



start something original.



*If only I could do this, if only I could do that, 2005*  
Acrylic on canvas mounted on wood  
100cm x 100cm x 5cm  
Courtesy Serpentine Gallery, London.

**t**akashi Murakami, the Japanese *phenom* whose Pop-centric mix of *manga* (comic books), animé, and the virtual planes of a computer screen bore the hugely influential "Superflat" movement a decade ago, is passionate about the intersection of creation and commerce.

A product of a Japanese culture that steadily seduces its citizens with images of sophisticated luxuries, even as it celebrates a near obsession with cartoonish characters—*Hello, Kitty!*—Murakami walks a fine inventive line. His recent collaboration with Marc Jacobs for Louis Vuitton left some purists puzzled, even as it cemented his reputation among Westerners as that cool artist guy who made the season's most coveted (and knocked-off) designer handbag. Still, by his estimation, "A handbag can be seen as art. In 50 years time, I expect this one will be."

Murakami finds value, even beauty, in what is mass-produced, despite also noting the potential destructive power of the consumer machine. Some see the artist

as a shrewd businessman, others as the inevitable, computer-age evolution of the late Andy Warhol. Murakami produces his provocative inflatable sculptures, as well as his computer-generated images and three-dollar key chains in the "Hirpon Factory"—its name an obvious nod to the Warholian "superstar" era—just outside of Tokyo, where a team of underlings follow his exacting direction.

As prolific as the media-saturated culture that inspires him, his current passion is curating "Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture" for New York's Japan Society (April 8–July 24), its title a wry reference to the nickname for the atomic bomb. "Japan is very much like a little boy," says Murakami. "Japanese culture and society were completely flattened by the atomic bomb...Japan has not been allowed to mature in many ways, but that is what has led to the formation of the culture that is attracting global attention, as demonstrated in this show."

Murakami will wrap a banner around the entire facade of the Society's building, blatantly advertising what the city will witness from the exhibition: illustrated subway placards; fanciful, ad-driven imagery in Union Square; a sculpture on Fifth Avenue at 60th Street; and more. Much like the works of Takashi Murakami, the show lifts its themes from the world bazaar, presenting what is ubiquitous and asking it to be seen in a heightened light.



*Eco Eco Rangers Earth Force, 2005*

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Microsoft is proud to sponsor Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture at the Japan Society in New York City from April 8 – July 24, 2005. For more information please call 212-832-1155 or visit [www.japansociety.org](http://www.japansociety.org)

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