

PRESSBOOK

Takashi MURAKAMI

Wallpaper

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Takashi Murakami goes for gold in immersive Hong Kong show

From monumental sculptures to floral fantasies, step into the Japanese art star’s hypersaturated universe at Tai Kwun Contemporary



Installation view of Gold Room at ‘MURAKAMI vs MURAKAMI’, Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong. *Photography: Kitmin Lee. © 2019 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved*

Tai Kwun Contemporary has mounted an ambitious major exhibition of Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, revealing dazzling and diverse new work ranging from paintings, sketches and video animations to monumental sculptures and costumes that has put the space on the map of the contemporary art world.

Murakami says the Hong Kong institution’s Herzog & de Meuron-designed building inspired the pieces. ‘I was very excited when I heard they were the designers,’ he says. ‘They are my favourite architects and immense spaces like this are hard to come by. They immediately reminded me of how I was first moved by contemporary art and I wanted to reflect this feeling embodied in the building.’



Installation view of the Flower Room at 'MURAKAMI vs MURAKAMI'. Photography: Kitmin Lee. © 2019 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co, Ltd. All Rights Reserved

This entailed transforming two large halls into immersive sensory-driven environments, completely integrating floors, walls and ceiling with gold leaf that provides a mesmerising backdrop to Murakami's *Enso* paintings – a circle sprayed over embossed patterns of skulls to symbolise emptiness and infinity. Murakami holds a PhD in *nihonga*, a refined hybrid of European and traditional Japanese painting. In another gallery, a floor artwork depicts an apocalyptic jumble of skulls, which visitors must cross to see *The Birth Cry of a Universe*, a 4.5m tall gold leaf-clad sculpture that took ten years to complete.

Murakami says he always conceives different themes for gallery shows, but Tai Kwun Contemporary offered a novel – and liberating – experience. ‘I didn’t have to think about whether this will immediately sell or not, so I could think instead about creating works that fit in this space.’ Other highlights include a room dedicated to Murakami’s own eclectic collection, with works by postwar artists who influenced him and the first exhibition of his cosplay costumes, custom designed in collaboration with Tokyo-based stylist and costume designer Kazuki Yunoki and presented in glass boxes on life-size pure white Murakami mannequins adopting his trademark animated stances.

There are also paintings inspired by British artist Francis Bacon’s surreal distorted works, meticulously detailed sketches in preparation for a painting of *Tan Tan Bo*, animated film, an alter-ego of Murakami based on a manga character by Mizuki Shigeru, and two large cartoon-like outdoor sculptures, *KaiKai* and *Kiki*. Even the pop-up store, where visitors can stock up on special edition badges, posters and plush flower cushions, stands out with a hyperstimulated skull-pattern carpet, mirrored black and silver wallpaper and neon wall art, in true Murakami fashion. §



Costumes at 'MURAKAMI vs MURAKAMI'. Photography: Kitmin Lee. © 2019 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved



Bacon: Three Studies of Lucian Freud, Red and Black, 2017, by Takashi Murakami, acrylic and platinum leaf on canvas mounted on aluminium frame. Photography: Kitmin Lee. Courtesy of Collection of DK. © 2017 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved



Bacon: Three Studies of Lucian Freud, Red and Black, 2017, by Takashi Murakami, acrylic and platinum leaf on canvas mounted on aluminium frame. Photography: Kitmin Lee. Courtesy of Collection of DK. © 2017 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved



From left, Bacon: Scream, 2019, acrylic, gold and platinum leaf on canvas mounted on aluminium frame; and Tan Tan Bo Black Hole, 2019, acrylic, gold and platinum leaf on canvas mounted on aluminium frame. Photography: Kitmin Lee. © 2019 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved



KaiKai, 2019, platinum leaf on bronze; and *KiKi*, 2019, platinum leaf on bronze. Photography: Guillaume Zicarelli. © 2019 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved