

"Being Asian-American," says New York-based Barnes, "my family would travel east every several years on vacation and that's when I would bring back toys and comics. Because I didn't have much anime or manga stuff to play with or look at while at home in the U.S., I would have to find a creative way to fill in this void."

As a child, he copied images from old Japanese comic books and creating his own storyboards and scenarios. This childhood escapism fueled his creative drive years later when, as a frustrated art student, he decided to unlearn most of the classical drawing techniques he had absorbed in school. Instead, he began seriously painting the robot doodles that had turned him on in his youth.

However, the cross-cultural exchange at the heart of "Psionic Distortion" also works both ways. Tokyo-born graphic designer and collage artist Keiji Ito, known for his acid-inspired collage art of psychedelic flower gardens and motorways, says he has received no inspiration at all from the manga culture of his own country. The artist, who instead namedrops Americans like the film director Richard Fleischer and cartoonist Robert Crumb as his artistic influences, says he feels quite distanced from the whole global anime and manga boom.

"On the other hand, those glorious American cartoons and animated films I watched on TV as a child have had an enormous impact on me," says Ito. "I think it's that almost ecstatic sense of happiness and optimism I witnessed on the TV screen in my childhood that really messed up my brain today."

For exhibition-goers not yet exposed to the darker side of Japanese manga, though, "Psionic Distortion" may also prove to be a heavy visual experience that's both disturbing and enlightening.

"The term 'Psionic' refers to the superhuman powers many anime and manga characters possess, like the power exhibited by a monk or yoga master who is deep into his/her practice," Evans explains when asked about the show's title. "They sometimes claim that their third eye has awakened, and that quasi-mystical experience is what 'Psionic' is all about -- a deep and profound insight into the human condition."

Don't say you haven't been warned.

*"Psionic Distortion" runs Nov. 10-30 at SuperDeluxe (tel: [03] 5412-0515), a 5-minute walk from Roppongi Station on the Hibiya Line. For more information on the artists and related events, call SuperDeluxe or visit [www.super-deluxe.com](http://www.super-deluxe.com)*

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