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History of Design

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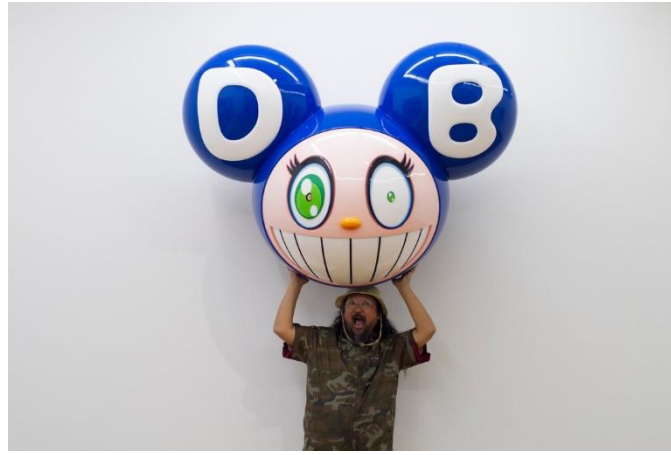
**VI** Choose a historic or contemporary media artist not discussed in class to carry out independent research that draws from our study of design history, theory and its concepts and forms. Explore how their work demonstrates interdisciplinary through the intervention of art and technology.

### **Takashi Murakami: Founder of Superflat Movement**

Takashi Murakami is American Japanese Artist born in 1962 in Tokyo, Japan. He enrolled in the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, majoring in Traditional Japanese Painting, nihonga, where got his Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1986. He then earned his Master of Fine Arts and his Ph.D. in the Graduate School of Fine Arts in 1988 and 1993, respectively. In 1996, he set up the studio Hiropon Factory, which in the following years became an art production and artist management company that is now known as KaiKai Kiki Co. Ltd. The artist is well known for his integration of Fine and Commercial Art, including Japanese pop culture aesthetics, and cultural motifs into his works. Throughout his career, he has been increasingly clearing the boundaries of fine art and popular culture by branding his works into merchandise, and he was the founder of the contemporary art movement Superflat.

Takashi Murakami drew inspiration from traditional Japanese paintings, drawing styles of Japanese comics and animation. Since the early 1990s, he has created characters that integrated element from popular cartoon in Japan, Europe and the US. Starting with his first character Mr. DOB, which served as a stand in for him. The character's name derives from the Japanese slang phrase "dobojite" or "why?". It reflected the artist's puzzle view

towards consumer society. Mr. DOB was created after researching the appeal of famous mascots such as Mickey Mouse, Sonic the Hedgehog and Doraemon.



The artist has also created other various characters and elements such as smiling flowers, lions, and bears, which served as motifs on comments towards themes of violence, technology, and fantasy.



While in western art history explored dimensions and perspectives learning to the evolution of realistic images, such practices had not existed in Japan pre-western exposure. Instead, the sense of depth was shown through the layering of images. Flat coloring, bold outlines and a lack of natural perspective and depth remained as strong characteristics in Japanese art, which influenced the development of Superflat. In 2000, Takashi Murakami curated an exhibition called Superflat. It was an exhibition that featured works by artist whose techniques and medium expressed aspects of Japanese visual cultures, from

woodblock prints, ukiyo-e, to anime and the culture of cuteness, kawaii. In 2001, he coined the term Superflat, which highlighted the “flatness” of Japanese visual culture in with the context of World War II and its aftermath. An example is the work titled “Little Boy”, a reference to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945.



Many of his works explored the consumerist culture of post-war in Japan, in which how culture reinvents itself after the war, leading to the country’s distinctly unique post World War II anime and manga craze. Showing the dual meaning of the flat in Superflat, not only referring to the history of non-three-dimensional styles of Japanese art, but also the flat shallowness of consumer culture.

The Superflat movement is known by bold lines, flat colors and a lack of perspective and three-dimensional depth. The Superflat movement also included other artists’ works such as Yoshitomo Nara, Chiho Aoshima, and Aya Takano. The movement had successfully cleared the boundaries of fine art and commercial art, with ranges from traditional paintings to digital art, graphic design, product design, fashion and film. With this, it revolutionized the appropriation of globalized visual culture, and they still use these aesthetic properties in anime and manga culture today.

(568 words)

## Citations

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