

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Takashi Murakami, Gagosian Gallery - review

Takashi Murakami is best known for taking to an extreme Andy Warhol's idea of the artist as an entrepreneur at the heart of a factory system.

Ben Luke June 28, 2011



As much nightmare as fantasy: Nurse KO2, a bimboish figure with a sinister side

He creates works in a style which channels Warhol, Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst through manga comics and Hello Kitty, and reaches out to the commercial world. But beneath primary-coloured pop art stylings is a satire of Japanese culture. This show is Murakami's most eloquent expression of this to date.

His subject is the "male sexual complex" in Japan, which, he argues, emerged from manga, animé cartoons and video games. A group of sculptures present kitsch, Playboy-like fantasy figures.

Nurse KO2 (2011) initially seems chirpily bimbo-ish but soon she becomes more sinister - the empty gaze with pupils, a blood-filled syringe in the shape of the cross. She seems as much nightmare as fantasy.



Sexual but unerotic: Paper K02

A group of paintings behind her are based on a trio of nudes by the 19th-century academic Japanese painter Kuroda Seiki, *Wisdom, Impression, Sentiment* (c1900). Murakami asked modern Japanese manga and animé artists to rework Kuroda's painting, with disconcerting results. Kuroda's dull, hairless nudes become child-woman hybrids, with porn-inspired circular breasts and classic childlike manga faces.

While these and others are sexual images - visitors are warned - they are unerotic. Murakami emphasises this by placing a vast gold-leafed sculpture of a penis and a platinum-leafed sculpture of a vagina, with smiley faces, in front of paintings quoting from *Shunga*, traditional Japanese erotica. These fragments of earlier works are the most shockingly vivid images in this gaudy and often hilarious show.

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