

Information concerning the Spring 2017 exhibition at Towada Art Center

Takashi Murakami's Superflat Consideration on Contemporary Ceramics

Saturday, March 11, 2017 – Sunday, May 28, 2017



Figure 1 | Photo by Mikiya Takimoto

The Towada Art Center strives to showcase contemporary art in a broader, more inclusive context that interprets both traditional and contemporary handicrafts as important examples of art. Our first exhibition held with a particular focus on a specific craft is *Takashi Murakami's Superflat Consideration on Contemporary Ceramics*.

Renowned artist and a major collector, curator, and gallerist, Takashi Murakami is a man of many faces. In more recent years, Murakami has turned his gaze to ceramics, and to Japanese contemporary ceramics in particular. He is not only a collector of ceramics, but is also the proprietor of Oz Zingaro, a shop specializing in contemporary ceramics, and has been a forerunner in bringing these ceramics onto the international art scene.

His vast collection shown during *Takashi Murakami's Superflat Collection – From Shōhaku and Rosanjin to Anselm Kiefer*— at the Yokohama Museum of Art in 2016 grabbed the attention of museum-goers for its vast scale, which includes over 400 pieces of contemporary ceramics.

In this exhibition, we plan to show over 300 artworks from 28 artists in Murakami's collection—a roster that includes ceramic artists such as Ryo Aoki, Masanobu Ando, Shin Murata, and Aso Kojima as well as ceramic works by contemporary artists like Yoshitomo Nara, Naoki Koide, Chiho Aoshima, Otani Workshop, Gabriel Orozco, Rosemarie Trockel, and Klara Kristalova, among others.

From the *chanoyu* tea ceremony of Rikyuu to the more recent *mingei* folk art movement of Soetsu Yanagi, and from the ceramics of swanky department store galleries to those of little-known craft fairs, the mind of Murakami is laid bare for the audience in a journey into the history of ceramics that uncovers the value of Japanese ceramics and the current state of aesthetics.

This exhibition marks Murakami's first time curating a ceramics exhibition at an art museum. It is a reconsideration of the ceramic context and a compelling attempt to grasp the essence of what we consider art.

Contact Us

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About the Exhibition

Title	<i>Takashi Murakami's Superflat Consideration on Contemporary Ceramics</i>
Date	Saturday, March 11, 2017 – Sunday, May 28, 2017 *Opening Reception March 10, 2017 16:30–
Hours	9:00-17:00 (Last admission 30 minutes before closing)
Closed	Mondays except for National Holidays, in which case the museum is open on the holiday and closed the following Tuesday *Open Monday, April 24, and Monday, May 1
Location	Towada Art Center
Admission	Exhibition + Permanent Collection: 1,000 yen Exhibition only: 600 yen 100 yen/ticket discount for groups of 20 or more High school students and younger: Free
Organized by	Towada Art Center
In Cooperation with	Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd.
Installation Aesthetics	Toshihiro Isomi / Transformer Inc.
With the Support of	To-o Nippo Press, The Daily-Tohoku Shimbun Inc., Aomori Broadcasting Cooperation, Aomori Television Broadcasting Co., Ltd., Asahi Broadcasting Aomori Co., Ltd., & Towada City Board of Education

Takashi Murakami

Born in 1962 in Tokyo, Murakami completed his doctoral work at Tokyo University of the Arts' School of Fine Arts, becoming the first person at the university to earn a Ph.D. in Nihonga. He is the founder and president of Kaikai Kiki, an art production and management company. Murakami is one of today's most internationally recognized contemporary artists. In 2008, Murakami was selected as one of TIME magazine's "The 100 Most Influential People." In addition to his solo exhibitions held in museums across the globe, Murakami is also known as a film director and producer of up-and-coming artists.

In 2015, Murakami held *Takashi Murakami: The 500 Arhats* at Tokyo's Mori Art Museum, his first exhibition in his home country of Japan in 14 years. The following year he took the Japanese art world by storm at Yokohama Museum of Art with *Takashi Murakami's Superflat Collection –From Shōhaku and Rosanjin to Anselm Kiefer–*, an exhibition that showcased antiques and contemporary artworks from Murakami's vast personal collection.



Figure 2 | Photo by Chika Okazumi

Exhibiting Artists

Masanobu Ando, Ryo Aoki, Chiho Aoshima, Tomoko Arakawa, Kazunori Hamana, Tetsuya Ishiyama, Hideto Kamiizumi, Naoki Koide, Aso Kojima, Klara Kristalova, Yukiharu Kumagai, Takuro Kuwata, Shoji Matsushita, Shigeyoshi Morioka, Yuji Muraki, Shin Murata, Yoshitomo Nara, Akio Nukaga, Atsushi Ogata, Teppei Ono, Gabriel Orozco, Otani Workshop, Shiro Shimizu, Rosemarie Trockel, Keiji Tsuruno, Yuji Ueda, Takayuki Watanabe, and Andro Wekua

28 artists listed in alphabetical order by family name

**Exhibiting artists may be subject to change.*

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Message from Takashi Murakami

Over ten years have passed since I first took interest in contemporary ceramics. During that time, I have been purchasing antiques alongside contemporary ceramics, learning the characteristics of different artists and galleries while, at the same time, examining my own preferences and awareness on various issues.

About five years into acquiring works, I became curious about operating my own store and opened a small gallery of ceramics and antiques called Oz Zingaro in Nakano, Tokyo. We don't constantly rotate exhibitions but rather present just three to four shows a year of artists in whom I take interest.

We also do one ceramics exhibition each year at my gallery in Motoazabu, where Kaikai Kiki is headquartered, and so far we have presented Teppei Ono, Shin Murata, and Aso Kojima, among others. In 2016, we showed Otani Workshop and plan to show Atsushi Ogata in 2017.

I have had many thoughts and feelings through my dealings with contemporary ceramics, and the theme in which I am interested at the moment is that of "border crossing." I am intrigued by the attempts to transcend values specific to a country, other existing values, or genres.

When Sen no Rikyū (1522 – 1591) first propagated ceramics for the tea ceremony in Japan, he appropriated wares imported from Korea for use as Japanese tea bowls, generating new values and modalities. Sōetsu Yanagi (1889 – 1961), through his *mingei* movement, upended the view of the time toward uncontrived objects made by obscure potters. In addition to these domestic "border crossings," there were also international ones by the likes of Sakaida Kakiemon (1615 – 1653), who amalgamated Japanese values and tastes of people overseas, exporting his works to the Dutch Republic. Looking back in history of ceramics, there were several such turning points along the way.

What is the current state of the Japanese ceramics world, then? Looking back at the recent past, we saw a flurry of cultural developments between pre-World War II and postwar periods, with works by contemporary ceramicists such as Rosanjin Kitaōji (1883 – 1959), Tōkurō Katō (1897 – 1985), Toyozō Arakawa (1894 – 1985), and Kazuo Yagi (1918 – 1979), as well as *mingei* and antiques all at play. With the rise of the bubble economy in the second half of the 1980s and its burst in the 1990s, however, they all but vanished.

These various developments since before the war had created a certain worldview pertaining to ceramics and consisted a tremendous movement, but none of them managed to traverse the ocean; it is not an overstatement to say they were entirely bound to and within Japanese domestic values.

After the burst of the bubble economy, both the ceramicists and the galleries regretted the abnormal escalation of the market and turned to suppressing the price to the absolute lowest. In the ten or so years that followed, affordable price ranges and practical shapes gradually gained popularity in ceramics.

For twenty years, roughly from 1990 to 2010, this cultural trend wildly blossomed and since 2010, works are also being exported to neighboring countries such as China and Taiwan.

As with anime and manga, the world of postwar Japanese ceramics has matured domestically in all its aspects, from quality and quantity to the form of distribution. In fact, it almost seems overripe. I think the world of Japanese ceramics is in a period of transition as we speak, in which a leap into overseas markets—as with anime and manga before it—is just starting to be explored.

Through the eyes and mind of Takashi Murakami the contemporary artist, I hope to present the rift in the world of ceramics being created by this turning point in an excessively distinctive manner. The ceramicists I have chosen for this show are those with whom I have achieved a profound level of communication from my standing positions as a gallerist and a collector.

Some may cross the ocean, and others may stay in the gravitational sphere of Japanese ceramics and go deeper. I hope the visitors will join me in having wild imaginations about the future developments of these ceramic works arising right out of this turning point.

Takashi Murakami
December 2016

Contact Us

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Related Events

Opening Talk

Date	Saturday, March 11, 2017 10:30–16:30 (tentative)
Moderator	Takashi Murakami
Details	Further details to follow.
Location	Towada Art Center Collaborative Space
Admission	Free with exhibition ticket. Reservations take priority.

Curators' Gallery Tour & Talk

Date	Saturday & Sunday, March 25–26, 2017 Saturday & Sunday, April 8–9, 2017
Location	Towada Art Center Exhibition Space & Central Towada
Admission	Free with exhibition ticket

Otani Workshop's Workshop

Date	Saturday & Sunday, April 15–16, 2017
Details	Arts and crafts workshop by the participating artist Otani Workshop. Further details to follow.
Location	Civic Center Plaza <i>towa- le</i>
Admission	TBD. Prior registration required.

Special Talk

Date	Saturday, May 13, 2017 11:00–17:00 (tentative)
Moderator	Takashi Murakami
Details	Further details to follow.
Location	Towada Civic Cultural Center (tentative)
Admission	TBD. Reservations take priority.

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About the Artwork

The Towada Art Center is pleased to introduce ceramic artworks by contemporary ceramicists and artists alike, both domestic and international, from artist Takashi Murakami's personal collection.

Below is a selection of artists and artwork on exhibit during this exhibition.

**Approximately 300 pieces by 28 artists*



Fig. 3 | Yuji Ueda, *Jar*, 2015 25 × 28.5 × 11 cm

Yuji Ueda Ceramic artist. Born in 1975 in Shiga Prefecture, where he currently resides.



Fig. 4 | Otani Workshop, *Sleeping Child*, 2016 40 × 36 × 33 cm

Otani Workshop Artist. Born in 1980 in Shiga Prefecture, where he currently resides.



Fig. 5 | Yukiharu Kumagai, *Dogu/Dharma*, 2010 17 × 20.5 × 21 cm

Yukiharu Kumagai Ceramic artist. Born in 1978 in Kanagawa Prefecture. Kumagai. Currently resides in Yamanashi Prefecture.



Fig. 6 | Klara Kristalova, *Sleeping, with Dog*, 2010 48 × 16 × 24 cm

©Klara Kristalova, Courtesy of Galerie Perrotin

Klara Kristalova Artist. Born in 1967 in Prague, Czech Republic. Currently resides in Sweden.



Fig. 7 | Aso Kojima, *Large Jar*, 2014 34 × 52.5 × 21 cm

Aso Kojima Ceramic artist. Born in 1978 in Kyoto. Currently resides in Nagano.



Fig. 8 | Yoshitomo Nara, *Girl with Tongue Out*, 2010 28 × 37 × 28 cm
© Yoshitomo Nara

Yoshitomo Nara Artist. Born in 1959 in Aomori.



Fig. 9 | Kazunori Hamana, *Jar*, 2015 39 × 35 × 14.5 cm

Kazunori Hamana Ceramic artist. Born in 1969 in Osaka. Currently resides in Chiba.



Fig. 10 | Yuji Muraki, *Torn Jar with Ame-yu*, 2016 36 × 31 × 16 cm

Yuji Muraki Ceramic artist. Born in 1958 in Kanagawa. Currently resides in Shizuoka.



Fig. 11 | Shin Murata, *Torn Jar*, 2013 90 × 65 × 48 cm

Shin Murata Ceramic artist. Born in 1970 in Kyoto, where he currently resides.

*Please contact the museum if you are interested in renting any of the pieces.

*Please use the main visual (Figure 1 on p. 1 of this press release) when posting only one image.

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