

PRESSBOOK

MR.

Bijutsutecho

June 2015



BIJUTSUTECHO
Spring 2015
Xiaojin Wu



Goin To A Go-go!, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 250 x 648 cm



Left: Give me Your Wings: Think Different, 2012, mixed media Installation
Photo: Joshua White
Right: Ours, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 194 x 162 cm
Courtesy: Galerie Perrotin



Mr.



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"Perico-Henyo" Papayo Edition "Takeshi-don", 2004–06.
Merganser, steel, acrylic resin, iron, various fabrics, 338 x 136 x 134 cm
Courtesy: Galerie Perrotin

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Cutting Critique
of the Sugar-coated Kind



Photo: Joyce Yung Production

Mr.

Born 1969 in Cupa, Japan. Lives in Saitama, Japan

- > 1998 Joined Takashi Murakami's Hiropon Factory (currently known as Kaikai Kiki), becoming a lead disciple of Murakami
- > 1999 Showcased solo exhibition "Mr., Painter of Alps," Tomo Koyama Gallery, Tokyo
- > 2000 Joined in the "Superflat" exhibition organized by Takashi Murakami, featured at Parco Galleria amongst other venues
- > 2002 Participated in "Coloriage" at Fondation Cartier, Paris
- > 2003 Presented solo exhibition at Galerie Perrotin, Paris
- > 2014 Produced the music video "It Girl" for Pharrell Williams. Unveiled first solo show in the USA with "Live On: Mr.'s Japanese Neo-Pop" at Seattle Art Museum's Asian Art Museum

The work of Mr., a protégé of Takashi Murakami, is rooted in *otaku* subculture and closely tied to the "superflat" style that lies at the core of Japanese pop art. It is marked by an obsessive interest in anime and manga, as the artist himself claims. "I've had one eye on anime since the day I was born." His saucer-eyed protagonists are seemingly an embodiment of *kawaii* (cute) Japanese pop art, but beneath these upbeat images of school girls and playful scenes of a fantasy world, the sticky-sweetness of candy gives way to an underlying darkness.

In Mr.'s first US museum solo show, titled "Live On: Mr.'s Japanese Neo-Pop," at the Seattle Art Museum's Asian Art Museum, the works selected—installation, paintings, and film—reflect Mr.'s personal and artistic responses to traumas—whether natural disaster, war, or psychological angst—and his way of expressing defiance against such adversity. Beneath the surface of colorful imagery in Mr.'s paintings—there lie frustrations and anxieties. But in this fantasy world, we live on.

Give me Your Wings: Think Different (2012), the central piece in the exhibition, is a massive mixed-media installation composed of found objects such as furniture, toys, clothes, and other refuse that Mr. collected over the course of three months. Mr. has always been disconcerted by the material waste in contemporary Japan, and the overwhelming masses of debris he saw after the 2011 tsunami and earthquake provided the impetus for this work. He nicknames it "Caterpillar" a motif inspired by the character Gregor Samsa in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1923). Like butterflies released from garbage-borne cocoons, twelve new paintings of cute and energetic girls adorn the gallery walls as part of the installation. To Mr., however, even these bright images are not as upbeat as they appear, expressing rather the spiritual poverty of post-war Japan. Reflecting on the irony that both military and civilian nuclear technologies have wrought disasters on the country, Mr. notes that even when a caterpillar metamorphoses into a butterfly, nothing good may come of it. ☺

By Xiaojin Wu