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## L.A.'s Iconic Library Card Gets Street-Styled Makeover By L.A. Artist Gajin Fujita

Limited-edition library card now available  
at all 73 libraries citywide



*Pictured from left: Isabelle Lutterodt, Director of the Los Angeles Municipal Gallery, Department of Cultural Affairs; Gajin Fujita, artist; John F. Szabo, City Librarian; and Bich Ngoc Cao, President, Board of Library Commissioners.*

**LOS ANGELES** (April 12, 2019) – A street-styled makeover of L.A.'s iconic library card was unveiled today by City Librarian John F. Szabo and artist Gajin Fujita at the Central Library in downtown. The new, limited-edition card is now available, while supplies last, at all 73 locations of the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) citywide. The card's striking design blends imagery of traditional Japanese mythology and contemporary L.A. graffiti art.

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Peter Persic, Public Relations & Marketing Director

"I feel honored to contribute my artwork for this special edition library card," said Fujita, an East-L.A. native. "Growing up, my local library in Boyle Heights was the R. L. Stevenson Branch, and it was a sanctuary for my brothers and me. The librarian there who is also Japanese American, really looked out for me. And beyond the access to books, magazines and refuge – the library had A/C on hot days!"

The card's image is a detail of Fujita's painting "Guardian Angel," which features Kintaro, or Golden Boy, a mythical child known for his uncanny strength. Kintaro was a protector of the common folk, a champion of the people and is a symbol of bravery and courage. The composition is based on an ukiyo-e print by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi from 1868.

"To contemporize the imagery, I dressed Kintaro in a Dodgers jersey with a bandana wrapped around his neck," says Fujita. "I also added black marks beneath his eyes, like an athlete ready to compete. The panels are gilded with gold leaf and tagged by members of my graffiti crew K2S and other graffiti writers. I wanted to create a work that very much embodied the spirit of Los Angeles through my own experiences."

"We are thrilled to have local artist Gajin Fujita featured our library card," said City Librarian John F. Szabo. "His bold design perfectly complements the card's tremendous power. This is the only card that lets you access more than six million books and items in the library's collection, as well as download e-books and music, stream movies, get online homework help, earn a high school diploma, and much, much more—and all for free."

Fujita established himself on the streets of Los Angeles with graffiti crews KGB and K2S, but his earliest artistic influences were informed by his father, who was a painter, and his mother, a conservator of Japanese antiquities. Fujita continued his artistic pursuits by earning a BFA from Otis College of Art + Design, and his works are in institutions worldwide including the Getty Research Institute, UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

As a second-generation Japanese American, Fujita found himself drawn to the Japanese folkloric heroes and legends that he came to know through his parents,

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who immigrated to Los Angeles from Japan. These stories and traditions were an important part of his upbringing.

This is the Los Angeles Public Library's second limited-edition library card designed by an artist. The first was designed by Shepard Fairey and Cleon Peterson and released in 2016.

For more information visit [www.lapl.org/art-card](http://www.lapl.org/art-card).

A recipient of the nation's highest honor for library service—the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Los Angeles Public Library serves the largest and most diverse urban population of any library in the nation. Its Central Library, 72 branch libraries, collection of more than 6 million books, state-of-the-art technology accessible at [www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org), and more than 25,000 public programs a year provide everyone with free and easy access to information and the opportunity for lifelong learning.

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