

News Release  
Public Information  
Department

April 2001

JAPANESE CARTOON CULTURE THE FOCUS OF REVOLUTIONARY  
ART EXHIBITION

Media Preview Friday July 27, 2001, 10 a.m.–noon

Synergies between Japanese and American popular culture are explored in the exhibition **My Reality: Contemporary Art and the Culture of Japanese Animation**, on view at the Brooklyn Museum of Art **July 28–October 7, 2001**.

The exhibition will showcase some forty works by eighteen artists who investigate the influence of Japanese animation and techno-culture on art today.

The show features photography, paintings, sculpture, and video's whose visual characteristics and themes resemble those found in Japanese animation (*anime*) and comic books (*manga*) whose sources lie in forms of Western entertainment such as animated films produced by Disney and Warner Brothers. This style is distinguished by its ultra-cute appearance and sci-fi settings replete with robots, aliens, and space vessels.

**My Reality** features creations by established Asian artists such as Takashi Murakami, Mariko Mori, Mr. (Masakatsu Iwamoto), and Kenji Yanobe. Work by Westerners such as Paul McCarthy, Tom Sachs, Charlie White and Richard Patterson is also included in the exhibition with items that reflect aesthetic themes of their Japanese counterparts and address similar issues of altered realities, consumerism, fantasy and techno-savvy.

Concepts of entertainment, escapism, and futuristic technology are often the focus of *anime* artists. *Anime* is incredibly versatile in its ability to comment on social and sexual mores, gender roles, and traditional values in the face of an increasingly alien future.

## **My Reality**

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The clean, colorful look of *anime* that has become familiar to us through such international phenomena as Pokemon and Hello Kitty is in stark contrast to the grimly apocalyptic anime and manga exemplified by such cartoons as "X", which betrays a sense of apprehension about a future filled with technology and more change than we can be comfortable with.

Kenji Yanobe's atomic cars, visually a cross between a robot and a Volkswagen Beetle, confront the feasible reality of a nuclear holocaust. The boldly colored, prophetic auto surfaces display a multitude of flashing lights and the radiation measurement devices necessary in a nuclear war ravaged world.

Takashi Murakami's sculpture's, paintings, and drawings - and those of many of his peers - pay homage to Pop artist Andy Warhol. In Murakami's case, his working methods are similar. Like Warhol's Factory, Murakami's "Hiropon Factory" creates artwork, toys, T-shirts, and publications via teamwork. This process of joint creation also bears similarities to the commercial animation process.

Masakatsu Iwamoto (a.k.a. Mr.), a young member of the Hiropon Factory, has works of his own in the show that explore gender, cultural colonialism, and Japanese absorption. His comic-style images have in many ways grown and developed out of older Asian art forms that often portray female subjects.

Mariko Mori, a fashion model turned photographer and performance artist, presented the critically acclaimed solo show *Mariko Mori: Empty Dream* at the BMA in the spring of 1999. Here she is represented by a recent work that examines the female image and popular culture, Japanese traditions, and high technology in her signature style.

Images of "cuteness" and sexual perversity are often compounded in *anime*. Los Angeles based artist, Paul McCarthy, is well-known for similar sensibility in his works. McCarthy examines mass media and consumerism in pieces filled with debasement and anxiety. The source material for his contribution to *My Reality* is the 1937 Disney classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. According to many creators of anime, Walt Disney has been a considerable aesthetic and contextual influence.

A conception of entertainment, escapism, and futuristic technology is often the focus of anime and now a launching point for contemporary Eastern and Western artists. The exhibition itself offers various perspectives of the “reality” offered in the vision new world community. Globalization and technology both contribute to this continually evolving image. This exhibition gives museum goers a chance to see the latest developments in Japanese art, ponder its sources, and witness its impact both here and in Japan. That a movement in high art could develop from cartoons is itself astonishing. That the art can be colorful, whimsical, terrifying, and similar in meaning in such different milieus is its own work of art.

The Brooklyn Museum of Art is the first stop on a national tour coordinated by Independent Curators International (ICI). Originally curated by Jeff Fleming, Senior Curator, and Susan Lubowsky Talbott Director of the Des Moines Art Center. The exhibition is coordinated at the Brooklyn Museum of Art by Charlotta Kotik, Curator of Contemporary Paintings and Sculpture.

Educational activities for the BMA’s presentation are supported by the Third Millennium Foundation. An illustrated catalogue co-published by the Des Moines Art Center and Independent Curators International accompanies *My Reality*. It features essays by Takashi Murakami, Jeff Fleming, and Susan Lubowsky Talbott.

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Admission:**

Contribution \$6; students with valid I.D. and older adults \$3. Free to Members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Group tours or visits can be arranged through the Education Division, ext. 234.

**Directions:**

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop. Bus: B71, B41, B69, B48. On-site parking available.

**Museum Hours:**

Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
First Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; all other Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. Museum Caf open until 4 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday, Sunday and holidays. Museum Libraries and Archive are open by appointment. Museum shops are open 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; till 6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.