



November 2007

**Major Takashi Murakami Retrospective Presented
At the Brooklyn Museum April 5 through July 13, 2008
Press Preview April 2**

The most comprehensive retrospective to date of the work of internationally acclaimed Japanese artist Takashi Murakami will be presented at the Brooklyn Museum from April 5 through July 13, 2008. The exhibition, © *MURAKAMI*, will include more than ninety works in various media that span the artist's entire career, installed in more than 18,500 square feet of gallery space.

The exhibition was organized by The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, where it will be on view through February 11, 2008. Following the Brooklyn presentation, which will be the only other United States venue, © *MURAKAMI* will travel to the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (October 27, 2008–January 4, 2009) and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (February–May 2009).

Born in Tokyo in 1962, Murakami is one of the most influential and acclaimed artists to have emerged from Asia in the late twentieth century, creating a wide-ranging body of work that consciously bridges fine art, design, animation, fashion, and popular culture. He received a Ph.D. from the prestigious Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, where he was trained in the school of traditional Japanese painting known as Nihonga, a nineteenth-century mixture of Western and Eastern styles. However, the prevailing popularity of anime (animation) and manga (comic books) directed his interest toward the art of animation because, as he has said, "it was more representative of modern day Japanese life." American popular culture in the form of animation, comics, and fashion are among the influences his work, which includes painting, sculpture, installation, and animation, as well as a wide range of collectibles, multiples, and commercial products.

Navigating between Japanese and American culture, Takashi Murakami blends the bright palette of pop, the flatness of anime, and the ominous dreams of surrealism. Drawing upon Japan's traditional lack of hierarchical distinction between fine art and craft, he has moved toward creating a new paradigm where synergies between fine art and pop culture create a new art form.

Like that of Andy Warhol or Jeff Koons, Murakami's canon, as well as his life, is referential of pop culture. His firm Kaikai Kiki, a name taken from the Japanese words for "bizarre" and "elegant", is based in Tokyo, Saitama, and New York. It has evolved into a highly complex corporation that assists in the production of

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Murakami's work, represents a stable of young artists, sponsors a Tokyo art fair, produces and promotes merchandise ranging from soccer balls to sticker sets, and develops collaborative projects.

The exhibition ©*MURAKAMI* explores the self-reflexive nature of Murakami's oeuvre by focusing on earlier work produced between 1992 and 2000 in which the artist attempts to explore his own reality through an investigation of branding and identity, as well as through self-portraiture created since 2000. Two works examining these subjects were a part of a group show *My Reality: Contemporary Art and the Culture of Japanese Animation*, presented at the Brooklyn Museum in 2001.

In 1993, in a continuing project to brand his own identity, Murakami created an alter ego named DOB, whose name was taken from a line made famous by the late Japanese comedian Yuri Toru that asked the existential question: *Dobojite dobojite?*, (Why? Why?) As the complexities of Murakami's examination of his own identity evolved, so did DOB, in painting and inflatable form, morphing from a strand of DNA to a balloon-like form with innocent eyes. The contrast of opposites is a recurring theme throughout Murakami's work: good and evil, sweetness and perversion, humor and darkness. Often work that seems bright and playful reveals a darker side upon close examination: the seemingly cheerful mushroom shapes that are ubiquitous in his work, for example, may be read as a reference to the mushroom clouds of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Among the works included in this large-scale survey tracing the trajectory of Murakami's artistic development are many of his acclaimed sculpture figures including the 23-foot-high *Tongari-kun* (2003-4); *Miss Ko2* (1997), a long-legged waitress who has become one of the artist's signature characters; *Hiropon* (1997), a Japanese girl jumping a rope created by milk spurting from her gargantuan breasts; *DOB in the Strange Forest*, in which a benign and innocent DOB figure encounters a group of menacing mushrooms; and *Second Mission Project Ko2* (2007), reprising the Miss Ko2 character, now transformed into a jet airplane. Among the paintings on view will be *Tan Tan Bo* (2001), as well as *Tan Tan Bo Puking—a.k.a. Gero Tan* (2002), in which DOB has evolved into a gigantic, sharp-toothed monster, with unknown substances oozing from his mouth; *Flower ball* (3D) (2002), a decorative work comprising dozens of Murakami's famous flowers; and *Superflat Jellyfish Eyes 1 and 2* (2003).

Paul Schimmel, chief curator of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, has organized the exhibition. The Brooklyn presentation is coordinated by Deputy Director for Art Charles Desmarais and Associate Curator of Exhibitions Tumelo Mosaka. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue co-published by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Rizzoli International Publications that includes essays by writers and scholars among them Dick Hebdige, Midori Matsui, Scott Rothkopf, Paul Schimmel, and Mika Yoshitake.

In his essay Mr. Schimmel writes, "Throughout his career, Murakami has mined his personal and artistic heritage, a conflicted amalgamation of Japanese, American, and European traditions. He has combined this to develop a unique aesthetic that has generated a proliferation of distinct images and icons. Murakami is an artist with the ability to plumb art history, popular culture, and corporate entities, ranging from Disney to Louis Vuitton, and an entrepreneur with the skill to promote his artistic and cultural vision to a global audience that spans a range of nationalities, social classes, and ethnicities."

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About the Artist

Takashi Murakami was born in Tokyo, Japan, in 1962 and currently lives and works in both Tokyo and Long Island City, New York. In 1993 he received a Ph.D. in traditional Japanese painting from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, where he also was granted a B.F.A. and an M.F.A. With his three-part *Superflat* exhibition, which debuted in 2000 and toured to major museums in the United States and Europe, he introduced Japanese artists, including cartoonists and animators, to a large international audience. His work has been the subject of many important solo museum exhibitions at institutions including the Gagosian Gallery, New York (2007); Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy (2005); Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris (2003, 2001, 1995); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2001); P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2000); Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, and the Serpentine Gallery, London (2002); Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (2001); and the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (1999). Murakami has been represented in many major group exhibitions and has been the subject of numerous scholarly essays and articles.

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