

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Takashi Murakami**

***Arhat***

April 13 – May 25, 2013

Opening reception: Saturday, April 13, 6 – 8 pm

Blum & Poe is very pleased to present *Arhat*, an exhibition of new painting and sculpture by Takashi Murakami. This occasion will mark the artist's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery and his first major presentation in the United States since the 2007-2009 traveling survey titled *© Murakami*. Coinciding with this momentous exhibition will be the world premiere of Murakami's first live-action feature film, *Jellyfish Eyes*, presented with Film Independent at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's Bing Theater on April 8, 2013. The film has been ten years in the making and utilizes both live-action and computer generated imagery (CGI) in a coming-of-age tale about a boy in contemporary Japan confronting its past and future, post-Fukushima.

The cycle of paintings on view at Blum & Poe continues Murakami's newest mode of painting, developed for his exhibition *Ego*, mounted in Doha, Qatar in early 2012. The *Arhat* paintings conflate historical, contemporary, and futuristic Japanese references with a myriad of styles, methodologies, and forms into single picture planes. The artist's long-standing interest in Japanese *nihonga* painting and the contemporary practices of *manga* and animation are highlighted in this important body of work.

*Arhat*, which derives its name from the ancient language of Sanskrit, translates to "a being who has achieved a state of enlightenment." The largest gallery will contain three imposingly scaled paintings measuring between eighteen and thirty-five feet in length, whose source imagery is drawn from an ancient tale of Buddhist monks confronting decay and death. Demonic monsters and decrepit monks in traditional robes and paraphernalia wander psychedelic landscapes. Standing tall and center amongst these large paintings will be a monumental new sculpture depicting a massive skull enveloped in flames, whose antecedents can be found in Buddhist statuary located in temples throughout Japan.

The gallery's second room will consist of a new suite of six-by-five foot paintings, combining the artist's optimistic and bright, smiling flower faces with his dark and brooding skull imagery. These paintings intermingle the handmade, silkscreened, and gestural techniques that have become a trademark of the artist. This gallery will also feature Murakami's first wall-mounted sculpture, portraying a constellation of cascading skulls overlapping and melding together in a highly crafted manner.

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The third gallery will include a series of painted self-portraits featuring Murakami and his beloved dog “Pom.” In the center of the gallery will be a third new sculpture made of highly polished stainless steel; a self-portrait of the artist with his dog, sleeping flat on their backs. This body of work furthers Murakami’s investigation into his own image, most notably seen in the recent sculptures, *Oval Buddha*, 2008, several versions of *Pom & Me*, 2009, and *Welcome to Murakami Ego*, 2012.

Taken as a whole, *Arhat* articulates more than twenty years of Murakami’s mastery of melding form, content, history, and methodology into a succinct body of work. Murakami distills his signature “Superflat” style into a reflection on high, middle, and lowbrow culture.

Takashi Murakami was born in 1962 in Tokyo, and received his BFA, MFA, and PhD from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. He founded the Hiropon factory in Tokyo in 1996, which later evolved into Kaikai Kiki Co., a large-scale art production and art management corporation. In 2000, he organized a paradigmatic exhibition of Japanese art titled *Superflat*, which traced the origins of contemporary Japanese visual pop culture to historical Japanese art. His work has been shown extensively in venues around the world, including the Qatar Museum Authority; Palace of Versailles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Brooklyn Museum; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao; Fondation Cartier pour l’art Contemporain, Paris; Serpentine Gallery, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

For additional information and press materials, please contact the gallery at 310-836-2062 or [info@blumandpoe.com](mailto:info@blumandpoe.com).

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