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 the creator of Alice in Wonderland

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Lolita in the Media:

KANON WAKESHIMA

Beautiful voice. Elegant fashion. Cello playing from the heart. That can only be the one and only Kanon Wakeshima, one of Japan's newest rising stars. Since the release of her debut album, "Shinshoku Dolce," in February of 2009 Wakeshima has been busy making her international presence known with performances at the Japan Expo in Paris and Baltimore's Otakun. Her songs still doll and Suna no Oshiro were featured in the anime series "Vampire Knight."

With upcoming concerts set for Tokyo its time to take a listen to the masterful interplay of cello and voice from someone who is carving out a style of music all her own. Kanon Wakeshima was kind enough to give an interview to Andrew from J-Pop World.





Let's start with the February release of your debut album, "Shinshoku Dolce," in both Europe and Japan. Can you tell us how you felt that week?

I never thought that I could release my CD internationally, so I was surprised and at the same time also very happy that many people came to see my show even though it was my first overseas performance.

How would you describe the album's musical style?

Mixture of classical, strings, and Electronica music.

How long had you been working on the songs?

It varies on each song, but it took about a year to finish the whole album.

Who worked on the album with you?

Mr. Mana produced the album.

There is a charming interaction between your voice and the cello in songs like Shinshoku Dolce and still doll. Do you consider yourself to be a cello player first, or a singer?

I started to play the cello first, so I'm a cellist first as a career. But I feel like I need much more practice in both as a cellist, and as a singer.

The video for the still doll features you reaching for a wedding dress with a chain on your leg. Can you tell us the story behind the video?

It might look like a wedding dress, but it's actually not. The concept of this video is about a girl who is confined in a little room remembering how free she was at one time.

How comfortable are you in front of a camera and crew?

I'm pretty comfortable. I usually don't get that nervous.

Your song skip turn step has an almost "jump rope beat" to it. Can you tell us more about the song?

I like how you expressed it as "jump rope"! Even though jump ropes don't appear in the lyrics (laughs). The theme of this song is adolescence, and it's about playing on the rooftop under the sunny rain. It's based on my own experience.

Can you tell us what types of things inspires your songwriting?

I get a lot of inspiration from books I grew up reading: The Grimm Fairy Tales, Hans Christian Andersen, Mother Goose... I like how these stories are very cute/sweet but also have a scary element to them.

Do you have a favorite song on the album to play live?

I have special feelings towards each of these songs, so it's very difficult to choose one.

On July 4-5 you performed in Paris at this year's Japan Expo. What were your expectations of the event going in?

I was worried if people would come out for the show, but I was happy to see many people coming out!

What lasting memory will you take away from the experience?

It was just a great experience to perform in such a big venue in Paris. Since I performed at the fashion show, it was interesting to not only perform inside the usual square stage, but on the runway as well.

Do you enjoy traveling, or are you a stay-at-home person?

I like staying at home. I enjoy traveling as well, but I'm not a big fan of airplanes...

In July you also performed at Baltimore's Otakon. Can you tell us about it?

Before coming to Baltimore, I was afraid if I had any fans here in America or not, but I was so happy to see so many of them. I got to meet many of the high quality cosplayers during the singing session, and it was just fun watching them. I was also invited to a tea party, and everyone there was surprisingly shy, and I thought that was very cute! They were all very elegant too.

What about the US surprised you the most?

The food portions are all so big! (lol) I also saw a Pyramid Head just walking down the street! That was a surprise!

Was Baltimore anything like you were expecting?

I had an image of Baltimore being surrounded with nature, but there were more buildings in the city than I was thinking, and all of them were beautiful.

Your album debuted in the US on June 30. How do you feel about your music getting out there to an international audience?

Just like when I released my album in Europe, I was surprised and honored to be able to release the album even in America.

Let's get to know a little more about your past. Can you tell us about the hometown you grew up in?

A peaceful place surrounded by nature.

How did your relationship with the cello get started?

It was actually my parents. They decided to teach their kid





(whether it was a girl or a boy) the cello even before I was born.

Were cello lessons something you always loved or were they something you felt you had to do?

I actually thought about quitting the cello many times, but I had such a great teacher who not only taught me about the cello, but about life in general. There were times when I've fought with music and almost hated music, but it was my teacher that made me continue playing to this day.

Have you had one particular cello that has a special meaning to you?

Each cello is very important for me. The current brown cello is the first one I've ever bought. Before that I was using rental cellos. I used to play the smaller cello, because the "regular" cellos are too big for kids. As we grow older, the cello gets bigger, and the smaller ones gets passed to the younger kids. That's why I've been treating each one of them very importantly.

You've said that you used to be a bit "hana yori dango" (dumplings before flowers) while growing up. Looking back now, what advice would you give yourself when you were still a kid?

You should study a little bit more. (lol)

Who have been your greatest musical inspirations?

A Japanese jazz singer called Mayumi Kojima. I was very inspired when I heard her music for the first time. Emily Simon (from France) and Lady Gaga are also some of my favorite artists too.

When and why did you decide to make music your career?

Music is something that I've been around since I was 3, so it was very natural for me to continue and pursue that.

What did your family think about your decision?

My parents weren't surprised even after my debut. They've been always supportive with my decisions since I was little.

Did you ever feel you had to choose between being a singer or cello player?

I never did.

As if music weren't enough, you are also a skillful artist. Can you tell us how you first got into drawing?

Because there was a paper in front of me. (laughs) I just naturally began drawing when I was little.

How different of a feeling do you get from drawing versus playing the cello or singing?

Drawing is just really a hobby for me. It's like self-satisfaction. Music is really a part of my expression, so it can be very tough sometimes. But perhaps I'm doing it because I want someone to listen to it.

Did your Paris or Baltimore trips inspire any drawings?

For some reason, it made me want to draw a crab. (laughs)

What are your plans for the rest of the year?

I have my own concert coming up on August 9th in Tokyo, and I'm also working on my new song, so I hope to get that out this fall.

Do you have a final message to all your fans?

Otakon was really fun! If I ever get a chance to perform overseas again, I would love to go anywhere, so I hope to see you then!

Interview by Andrew

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Although the name 'Gothic' Lolita alludes to goth fashion as a whole, the style is primarily influenced by victorian inspired goth style and not cyber goth or industrial style.



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A Gothic Lolita outfit like all Lolita styles, is very modest in today's standards. As with other Lolita styles a Gothic Lolita outfit can usually be recognised by the bell-shaped skirt, and puff-sleeves. A Gothic Lolita outfit is usually comprised of black or rich dark colors such as burgundy, purple and navy. It is common for this style to involve details in complementary or contrasting colors, such as the infamous black and white coordination choice.

Makeup for this style can range from a light natural look to a dramatic smokey eye with a dark red lip depending on the outfit and occasion. A common mistake by beginners that is worth mentioning is the use of black lipstick and whiteface. Both whiteface and black lipstick take away from the elegance of the lolita style and should only be used as stage makeup as a general rule.

The term 'Gothic Lolita' is often confused with the term 'Elegant Gothic Lolita,' which was coined by the Japanese musician Mana to describe the clothes of his brand

Moi-Meme-Moitie.

An elegant Gothic Lolita, EGL or Gothic Lolita for short, is a Japanese teen or young adult who dresses in amazingly elaborate Gothic looking babydoll costumes. On the weekends these women walk the streets of Tokyo and Osaka and fill Yoyogi Park and Harajuku neighborhood where they pose for tourist's pictures and sit around looking pretty. They are beautiful, glamorous, doll-like manifestations of their favorite Visual Rock stars.

This subculture's physical look began around the fall of 1999 as a sort of French Maid meets Alice in Wonderland style and has expanded gradually to encompass many nuances in a Victorian Gothic look. Make no mistake – these women want nothing to do with our Western Gothic ways. They do not listen to our music and they are not Gothic in the American and European sense. (Don't worry there are Japanese Goths but they are just not a prominent mainstream subculture.)

The Lolita's music of choice, for the visuals and sometimes the sounds, is a version of Heavy Metal with gothic hints. Visual Kei or Visual Rock is a form of Japanese pop rock music where the musicians dress in elaborate costumes. Anything from a twinge of glam to

full blown female impersonation can be called Visual Rock. These artists feel they must dress up to act out their music. X Japan seems to be the band that started it all. Visual Rock is a blanket term that encompasses J-Rock or J-Pop.

J-Rock is not usually the music Gothic Lolita's listen to. J-Rock is very influenced by the American Heavy Metal Glam bands like Motley Crue. Gothic Lolitas want to emulate the Visual bands that dress the most feminine. There are male fans of all forms of V-Rock but men do not participate in the Gothic Lolita culture. Male fans are uninterested in looking feminine and it is the women who want to look like their idols.

Dir en Grey and Malice Mizer are the most popular and authentic of the bands the Gothic Lolitas follow. Malice Mizer's (pronounced Marisu Miseru) guitar player, Mana, is commonly given credit for starting the Gothic Lolita look. Sometimes he wears a kind of modern Victorian mourning style with large elaborate dresses, big hair, and dark make-up.

The amount of time, energy, and money all these people put into their appearance is truly amazing and inspiring at the same time.

In recent years, Japan has bred a youth culture with a passion for costume and dressing up. This is referred to as Cosplay or Costume Play and it has already made its way all across the world. (Most people Cosplay Anime characters.) Perhaps harkening back to the historic days of Kabuki, Japanese youth want to continue the tradition of escape through dress and style. The Gothic Lolita look is an amazing contrast of innocence and sexuality. The child-like physical look of young Japanese women contributes to this alluring illusion.

As we all know, the Japanese have some of the most interesting fetishes and sexual habits of any culture on Earth.

Female youth have long been exciting to older Japanese males and the innocence of looking like a child may appeal to these women because of the powerful sexual allure but also because it presents a way for them to escape growing up at least for the moments they are dressed in the Gothic Lolita style. The attention these women get must

validate them in some way; it must make them feel special. Or it could just be that they dress this way to be closer to their idols.





The French Maid look or Alice in Wonderland look of a white apron over a black babydoll dress was an original Gothic Lolita look. It is not seen as much now.

These dresses and skirts are worn with knee-high or thigh high stockings. Some times white with little bows and ruffles at the top or in black fishnet with holes and without. Mostly black opaque stocking material. Headdresses are a must. A small rectangular headband headdress made of ruffles, ribbons, and lace. Can be worn with a bow under the chin. It is worn at the crown of the head, just above where bangs are. Can be used to hold hairpieces in. Sometimes the headpiece can extend over the forehead like a small bonnet, this happens most often in white.

A small top hat worn askew on the head is sometimes seen.

Shoes are Mary Jane type platform heels or large platform shoes. Very chunky and clog-like.

Women wear long or short large curls on either side of the head, or a full head of curls ala Shirley Temple. Long straight hair worn sometimes with bangs is a common look as well. Many wear wigs and hairpieces to achieve these looks. Hair is mostly black but can be any shade of brown.

Little to no make-up is worn. The look requires a pale complexion, which many Japanese women already have. Any shade of red lipstick is fine with black eyelashes and a small amount of black eyeliner. Fresh faced and young.

Large pocketbooks are carried. Some are huge container-like suitcases in a variety of forms from the carpetbag to the circular hatbox. A parasol is a must on sunny days in the park. On occasion lace gloves and lace opera length arm warmers complete this look.

When the look begins to lean towards Victorian mourning, with long dresses and ghoully make-up, it is Visual Kei or Gothic and not Gothic Lolita. But the elegant Victorian look with a long skirt is still Lolita. The women who dress in the Gothic Lolita style do so only on weekends and for "Lives" or concerts. This is a form of escape for them; a way for them to look like their idols and to attract attention.

Trying to look young and elegant all at once is a purely Japanese phenomenon. Can you imagine today's American Teens emulating J-Lo and looking elegant doing it? I didn't think so. Possibly this Lolita look holds the same allure for them as does the "Romantic Goth", Victorian or Renaissance, style in the West. That allure of a more cordial and better dressed time in history. Or perhaps these young Japanese women are just following a trend to be a part of the conformity of a bigger crowd. Either way this style is a welcomed look in the American Gothic scene.

Kyshah Hell

**ANNA
SUI**



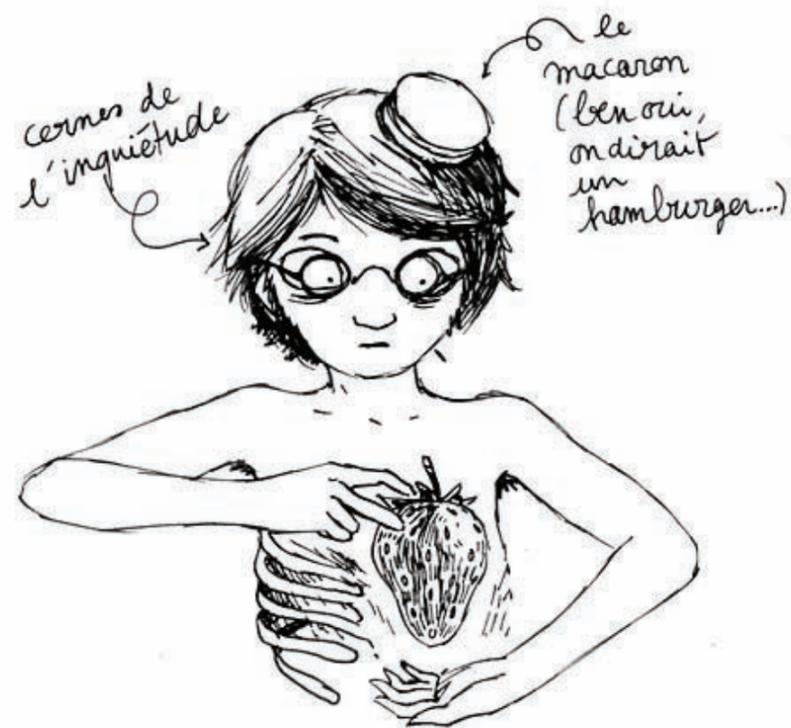


Chapter



FRANCOIS AMORETTI

THE OFFICIAL FRENCH CARTOONIST
OF LOLITA ENCHANTED WORLD



*mon docteur m'a diagnostiqué
une carence en fraises et macarons
qui pourrait m'être fatale...
si si !!!*



The Lolita spirit, it is not only for the feminine genre, but it may also appeal to men. Of those who have kept the soul of a child, tempted by the fantasy, beauty, and absurd... Of those whose eyes are smart enough to let beauty and good manners express themselves... Or perhaps, of those who definitely fell into the hole of the white rabbit. And if you are a man and an artist who has been doted by these sense, it let a place to creations with all elegance and finesse. A feature drawn by dream... Francois Amoretti, French illustrator and a now official Lolitas cartoonist, invites us to his world.





When did you start your career as an illustrator?

As an amateur, I started in high school. But my first start as a professional was published in Tokyo Classified a magazine for foreigners distributed for free in Japan, known today as Metropolis. But I fought over to make progress as my career was barely moving, and people around me seeing this type of career as strange. My first book, under a major company has only been published in 2009.

Since when did you notice you had a gift as an illustrator, were you pushed (family, friends) in that direction?

Since I was a kid, I was drawing. I always liked to draw. When I finally wanted to give a push to it, to make a career out of it, it has been difficult. Even if my motivation was strong, it was nonetheless constrained by people around me. My family never considered that being an illustrator was a real profession; my wife didn't like my drawings. And it took some time for me to get rid of them (laughs). Finally, the only person I've been ever pushed in that direction is my editor, Audrey Alwett. Then, my mother who finally understood that for me being an illustrator was a question of life or death, supported me with all of her heart.

What is your first success, and how were you discovered?

My first success was a little self-produced book, based on The Little Red Hood fairy tale by Charles Perrault. It was a small book of thirty pages, perfect to fit in a Lolita bag. 800 copies have been sold without any distribution, just through the internet and exhibitions I was participating. It is also thanks to this little book that I have been found out by Soleil editions, supported by Audrey Alwett, director of the Blackberry collection of Soleil Editions, and all her strength.

How did you come to Lolita? Why do you have a so pronounced interest for this world?

I've been drawing Lolitas for almost 20 years but I did not know they were called Lolitas when I started. It is only when I first went to Japan in 1999 that I meet with these young women in the streets of Tokyo and then

I realized that they were dressed up like in my drawings. Immediately, I intended to get closer to them but my Japanese was really not good enough at that time and I had to wait until 2005 or 2006 to really enter their community, thanks to my friends Yuka and Sachi from Kokusyoku Sumire. I like Lolitas; aesthetically, they are wonderful for drawing. But my fascination goes further; I love their expression of femininity, all elegance, all courtesy and dreamlike. But they are also a wonderful way to resist to the establishment with intelligence. They are the proof that one can oppose strength with finesse. Without forgetting it is an anti-establishment movement founded by women for women. Their ways of thinking, seeing things, living is really like thumbing one's nose at what all the medias and governments tries to make us believe.

Do you plan or did you have in the past some collaborations with Lolitas? Japanese? French? With other any illustrators?

I always actively participate to the organization in Kokusyoku Sumire French tours (2007, 2009, 2010). I attended to their album Gothlic, where I read poems. My son also participated! In my book, Gothic Lolita, I have had many collaborations with Japanese illustrators (Kozue Kuroki, Masaru Shichinohe Kari Miyaki, Kenichi Koyama, Cojimies Miyako, Natsuko Hamada, Garasu no Hikari to Kotorisya). In that same book, Kokusyoku Sumire have their own characters. For Little Red Hood, Maki from Angelic Pretty brought me help with her drawings, something she's doing again for the reissue of the same book. I like to work with Angelic Pretty for their clothing; to me, this brand seems to be the most hardcore of the sweet Lolita brands, and in a very graphic way. My Little Red Hood dresses up in



this brand, as my Sleeping Beauty (still in progress). I also try to set up some new project in France with Kira Imai.

What is your greatest source of inspiration... rather Japanese, rather French?

Both... As for the Lolita, indeed. Inspiration comes from the past of our old Europe (Rackham, Tenniel, Dulac, Boucher, Madame d'Aulnoy, Lewis Carroll, Grimm, Perrault, etc.) as much as contemporary Japan (Lolita fashion and movement, Kokusyoku Sumire, Kira Imai, Masaru Shichinohe, etc.).



What do you think of this rather strange phenomenon of Lolita: western young women and girls attracted by a Japanese Lolita which is actually inspired by our French Baroque and the English Victorian? Some kind of vicious or virtuous circle?

If it was a vicious circle, then it wouldn't last much longer ... but this is not the case. Japanese have put their finger on an aesthetic on which we use to sleep during our History classes. They reinterpreted it, updated it, giving it a new meaning. French girls loved it, certainly, but they are also start to be very active, French Lolita brands being created. But on this ground, there are common points which are fairy tales, dream and rebellion. And these are concepts that don't die. Whether you call it Lolita or something else! Like I said, I've been drawing Lolitas since I'm a teenager; it was just the expression of my passion for old tales, Rococo and Victorian, which I was reinterpreting. Lolita will change again, in its form, but the substance should remain the same, whether in Japan, in France or any other country: elegance, dreamlike, romanticism, freedom, femininity and rebellion.

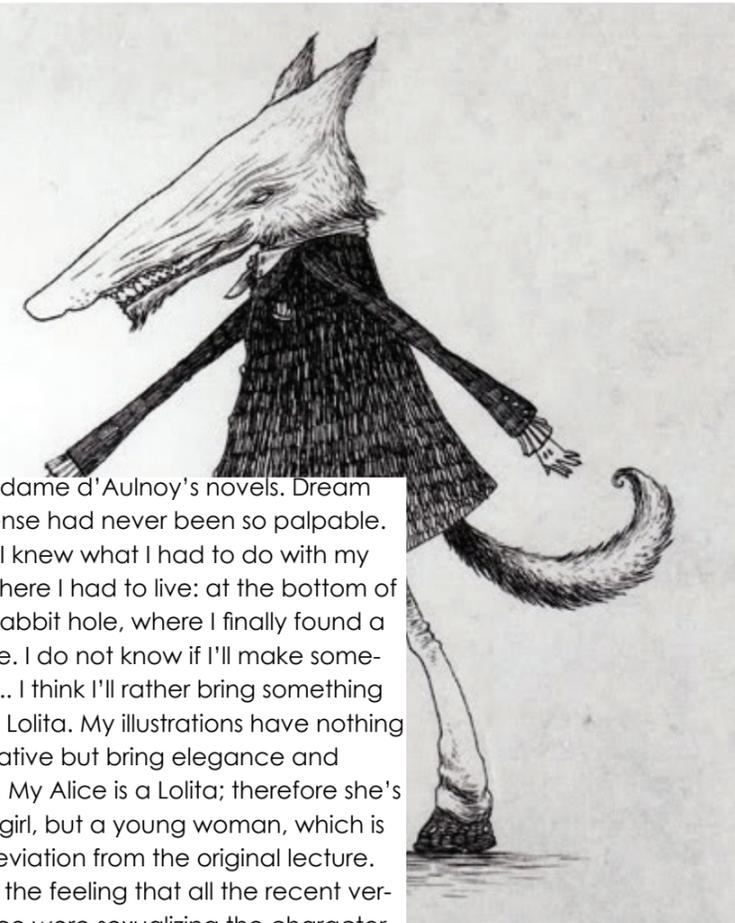


Your illustrated version of Alice in Wonderland is released in March 2010. I also know that it's your favorite book. Can you tell us about your relationship with the wonderful novel of Lewis Carroll? What new do you think you can bring?

Yes, the book comes out on March 23rd. Alice in Wonderland is actually my favorite book. Alice was my first real key to change the world. After reading it (I was about 11 years old), I have never stopped seeing life, the world in that same way. From there, I looked



also at Madame d'Aulnoy's novels. Dream and nonsense had never been so palpable. Therefore, I knew what I had to do with my life. And where I had to live: at the bottom of the white rabbit hole, where I finally found a sense to life. I do not know if I'll make something new... I think I'll rather bring something old. As the Lolita. My illustrations have nothing very innovative but bring elegance and sweetness. My Alice is a Lolita; therefore she's not a little girl, but a young woman, which is the only deviation from the original lecture. Also, I had the feeling that all the recent versions of Alice were sexualizing the character with extensively comics, manga and pop images. I'm going in the opposite direction: no sexualized character, a print and therefore antique look.



Your books are currently for French readers? Have you received any proposal to be published abroad? In Japan? In English?

I have no plans abroad... Although, Gothic Lolita should be distributed in Japan soon, but in its first national edition as the book was already a French/Japanese bilingual book.

Interview by Valerie Fujita

