



Mr., *In Search of the Map to the Future*, 2025. Acrylic on canvas mounted on wood panel. 91.1 x 83.8 cm ©2025 Mr./Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin

MR. *IT WAS ON A BRILLIANT DAY.*

February 19 - March 29, 2025

Perrotin announces Mr.'s first solo exhibition in Los Angeles, a decade since his debut institutional show in the west coast of the United States. This presentation, his ninth exhibition with the gallery, opens the week of Frieze Los Angeles, and highlights his practice in recent years in painting, sculpture, and work on paper. New paintings are the focal feature in the north gallery, and in the south gallery, an installation based on the artist's studio in Saitama, Japan.

If you've ever walked into a Japanese convenience store—Family Mart, Lawson, 7-Eleven, etcetera—you know that there is impeccable order and refreshingly high quality in the overwhelming array and density of even the most pedestrian of Japanese retail commerce. At the multi-floor, everything-and-anything from canned beverages to rice cookers to lacy underwear and of-the-moment rubber novelties, mega-discount retail chain Don Quijote, however, things are not so Zen. Amidst the labyrinthine din of overflowing shelves and in-your-face, bubbly, neon-painted signage, you may not find what you are looking for. Nonetheless, you will probably end up buying something you didn't know you wanted and which you definitely do not need. Mr.'s work reminds one of that—not the young

women's shopping paradise of Harajuku, not the youth hangout district of Shibuya, but rather the overgrown jungle of mass-produced treasures, Don Quijote.

In the late 1990s began a movement called Superflat, founded by an artist named Takashi Murakami, who elevated the aesthetics of anime cels and "otaku" nerd subculture with references to Japanese art history and enlargement to mural-sized scale to create an indelible body of work that still today, years later, defines many people's image of contemporary Japanese art. Mr.'s inspiration from manga (comics), anime, and cute "moe" characters and goods make him a key part of Superflat. "At face value, Mr.'s seeming anime-style depicts prepubescent boys and girls, however, the deeper meaning is the product of escapism from the artist's own dislocated family structure. His father, at the bottom of the social hierarchy as a common laborer, worked with chemicals in a plastic moulding factory, and his mother was a devout follower of a fanatic religious cult. While a high school student at the age of 17, Mr.'s brother was placed in a protection facility by police for over a decade after violently escalating a domestic quarrel. In this unstable family environment, Mr. often disappeared into the world of solitary play in order to escape from his reality."¹

1: Perrotin HK (2018) Mr., People misunderstand me and the contents of my paintings...Press release. [link](#)



Mr., *The Boy's Dream Flew Through the Sky*, 2025. Acrylic, silkscreen print, pen on paper. Unframed: 76.3 x 56.7 cm, framed : 92.3x 72.7 cm ©2025 Mr./Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin.

In the development of Murakami's aesthetic toward something ever cleaner and ever more deferent to museum-defined "fine art," something was forgotten about the urban soil from which it grew and which Mr.'s oftentimes cacophonous work reminds us of. That is, during the explosion of mass consumer culture in Tokyo in the '80s and '90s around cutesy "kawaii" accouterments for young women and manga, anime, and video game spinoffs for men, there was an undeniable decadence that ran through the majority of products and the subcultures they supported. There was the garish campiness of Shibuya "ganguro" girls with their brown-purple tans and bleached and/or re-dyed hair. There was the oftentimes overt masturbatory relationship of otaku nerds' relationship to their purchases. There were the young female protagonists—assertive, spunky, intelligent, and witty, yet hamstrung by identities overly defined by consumerism—of manga by Okazaki Kyoko like Pink and Helter Skelter. Japanese pop culture was maximally messy, some might even say junky and frivolous. But in that anarchic array, young Japanese found solace and a home in an age in which the middle class dreams of upward mobility, job security, and suburban family comfort were beginning to fracture under the pressures of the recession and social malaise that followed in the wake of the collapse of Japan's postwar bubble economy. These problems have since been compounded by the disaster wrought by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, and the nuclear meltdowns in Fukushima that followed—events which left a lasting impression on Mr. and his work.

Mr.'s work often exists at the juncture between those two divergent but complementary vectors: the elevated pop culture of Superflat and the decadent cacophony of urban consumer culture and subcultures. This is especially evident in his paintings that incorporate graffiti and the ordered chaos of Japanese pop culture magazine cover design, as well



Mr., *Hikari and Cat—At Dusk*, 2025. Iron, FRP, urethane paint, acrylic paint, and plywood base with MDF surface finish. 201.3 x 155 x 110 cm (Pedestal included). ©2025 Mr./Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin.

as in his installations made of consumerist and studio junk. The characters of his paintings—rendered with clean lines and bright colors yet riddled with cheap trinkets—wear this contradiction. On first pass, they resemble the cute girls of "moe" fame. But taken as a whole and in the context of their painted backgrounds, they remind one instead of the frequent story on Japanese television shows of young women who live in small apartments or still at home with their parents, their rooms crammed with stuff and their kitchenettes unpassable due to bags of undisposed trash and dirty dishes—but who yet still look impeccable in whatever kawaii or baroque style they are going for the minute they step outside, as if they possess some alchemical power to render the pigpens of their private lives into magical mandalas of irresistible femininity. It is, therefore, more than a footnote that Mr. was influenced by Rauschenberg and Arte Povera when he was starting out. Rauschenberg's flatbed and junk assemblage practices in particular, but also Arte Povera's interest in neglected and cast-off materials, seem to have served Mr. as effective strategies for capturing the disorder of contemporary consumer identity in a state of suspended jumble.

For Mr., these aesthetic practices also have personal meaning. As he said in an interview, "In my life, I've encountered my share of unreasonableness and conflict in interactions with my blood relatives. The world of otaku culture was a place where I could soothe these wounds. For me, images of cute young girls carry the same sort of healing beauty and love that many people find in religion."²

By Ryan Holmberg

2: Ascari, A. (1 March, 2015). Mr. Interview by Alessio Ascari. Kaleidoscope, p. 74-79