

GAGOSIAN



TAKASHI MURAKAMI

GYATEI²

Opening reception: Thursday, February 21, 6–8pm

February 21–April 13, 2019

456 North Camden Drive, Beverly Hills

Takashi Murakami, *Viral: And Yet the Earth Moves*, 2018–19, acrylic on canvas mounted on aluminum frame, 30 × 30 inches (76.2 × 76.2 cm) © 2018–19 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All rights reserved

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I feel like people tend to look at a painting and think, “OK, one artist paints a painting.” As if the condition remains the same ten years ago, three years ago, and now. But . . . the way I create the work constantly evolves. Especially in the past few years, we’ve been able to use a lot of the 3-D modeling programs, so the way I can grasp and understand forms has drastically changed and evolved. . . . Artistic expression really has to do with technique, and how you can actually realize ideas.

–Takashi Murakami

Gagosian is pleased to present GYATEI², new works by Takashi Murakami, as the 2019 “Oscars show,” a much-anticipated annual fixture on the Los Angeles cultural calendar.

Drawing from traditional Japanese painting, sci-fi, anime, and pop culture, Murakami's oeuvre comprises paintings, sculptures, films, and a stream of commercial products populated by mutating characters of his own creation. His iconoclastic individualism continues the nonconformist legacy of the Edo Eccentrics, a group of eighteenth-century Japanese artists who constructed a powerfully imaginative world filled with bizarre and emotive imagery.

The exhibition title comes from the Buddhist *Hannya Shingyo* (Heart Sutra), a popular sutra in Mahayana Buddhism. The incantation is often chanted by Zen groups before or after a meditation. At the conclusion of the sutra, the Avalokiteshvara, a popular and recognizable bodhisattva, turns and recites a mysterious mantra to one of the disciples. The mantra is often roughly translated as "gone, gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond, enlightenment, *svāhā*." This articulation has been diversely interpreted as a call to "go" attain enlightenment, as the cry of a baby reborn into an eternal true world, and as a curse.

*GYATEI*² reveals myriad variations of interconnected imagery, each permutation and combination generating new meaning. Murakami's first character, Mr. DOB—a whimsical, sharp-toothed Mickey Mouse-like character—reappears in different forms, as does the ubiquitous rainbow flower. Elsewhere, images of doorways, graffiti of the word "viral," and a self-portrait of the artist and his dog are overlaid onto dense graphic patterns. *A Statue of Flower Parent and Child* (2019), cast in bronze and covered in gold leaf, stands sixteen feet tall and shows an enormous flower character with its flower offspring. Similarly, the rabbitlike *Kaikai* and three-eyed, smiling *Kiki* (both 2019) are rendered in cast bronze covered in platinum leaf, the cute yet imposing characters illustrating Murakami's interest in paradox, as *kikikaikai* describes something that is dangerous yet appealing.

The seventeen-panel *Qinghua* (2019) reinterprets a motif originally painted on a vase from the Chinese Yuan Dynasty (c. 1206–1368), whose imagery mingled in Murakami's memory with childhood trips to the riverside with his father, where fishers would haul enormous carp. At almost eight feet high and fifty-eight feet wide, the image proceeds panel by panel, like an enormous storyboard, or a vase that has been unrolled like a long scroll along the gallery's walls.

Takashi Murakami was born in 1962 in Tokyo, where he lives and works. Collections include the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Museum of Modern Art, New York. Recent institutional exhibitions include *Murakami Versailles*, Château de Versailles, France (2010); *Murakami: The 500 Arhats*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2015); *Murakami by Murakami*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2017); *The Deep End of the Universe*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; *Under the Radiation Falls*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2017); *The Octopus Eats Its Own Leg*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2017, traveled to Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada, and Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX, in 2018). Murakami is the founder of Kaikai Kiki Co. Ltd., an art production and art management corporation, which both produces his work and functions as a supportive environment for emerging artists.

In June 2019, an exhibition of Murakami's work will open at Tai Kwun Centre for Heritage and Arts in Hong Kong.

#TakashiMurakami

Press

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