



"Takashi Murakami's Superflat Consideration on Contemporary Ceramics", 2017, Towada Art Center, Aomori, Japan. Photo by Mikiya Takimoto.

ASIA NOW

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For its participation in Asia Now, Perrotin presents a selection of works by Takashi Murakami, Shin Murata and Aso Kojima.

Murakami's ink calligraphies on used coffee filters take up his aesthetic concerns in an innovative form. The artist, whose mother is passionate about calligraphy, has studied the practice since the age of five.

Like these original calligraphies, Murakami's works in the *Ensō* series have strong poetic and Zen significance: the Enso, a freehand circle, is painted with a brush by followers of Zen as a form of spiritual practice and free movement.

For the first time in Europe, Perrotin will present a series of ceramics by Murakami made in collaboration with Shin Murata, as well as Aso Kojima's ceramics accompanied by boxes decorated with Murakami's drawings.

The collaboration between Murakami and Murata revisits the artist Rosanjin, whom Murakami admires immensely. Conceived by Murakami and produced by Murata, the works are *Honkadori* (Japanese practice of adaptation or copy) of the pots that Rosanjin once copied from Shigaraki and Oribe wares. They challenge the boundary between original and copy, and question the notion of what it means to make a copy of a concept.

For his part, Aso Kojima breaks away from the traditional market principles of crafts and adopts an artist's perspective to explore his own unique world of ceramics from a more liberal standpoint. Kojima's unique pottery methods combine respect for tradition with the principles of improvisation and experimentation, resulting in a body of work inspired by his passion for nature and sustainable living.

"For the past fifteen years, I have been involved with a number of contemporary Japanese ceramicists associated with the seikatsu kōgei movement, the craft of everyday objects, organizing their exhibitions, financially supporting their production and collecting their work. Around 2005, when I first became interested in and acquired ceramics, seikatsu kōgei was in its heyday, and the artists and their representatives seemed free and optimistic." - Takashi Murakami

In addition to his successful artistic career, Murakami has established a reputation as a collector, curator, producer and gallery owner, with a particular interest in ceramic art. Murakami's passion for ceramic art has led him to build a private collection of more than 30,000 objects, regularly loaned for museum exhibitions. In 2020, he opened the ceramic store "Tonari no Murata" in Kyoto in collaboration with Shin Murata, followed by the antique store "Tonari no Totoya," with the aim of creating a second-hand market for contemporary ceramic art.

In 2021, the exhibition *GEIBI KAKUSHIN* ("Aesthetic Innovation in Japanese Ceramic Art") at Perrotin Paris presented a whole generation of ceramic artists for the first time outside Japan.



Takashi Murakami x Shin Murata. Box drawing by Takashi Murakami. *Rosanjin Oribe Copy Pot "Honkadori"*, 2018-2019. Ceramic: 10 ³/₁₆ x 8 ¹/₂ x 9 ³/₁₆ inch. Box: 16 ³/₄ x 13 ³/₈ x 13 ³/₈ inch. ©Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin. ©Shin Murata/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin



Aso Kojima. Box drawing by Takashi Murakami. *Mishima Jar with Leaf Design*, 2014. Ceramic: 14 ³/₁₆ x 12 ³/₁₆ x 12 ³/₁₆ inch. Box: 23 ¹/₄ x 17 ¹¹/₁₆ x 17 ¹¹/₁₆ inch. ©Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin. ©Aso Kojima/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin.

ARTISTS

Aso Kojima was born in Nagano in 1978. Living completely self-sufficiently with his family in the countryside, Kojima is a self-taught ceramicist who lives by the rhythm and routine of making his ceramics. This approach gives him a vitality unmatched by other artists in this discipline. His skepticism of capitalism and contemporary society emerged in his youth and led him to favor the rural lifestyle that is his today.

Born in Kyoto in 1970, **Shin Murata** graduated from the ceramics department of Kyoto Seika University. He currently lives on the outskirts of Kyoto with his family. Following his studies, he established his own studio in 1998, devoting himself to the practice of ceramics and its mythical culture. In 2013, he traveled to the Muan district of Korea to rediscover the roots of Japanese pottery. There he built a kiln to make objects from the local clay, which is of exceptional quality. Like Murakami, Murata is strongly influenced by Rosanjin's imprint on art in general and the art of living in particular.

Born in Tokyo in 1962, **Takashi Murakami** is the originator of Superflat theory, which reconstructs Japanese traditional paintings and the origin of Japanese contemporary art through visual premises of anime and manga. Murakami's cultural theory not only deconstructs the highbrow/lowbrow hierarchy, but critically illustrates the post-World War II Japanese psychology, establishing a discourse unique to Japan in the increasingly globalized art scene. The artist continues to attract a wide-ranging audience beyond contemporary art through his multifaceted activities including his collaborations with Louis Vuitton, Kanye West and Drake, as well as his focuses on street culture and contemporary ceramics.

The final installment of his Superflat trilogy of curated exhibitions, *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture* (New York, 2005), was awarded "The Best Thematic Museum Show in New York by AICA that year".

Since his first retrospective, ©*MURAKAMI* (2007–2009), Murakami has held major solo exhibitions around the world, including at the Palace of Versailles (2010), Al Riwaq Exhibition Hall (Doha, 2012), the Mori Art Museum (Tokyo, 2015), the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (2017) and Tai Kwun Contemporary (Hong Kong, 2019). In 2021 he collaborated with RTFKT on their NFT project, *Clone X*, before releasing his own NFT work, *Murakami.Flowers*, in 2022.

TAKASHI MURAKAMI, THE PERPETUAL QUEST

Unclassifiable, prolific, the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami surprises us once again with this group exhibition that presents a little known side of his work.

Leaving behind the pop and kawaii world of otaku culture that made him world famous with his paintings of flowers, deities from traditional Japanese tales, and his iconic sculptures (Mr. DOB, Kaikai and Kiki), the founder of the Superflat collective unveils the intimate side of his work: going back to the spiritual practice of Japanese Zen, Takashi Murakami explores the ancestral arts of ceramics as well as calligraphy which he was introduced to by his mother and studied from an early age.

The exhibition features paintings on canvas produced using the silk-screen technique representing the Enso motif, an imperfect circle that is part of a meditative ritual in which the mind and the hand become one. A symbol of awakening, but also of the universe, the Enso expresses the state of mind of the one who traces it and the concern which inhabits it facing the emptiness or energy of the world. A true mystical experience, the ring embodies the vertigo of Buddhist philosophy, built on the paradox of nothingness and illusion, sending the viewer back to their own reflection in an infinite dialogue.

Through this *mise en abyme*, Takashi Murakami both upsets and defends the singularity of the Japanese soul, which celebrates the beauty of impermanence and evanescence. In this disruptive impulse that characterizes him so well, his abstract silkscreens were painted with a spray can, and no longer with the delicate brush that his ancestors used. Doubly born of the anti-conformist gesture of renouncing the ego specific to Zen philosophy, these works convey the spirit that moves the artist in the face of our era struck by the Covid 19 pandemic. Takashi Murakami deeply questions the codes of a consumerist society, absorbed in its own contemplation.

It is, it seems, this same defiance towards the cultural industry that drives the artist when he draws his calligraphic figures on used coffee filters, a technique and use of a poor material which is not without reference to *arte povera*. Circles, triangles and squares reveal accidental patterns, dreamlike landscapes born of the process of humification and traces of coffee sediment that have settled on the filters. The meeting of brush and paper gives birth to a beauty of imperfection that always remains faithful to the spirit of Zen Buddhist art and *wabi sabi*, the aesthetic that cultivates modesty, austerity, asceticism...

In this quest to find his roots, Murakami created conceptual ceramic works in collaboration with his friend Shin Murata, a ceramicist he highly respects, on view in this exhibition. He is also exhibiting Aso Kojima's ceramics accompanied by boxes adorned with Murakami's drawings, *hakogaki* ("box writing") being the traditional format for praising the artistry of the work contained within the box.

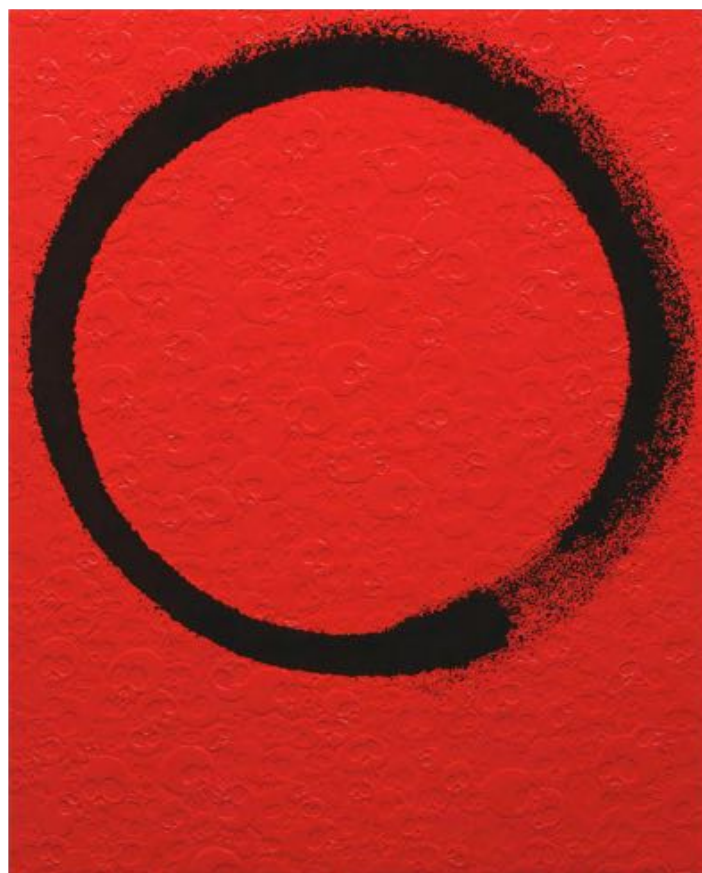
In Murakami's collaboration with Shin Murata, the ceramics giant of the Showa era (1926–1989) Kitaōji Rosanjin (1883–1959) serves as the project's motif. Rosanjin maintained a vast collection of antiques, which underpinned his artistry. He would select antique pieces from his collection suitable for reproduction, make plaster molds from them, and reproduce them as his avant-garde creations. Murakami in turn selected some of Rosanjin's reproduced Shigaraki jars and used them as the motif for his collaboration with Murata. Shigaraki is an area known for its pottery production in Gifu prefecture, close to Kyoto and Koga, the birthplace of ninjas; Rosanjin produced his copy jars using the popular firing method of the region. For the "Jars in Shigaraki and Oribe Styles" project, Murakami and Murata spent about four years creating a series of works with the copied jars by Rosanjin as their motif.

The most important aspect of this project is the fusion between a dialogue with history and the digital technology of the present. The artists digitally scanned Rosanjin's jars, adjusted the scanned data, 3D printed the results at 115%, made silicone molds with these as the masters, cast them with ceramic clay, colored them with glazes experimented and verified at Murata's workshop before firing them after repeated trial and error. The result is cutting-edge works of pottery with an aesthetic based on a thoroughly-researched traditional format.

Aso Kojima's ceramic works, on the other hand, are presented with boxes adorned with Murakami's *hakogaki* ("box writing"), a method used to praise the ceramics within. Kojima lives a self-sufficient life with the crops he cultivates in his own fields, and defines himself as a *hyakusho* ("peasant") as well as a potter. He is thoroughly committed to his self-critical way of life as a peasant, a vocation in which one must handle a hundred (*hyaku*) tasks in addition to farming in order to survive. Truly earthen sculptures, his unique and delicate works with their milky hues blur the boundaries between the so-called noble arts and the fruit of the earth.

In total, the artists unveil eleven vases with powerful organic forms and matte and shiny textures, striated and oxidized by the effect of the flames on the metals contained in the clay. The jars are presented here with their packaging fabric designed by Murakami and their traditional paulownia boxes decorated with his sketches.

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Ludovic Perrin



Takashi Murakami, *Enso: The Reverse Side of Consciousness*, 2016. Acrylic on canvas (to be determined), 22 11/16 x 18 1/8 inch. ©2016 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin.

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