

Takashi Murakami

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Paul Schimmel, chief curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, has in recent weeks been a fixture in Brooklyn as he mounts a major retrospective of the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami. The show, which he organized, closed on Feb. 11 at the Los Angeles museum's Geffen Contemporary space and will open on April 5 in Brooklyn.



Workers assemble Mr. Pointy, a large-scale sculpture by Takashi Murakami at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

“It took 11 trucks driving across country to get everything here,” Mr. Schimmel said as he surveyed the pieces of Mr. Murakami’s art in the rotunda and the battalion of installers at work. “The Geffen Contemporary is a large, theatrical space,” he added. “Brooklyn has more traditional galleries, so the layout here is more chronological, more classical.”



Parts of Mr. Pointy.

The show includes some 90 works, sampling Mr. Murakami’s entire whimsical world in paintings, wallpapers, colorful sculptures, drawings and a 20-minute animated video. It will consume 18,500 square feet of exhibition space spread over two floors.

This show is the Brooklyn Museum's largest after "Sensation: Young British Artists From the Saatchi Collection," which opened in 1999 to considerable furor over Chris Ofili's depiction of the Virgin Mary in a painting that included elephant dung. Mr. Murakami's retrospective is expected to generate talk of a different sort.



The large-scale sculpture.

Popularly known as the Warhol of Japan, Mr. Murakami, 46, has earned an international reputation for merging fine art with popular Japanese anime films and manga cartoons. Intent on exploring how mass-produced entertainment and consumerism are part of art, he teamed up with the fashion house Louis Vuitton in 2003 to create brightly colored versions of the classic LV monogram on Vuitton handbags.

The show — its title, appropriately, is "©Murakami" — includes a fully operational Louis Vuitton shop selling some of Mr. Murakami's designs for that luxury brand. A leather strap for a cellphone carries a \$220 price tag; handbags range from \$1,310 to \$2,210. He has designed three new patterned-canvas wall hangings just for this exhibition; printed in editions of 100 each, the first 50 will be offered at the shop for \$6,000 apiece, and the rest at \$10,000 apiece. Other leather goods designed for the show will be for sale too.



Takashi Murakami in front of one of his pieces at the Brooklyn Museum.

Mr. Murakami first became famous in the 1990s for a theory he called Superflat. Derived from traditional Japanese painting, it was adopted by the contemporary art world to indicate a mix of high and low art. The retrospective begins with his fantastical and sometimes dark universe from that period. Creatures like Mr. DOB, a Mickey Mouse-type character, and Mr. Pointy, another cartoonlike creature, inhabit this space alongside smiley-faced flowers and colorful mushrooms.

The artist's latest, largest and most colorful version of his Mr. Pointy character greets visitors just inside the museum's front door. Known as Tongari-kun in Japanese, this character is represented by a 23-foot-tall edition flanked by smaller pointy guards that wear different expressions — smiling, yawning, sleepy, etc.



The Los Angeles show attracted young people who had never been to the museum. “Many of the kids were first-time visitors, who came because they heard about the show through various kinds of cross-branding,” Mr. Schimmel said. “Names like Louis Vuitton, Kanye West and eBay.” [N.Y. Times](https://www.nytimes.com)