

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the impact of Superflat theory and practice of the artist and curator, Takashi Murakami. The thesis aims to analyse how contemporary transnational artistic activity functions via the work of Murakami and Superflat artists, including Chiho Aoshima and Aya Takano. From the blockbuster group exhibition, *Super Flat*, curated by Murakami, which debuted in the United States in 2001 at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, to the 2007-2009 ©MURAKAMI retrospective traveling from Los Angeles to Brooklyn then Frankfurt to Bilbao, the synthesis of ideas is showing the way to unprecedented directions in contemporary art. This investigation also links Murakami's work to that of American Pop artists Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons and explores how Superflat art functions within and contributes to the already distorted area between parallel structures, such as high and low, fine art and commercial production, or East and West.

When peeling back the layers of Superflat, there is a rich, beautiful and violent history. Recognising the fusion of tradition and technology, my research explores how Superflat artists are achieving international success by engaging in multiple outlets of creative expression and collaboration in the continuing context of globalisation and a consumer-driven art market. Images of anxiety and destruction are disguised as playful and marketable characters, and three-dimensional animation figures become cultural icons. Superflat explores the simulated, sensuous, colourful and obsessive "realities" that we inhabit on a global scale and captures a twenty-first century aesthetic. With reference to the representation of violence and disaster in art and popular culture, contemporary Japan's construction of national identity and the postwar "Americanization" of Japan, this thesis examines how the layering of ideas via cross-cultural exchange produces a new form of hybrid and hyper Pop art.

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