

TAKASHI MURAKAMI
Japanese artist

TAKASHI MURAKAMI, a Japanese painter and sculptor, is today one of Japan's most highly rated artists, representing the new Japanese culture. His work 'My lonesome cowboy' was sold for more than \$15 million at Sotheby's in May 2008. In 2012, "The Castle of Tin Tin" (1998) was sold for \$4.4 million at Sotheby's New York. Takashi Murakami's diptych The World of Sphere (2003) was sold for \$2 million at Sotheby's Hong Kong in the fall of 2013. With cumulative sales of \$8 million, he ranked 25th in the 2017-2018 Artprice ranking of the world of contemporary art.

The artist

Takashi Murakami is born on February 1, 1962 in Tokyo. He graduated from the University of Fine Arts in Tokyo (Department of Painting) (1988) where he chose not comics but traditional Nihonga painting, until his doctorate in 1993. He lives and works between Tokyo and New York.

Artwork

Thanks to his musician friend, Masato Nakamura, Takashi Murakami was brought to contemporary art and the pop movement. After a year in New York, he founded his own Hiropon Factory production studio in 1995, which became an "art production company" called Kaikai Kiki Co. He is considered as the leader of the "Superflat" movement, influenced by Japanese animated films, manga and Japanese pop culture. He is known for his graphic style and his abundance of bright and flashy colors.

The artist explores all modes of expression, monumental painting, inflatable balloons, sculptures, fiberglass in particular. But he is nonetheless influenced by traditional Japanese compositional techniques, Buddhist or Shinto references, and even paintings from the Edo period whose images at the time were unconventional. 'Alter ego Mr DOB', a kind of protean Mickey, was one of his first creations, in 1993.

Murakami "claims an intentionally superficial and commercial art, and some see him as a new Andy Warhol." Takashi Murakami now seems more inspired by Buddhist philosophy than by manga, even though they remain important landmarks in his life. In his exhibition at Galerie Perrotin in Paris in 2016, he offered a mix between fine arts and folk art, through paintings depicting animals or dragons, accumulations of skulls or flashy flowers, monochromes invaded by a circle, symbol used in Zen Buddhism, traced with an acrylic bomb."

In 2011, he already presented 'Dragon in Clouds - Red Mutation and Dragon in Clouds - Indigo Blue', in reference to 18th century Japanese artist Soga Shuhaku, at Gagosian Gallery. Murakami dragons are not as dark as in Western iconography. The Japanese dragon is considered a symbol of good luck and optimism. In his exhibition at the Perrotin Gallery in 2016, he also presented "The 500 Ahrats", a 100 m long painting (the Arhats are Buddha's far-sighted disciples). This painting (composed by mystical creatures and caricatures of the elderly) was presented in 2012 as part of Takashi Murakami's retrospective in Qatar.

The Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada, presented "Takashi Murakami: The Octopus Eats Its Own Leg," from February to May 2018. This was an important retrospective of Takashi Murakami's work, with more than 50 works on display, produced over the past three decades. The paintings and sculptures on display at the Vancouver Art Gallery showed in particular his attachment to craftsmanship, his boundless imagination, allied to an aesthetic bias and cultural inspirations that range from Buddhist popular traditions to art history to folk culture. The exhibition was organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago where it was presented in 2017. Takashi Murakami collaborated with big names like Louis Vuitton, for which he created a series of motifs combining the famous logo with his colorful, quirky universe, in 2004. At the request of American rapper Kanye West, he directed the music video Good Morning as well as the graphic presentation.