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Gagosian to Exhibit New Paintings and Sculptures by Takashi Murakami at Le Bourget

Exhibition Features Panoramic Painting Based on the Artist's Design for Kabuki Theater Curtain

Special NFT Gift Designed by the Artist and Minted on Demand Will Be Available for Free to Visitors on Opening Day

Understanding the New Cognitive Domain Opens June 10, 2023



Takashi Murakami, 2020 *The Name Succession of Ichikawa Danjūrō XIII, Hakuen, Kabuki Jūhachiban*, 2023 (detail), acrylic and glitter on canvas mounted on aluminum frame, 16 feet 4 7/8 inches × 76 feet 5 3/4 inches (5 × 23.3 m) © 2023 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All rights reserved

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LE BOURGET, May 24, 2023—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Understanding the New Cognitive Domain*, an exhibition of work by Takashi Murakami at the gallery in Le Bourget, focused on his monumental paintings. The exhibition features five such works plus others in smaller formats and several sculptures. This is the artist's first exhibition with the gallery in France.

Understanding the New Cognitive Domain marks the debut of a monumental new 5-by-23-meter painting by Murakami based on the *iwai-maku*, or stage curtain, that he produced for the Kabuki-za theater in Ginza, Tokyo, in celebration of Japanese Kabuki actor and producer Ichikawa Ebizō XI's assumption of the name Ichikawa Danjūrō XIII, Hakuen. (Kabuki stage names, which specify an actor's style and lineage, are passed down through generations; the Ichikawa family has a roughly 350-year history.) The November 2022 unveiling of Murakami's design, which was commissioned by film director Takashi Miike, coincided with the first performance of Ichikawa Shinnosuke VIII in the November Kichirei Kaomise Grand Kabuki Theaterprogram.

Also on view is another extended-format painting, *Dragon in Clouds – Indigo Blue* (2010), which Murakami produced in response to eccentric Japanese artist Soga Shōhaku's *Dragon and Clouds* (1763). Shōhaku's work is a multi-panel *Unryūzu* (cloud-and-dragon) painting in which the titular creature appears as a Buddhist symbol of optimism and good fortune. Murakami's painting, like Shōhaku's, uses a restricted palette and is spread over several conjoined sections. Graphic swirls allude to Shōhaku's expressive use of ink and suggest the dragon's flight, combining with its flared nostrils and serpentine whiskers to evoke turbulent motion. *Dragon in Clouds – Indigo Blue* also resonates with contemporary Japanese visual culture, particularly the video game *Blue Dragon*, while its vast scale revives the visceral and psychological impact of Shōhaku's masterpiece.

In another epic, friezelike painting, Murakami employs an aesthetic that evokes nostalgia for the pixelated look of 1980s computer graphics. The work was inspired by Mike Kelley's *Pay for Your Pleasure* (1988), a set of banners portraying great artists and writers, accompanied by quotes about the transgressive nature of creative genius, shown with a self-portrait by a convicted criminal. (Kelley will have a solo exhibition at the Bourse de commerce, Paris, in October.) Murakami's work replaces Kelley's subjects with important contributors to the field of economics over the past millennium, including the Sumerians, Sima Qian, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Benjamin Franklin, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes, Satoshi Nakamoto, Vitalik Buterin, Elon Musk, and the cryptocurrency Dogecoin, ranging them along a rainbow-hued timeline. By aligning these key drivers of global economic change with characters in a video game, Murakami draws attention to the competitive and strategic aspects of economic theory, and the degree to which these figures' ideas have influenced contemporary culture.

Understanding the New Cognitive Domain also includes several "lucky cat" paintings that reference the artist's recent NFT projects, and other works featuring Murakami's iconic smiling flower motif—including a two-meter rainbow neon sign—in which the artist again employs a retro-digital variant on his influential Superflat aesthetic. His ever-proliferating cartoonlike blossoms function as immediately recognizable and infinitely flexible icons that may be at once ornamental and symbolic, directing the viewer toward intertwined themes of identity, representation, and technology.

Finally, two mirror-plated figures representing futuristic anime-style avatars reinvest the Clone X NFTs (2021) that Murakami developed in collaboration with RTFKT Studios with physical presence, reflecting his fascination with the metaverse and his sensitivity to the hybrid nature of agency in today's world. Separated from works such as *Dragon in Clouds – Indigo Blue* by a gulf of history, such projects act as a reminder that, while their maker trained in the techniques and aesthetics of traditional Japanese painting, he is also immersed in current pop-cultural styles, modes, personalities, and technologies.

Murakami has designed a [special NFT gift](#) that will be available for free exclusively to visitors on the opening day of the exhibition from 3 to 6pm. The NFTs will be minted on demand at the Le Bourget gallery and are limited to one per person. There will be a special giveaway booth located at the exhibition where visitors will be able to claim their digital gift.

Takashi Murakami was born in Tokyo, where he lives and works. Collections include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Broad, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan. 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 (2017); *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, Texas, in 2018); *Murakami vs. Murakami*, Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong (2019); and *MurakamiZombie*, Busan Museum of Art, South Korea (2023).

#TakashiMurakami

TAKASHI MURAKAMI

Understanding the New Cognitive Domain

Opening reception: Saturday, June 10, 3–6pm

June 10–December 22, 2023

26 Avenue de l'Europe, Le Bourget

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