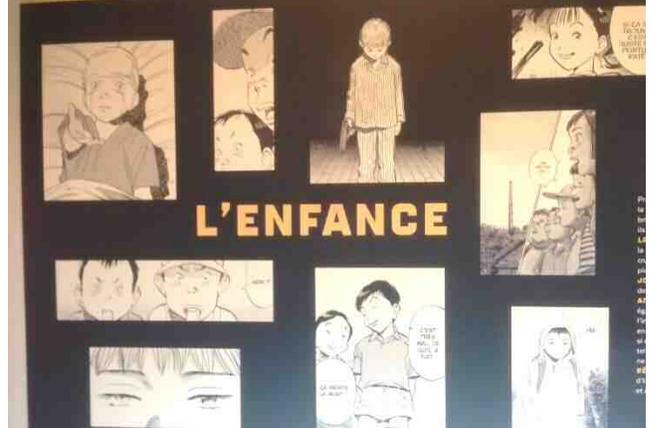
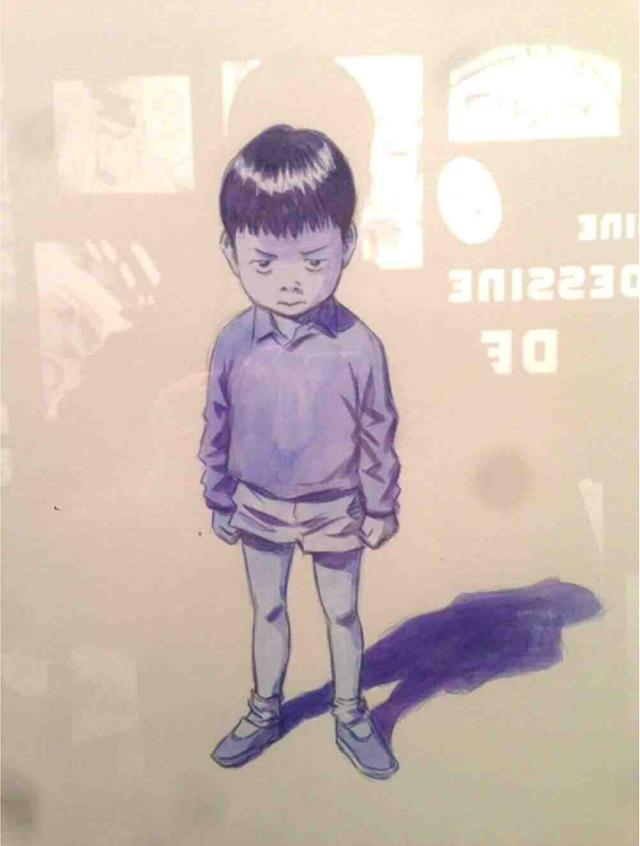
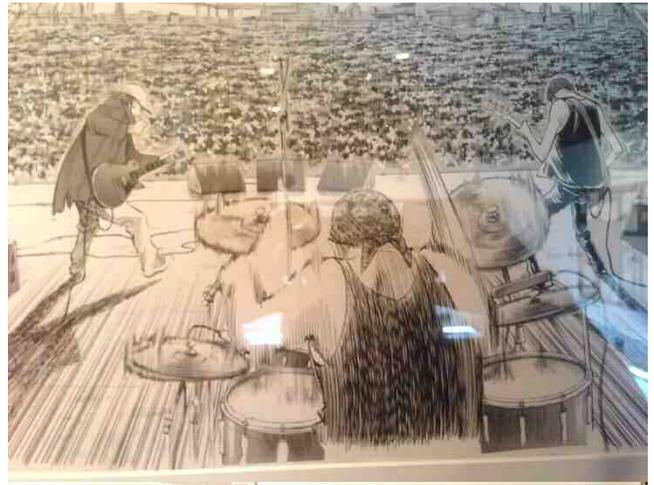
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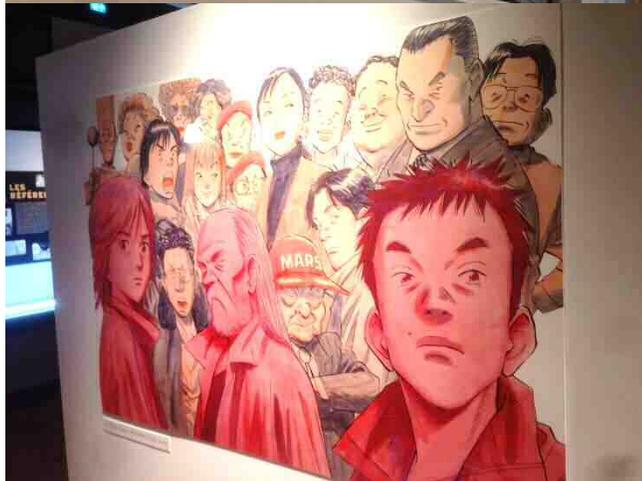
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Pictures of the Urasawa Exhibition

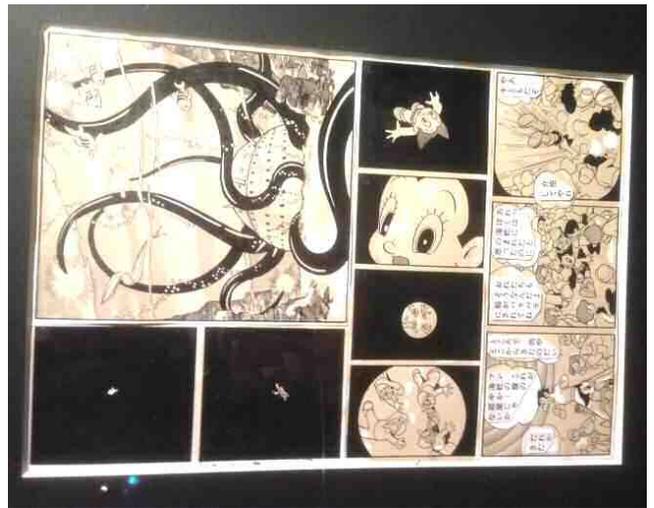
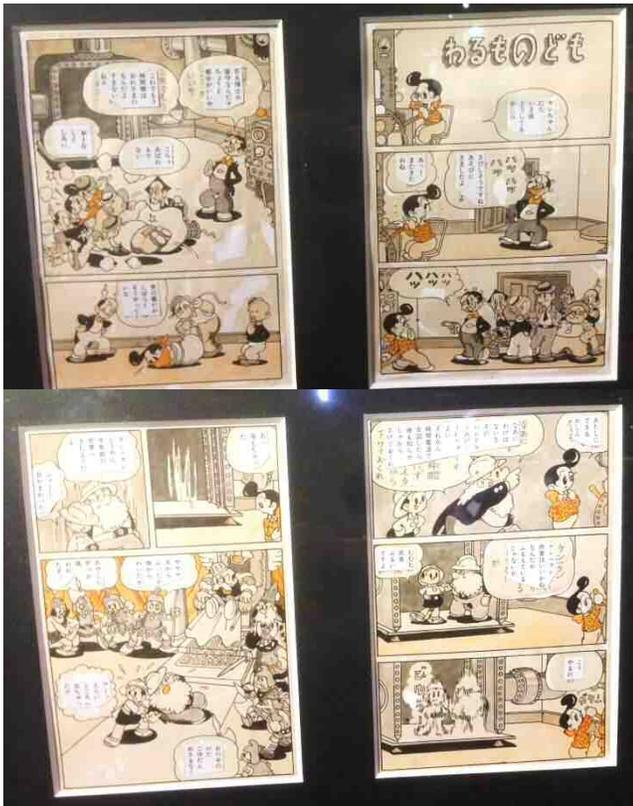
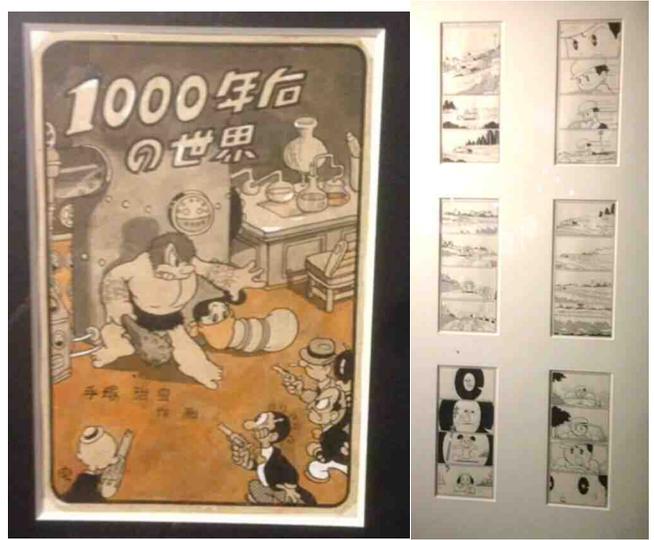


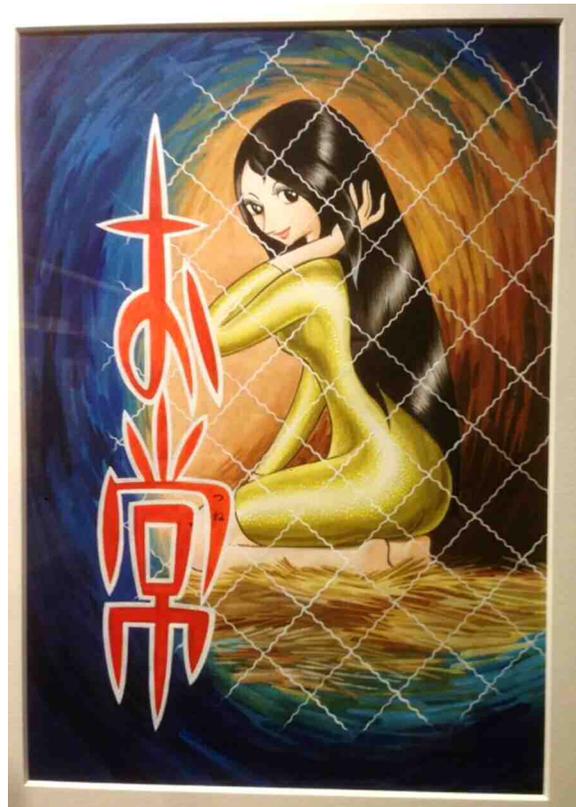
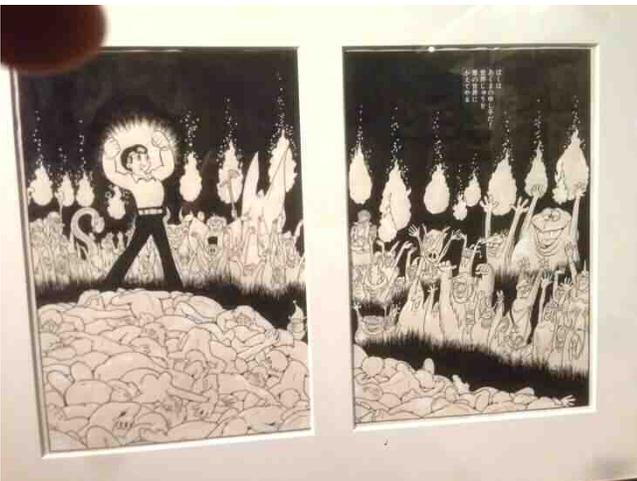
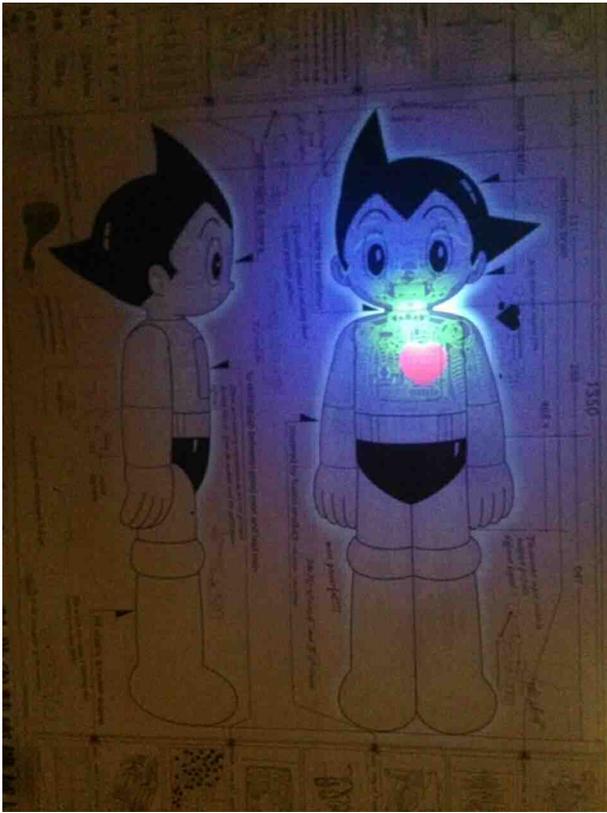


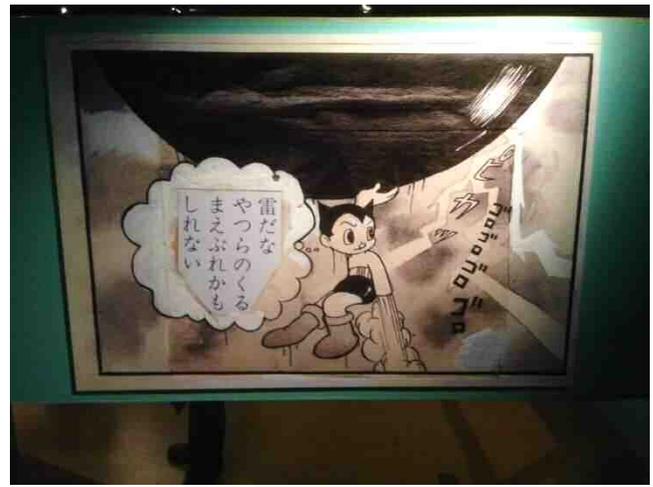
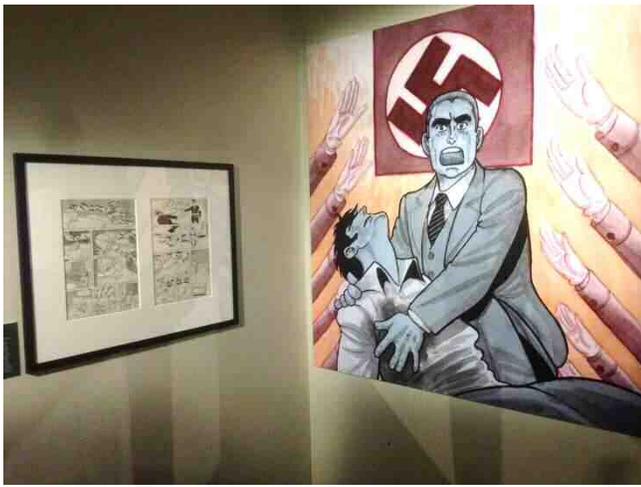




I took over 300 pictures of this exhibition and brought home the catalog. I am still in awe of what I saw. I believe the artist still owns every page of every manga he has drawn. The works were grouped by the manga initially and dozens of pages from each series he worked on. All of the most important pages were here. If you are familiar with his work and had read the manga there were images that were literally heart stopping and jaw-dropping. In addition to the art from series on the wall, there were many prelim pages, color drawings, sketches, concept pieces, wall murals and a life-sized friend statue. Parts of this exhibit also dissected out different aspects of Urasawa's art and themes. This was truly a well-presented exhibition and a fitting tribute to a modern manga deity. If you are interested in reading some Urasawa, I'd suggest 20th Century Boys and Monster. The only thing better I saw in Angouleme was the mind-blowing Tezuka exhibit.







I have seen some beautiful retrospectives and comprehensive exhibits of comic artists and fine artists all over the world. The Tezuka exhibit with works from the Tezuka Museum in Japan was among the best shows I have ever seen. I went in with a very strong knowledge of Tezuka's art and very high reverence for his work. I came out so thoroughly impressed with not only what I saw but how it was presented. I learned so much and my appreciation of just how innovative and important Tezuka was increased exponentially. I had already planned to write an article on him one day but there were such interesting ideas and themes presented in addition to the overview of his work that I have a lot more to think about. I also came home with the hardcover catalog from this show. It is interesting to note that this catalog is the only time Tezuka original art has been reproduced untouched. I heard from the gallerist that it was a fight with the Tezuka Museum to allow them to print the original art pages in an untouched manner. The Museum in Japan presents the art in its raw form but when printed, it is altered to remove the mistakes and corrections. This was truly a once in a lifetime, game changing experience.



Angouleme Comic Strip Musuem



Corto Maltese statue on bridge with museum in background







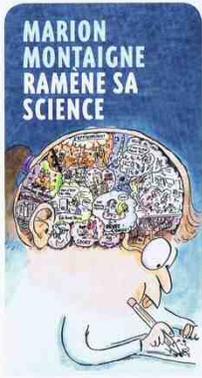
The museum is a large building that is outside of the old city and down the escarpment from the rest of the festival. Along the steep climb down there are several venues that were hosting films and exhibitions related to the comic festival. The museum is on the shore of a river and there is a bridge with a Corto Maltese statue that you may cross to arrive there. There are access points from other streets as well but when I was there all of France was having some flooding so the banks of this river had overflowed and many of the walking paths were submerged by several meters of water. The museum was up high enough to be well out of danger. In the main foyer of the museum there was an exhibition or competition of young, budding comic artists divided into age groups. I suspect they may be from a local comic school but perhaps just local students in the region as well. Some very impressive art was on display in age grouped displays. The museum has a main, permanent exhibition space which is a large area with a winding showcase that spirals and snakes through the room making for ample and interesting displays of comic art. Although a lot of it is European there were certainly a lot of North American art there as well. The main special

exhibition space was filled with Alix: L'art de Jacques Martin which was a long running Franco-Belgian comic with a Roman backdrop. I was not familiar with the comic, art or artist but it was a magnificent display. They also had a feature of Islamic artists and comics from the middle east which was very well done. No artists I knew but some very interesting, provocative and emotional art and comics were on display. Certainly a whole new world to discover.

Pictures of Other Exhibitions



<p>COSEY UNE QUÊTE DE L'ÉPURE</p>	<p>L'ART DE NAOKI URASAWA</p>	<p>OSAMU TEZUKA MANGA NO KAMISAMA</p>
<p>11 HÔTEL SAINT SIMON du 25 au 28 janvier</p>	<p>7 ESPACE FRANQUIN du 25 au 28 janvier</p>	<p>10 MUSÉE D'ANGOULÊME du 25 janvier au 11 mars</p>
<p>ALIX L'ART DE JACQUES MARTIN</p>	<p>EMMANUEL GUIBERT, LE DESSIN COMME ÉCRITURE</p>	<p>FAIRY TAIL</p>
<p>19 MUSÉE DE LA BANDE DESSINÉE du 25 janvier au 13 mai</p>	<p>15 VAISSEAU MOEBIUS du 25 au 28 janvier</p>	<p>18 QUARTIER JEUNESSE du 25 au 28 janvier</p>



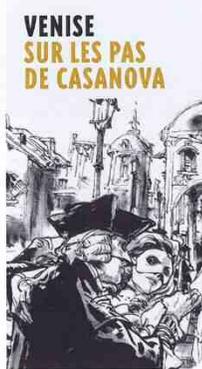
21 L'ALPHA MÉDIATHÈQUE
du 25 au 28 janvier



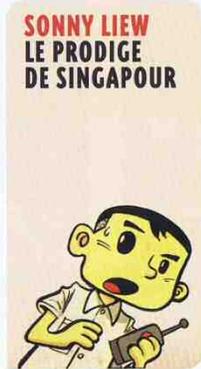
13 PARVIS DE L'HÔTEL DE VILLE
du 25 au 28 janvier



10 ESPACE FRANQUIN
du 25 au 28 janvier



10 MUSÉE D'ANGOULÈME
du 25 janvier au 11 mars



8 THÉÂTRE D'ANGOULÈME
du 25 au 28 janvier



17 PAVILLON JEUNES TALENTS®
du 25 au 28 janvier





There were over a dozen total exhibits and for me that was the highlight of the convention. Well-presented and amply illustrated exhibitions showcasing artists from around the world. Some of the venues were truly remarkable too being ancient cellars or having comic art in museums next to the art of fine masters. It was all a bit overwhelming and I saw more art in those 3 days that I think I have ever seen in my life elsewhere. I know a lot of collectors go to get dedications in books which is the equivalent of us getting sketches although in general there is not charge in Europe for this other than the purchase of a book. The lines and process were too daunting for me this time around but I do plan on returning in the future and hopefully will be able to get catalogs for the exhibitions I am not able to attend. Angouleme left a very positive impression on me and it is my favorite comic convention in the world. I leave you with one more image, a booth in one of the dealer pavilions that sold almost exclusively Corto Maltese prints.

