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NEW TRENDS IN ART

WORKING WITH POP IMAGES

SPECIAL FEATURE ON TAKASHI MURAKAMI

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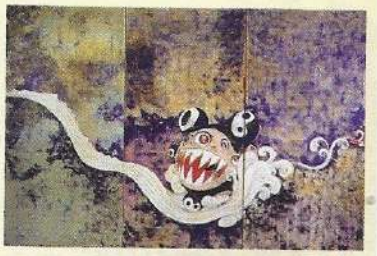

In this painting, contemporary Japanese artist Takashi Murakami (see pages 4–7) transforms an image from popular culture by combining Mickey Mouse with images from traditional Japanese art.

Cover: Takashi Murakami (Japanese, b. 1962). *727* (detail), 1996. Acrylic on canvas mounted on board. Three panels: 118 x 180 in. overall. Courtesy of Blum & Poe, Los Angeles. ©1996 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Pictured above is the entire work.

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Ideas that Pop!

For nearly a century, artists have been inspired by the ideas and images found in popular culture

Can a bicycle wheel be art? How about a wooden stool? In 1913, the year that French artist Marcel Duchamp (mar-SELL Du-SHOM) made this sculpture *Bicycle Wheel* (bottom left), art was generally considered something found only in a museum or gallery, something separate from everyday life. Duchamp decided to test this separation by creating what he called *readymades*, sculptures that were actually commercially manufactured objects. By calling these common objects art and placing them in galleries and museums, Duchamp inspired people to notice items they used every day but had always taken for granted. He also inspired generations of artists who came after him to take a closer look at something else most people are surrounded by but pay little attention to: popular culture.

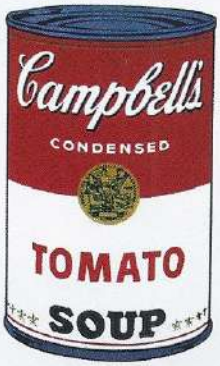
In an age where products are mass-produced in factories, it's hard to walk into a store and find something unique. Pop artist Andy Warhol (WAR-hall) played with this idea by choosing one of the most mass-produced subjects possible: the Campbell's soup can. Before becoming a fine artist, Warhol worked in advertising where he learned the

▼ "My image is a statement of the symbols of the impersonal products on which America is built." —Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol (1928-1987), *Campbell's Soup I*, 1968. (Four from portfolio of ten screenprints, 35 x 23 in., printed on white paper. Photo credit: The Andy Warhol Foundation, Inc. / Art Resource, NY. ©2009 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts / ARS, New York.

▲ "I am interested in ideas, not merely in visual products." —Marcel Duchamp

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), *Bicycle Wheel*. New York, 1951 (third version, after lost original of 1913). Metal wheel mounted on painted wooden stool, 50 1/2 x 25 1/2 in.; stool, 23 ¾ in. high. Gift of the Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection. (595.1967 a-b). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. ©Digital Image ©The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. ©2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.



◀ "I enjoy the simple abstraction of mirrors and how they bring the viewer into the work." —Jeff Koons

Jeff Koons (b. 1955), *Balloon Dog (Blue)*, 1994-2000. High chromium stainless steel with transparent color coating, 121 x 143 x 45 in. The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica. ©Jeff Koons.

techniques that commercial artists use to mass-produce images. To create this print (page 2, near left), he used a commercial process called silkscreen that pushes ink though stencils. The result is an image made up entirely of **sharp-edged** shapes of **flat color** (red, blue, purple, and gold) with no shading or value changes. The **precise craftsmanship** of Warhol's work makes it feel impersonal. The **repetition** of the cans makes each can seem less special. Through the language of commercial art and popular culture, Warhol has transformed a simple soup can into a statement expressing how easily an individual can get lost in a crowd.

American artist Jeff Koons likes to work with sappy or silly popular images. Some of his past subjects include mermaids, hearts, and cute animals from greeting cards. In the sculpture above, Koons transforms a balloon dog, something a clown might make at a child's birthday party, into a 10-foot-tall work of art. As viewers walk around it, they catch glimpses of their reflections warping and **distorting** on its **slick** blue **surface** as though being seen in a funhouse mirror. By inflating this balloon animal to giant **scale** and giving it a mirrored surface, Koons confronts, challenges, and amuses viewers with their own silliness.

American artist Elizabeth Murray once said, "All my ideas about art came from looking at comics." This may be an exaggeration, but the influence of cartoon art can be seen clearly in Murray's work. In the print below, Murray uses the visual language of cartoons: **stylized, hard-edged shapes, curving black outlines,** and **bright, even color.** This work is made up of a jumble of positive **interlocking shapes** surrounded by white areas of **negative space.** Some of the shapes are recognizable, while others have been **abstracted.** The viewer can make out a dark-blue paintbrush, a green bow tie, a small orange shoe, and a tiny purple bone—all objects that might be found lying around the artist's studio. These images are framed on four sides by cartoonish stretcher bars, the wooden bars over which painters stretch canvas.

Unlike artists who use pop culture to comment on society, Murray uses it to look inward. Her work is a sort of visual diary in which she records the everyday objects that make up her world.

▼ "The shapes were really meaningful to me. I found a way to use them to find out a lot about myself." —Elizabeth Murray

Elizabeth Murray (1940-2007), *Biff Alley*, 2006. Three dimensional lithographic construction, 35 x 41¼ x 1 1/8 in. Edition 25. Published by Universal Limited Art Editions. © Elizabeth Murray/Universal Limited Art Editions, 2006.

Takashi Murakami

A contemporary Japanese pop artist brings his country's artistic traditions into the present

When contemporary Japanese artist Takashi Murakami (ta-KA-she murr-ah-KAH-me) invented the term *superflat*, he meant it to express many ideas at once. Most visibly, the word describes the look of both Murakami's work and the art he draws his inspiration from: images from Japan's unique popular culture.

Murakami was trained in traditional Japanese art at the Tokyo National University of Arts and Music. There he was influenced by Japan's long tradition of mass-produced images. For hundreds of years, powerful prints like the one on this page were a part of Japan's popular culture. Artists drew shapes or lines on blocks of wood, carved away the negative space around their drawings, and used black and colored ink to print the remaining positive shapes onto paper. Woodblock printing allowed artists to cheaply and easily make many copies of the same picture to use for anything from illustrations for travel guides, to programs and posters for theater productions.

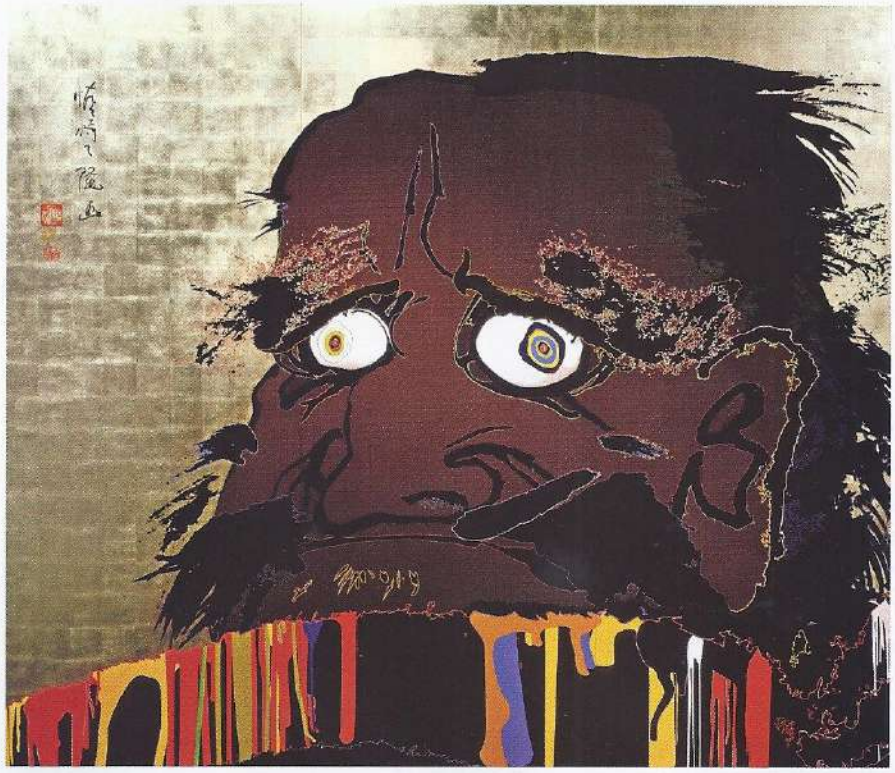
This print was made in 1848 by the Japanese printmaker Utagawa Kuniyoshi (oo-tah-GAH-wah koo-nee-YO-she). It depicts a theater actor playing the role of Daruma (DAH-roo-mah), the monk who founded the religion of Zen Buddhism. One of the beliefs of Zen is that nothing should be taken too seriously, which is why Daruma is often shown as comically cross-eyed. The **gestural, curved black lines** that make up the cloth draped over Daruma's head resemble brushstrokes, and make the print look like a painting. But unlike a painting, this print is made up of areas of **solid color** that don't shift in **value** or **tone**. The image is entirely **two-dimensional** without any modeling, perspective, or depth.

▶ **This 19th century woodblock print combines bold outlines with areas of flat color.**

Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Japanese, (1797–1861). Publisher: Ibaya Senzaburo (Dansendo). Japanese, *Portrait of Daruma on a Hanging Scroll: Actor Nakamura Utaemon IV as Daruma* (detail). Japanese, Edo period, 1848, Woodblock print; ink and color on paper. Vertical oban. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. William Sturgis Bigelow Collection. Photo ©2009 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

In the two works on the opposite page, Murakami

► **In these two computer-made images, contemporary Japanese pop artist Takashi Murakami updates the traditional Japanese woodblock print on page 4.**



(Top): Takashi Murakami (b. 1962). *That I may time transcend, that a universe my heart may unfold*, 2007. Acrylic and silver gold leaf on canvas mounted on board, 3 panels: 95 1/2 x 111 in. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, New York. ©2007 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. (Bottom): Takashi Murakami (b. 1962). *I open wide my eyes but see no scenery. I fix my gaze upon my heart*. 2007. Acrylic and platinum leaf on canvas mounted on board, 95 1/2 x 111 in. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, New York. ©2007 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

has created an updated take on Daruma. Like Kuniyoshi's print, Murakami's works are made up of areas of **flat, solid color.** They also have black lines that resemble brushstrokes. But instead of being printed from woodblocks, these two images were made with the help of a computer. Using a computer allows Murakami to easily make different versions of the same image. The face on the top has dark skin, is seen against a gold background, and appears to ooze bloodlike drips of bright paint. The light-skinned image below is seen in front of a platinum background. These different versions represent different characteristics of Daruma, a symbol of Japanese spirituality.

Murakami's term *superflat* also expresses his ideas about how Japan's popular culture changed after World War II. During the war, Japan joined Nazi Germany in fighting the Allied Powers (America, England, and the Soviet Union). In 1945, after many of its cities were bombed to the ground, Japan surrendered. The American forces that had helped destroy the country then helped to rebuild it. Today, Japanese cities are full of glass skyscrapers and fast food chains, and Japan's popular culture reflects America's influence.

What clues do Murakami's two images of Daruma provide about his view of contemporary Japan? Like Andy Warhol's soup cans (on page 2), Murakami's **repeated** images of Daruma don't seem unique or special. Daruma's eyes—wobbly, **concentric circles** of toxic, **clashing color opposites**—make him look confused, and overwhelmed as if he's not sure what to make of Japan's current culture. By blending references to Japanese spirituality and prewar traditions with American pop art and computer imaging, Murakami flattens many layers of culture and history into one slick surface.

Murakami's Characters

"You could go so far as to say that anime is part of Japan's national consciousness." —Takashi Murakami

▲ **These stills from the animated films *Spirited Away* (top), and *Akira* (bottom) show two common themes from Japanese manga and anime: cute creatures and monstrous mutants.**

(Top): Hayao Miyazaki (b. 1941), Writer and Director, *Spirited Away*, 2001. Photo credit: Studio Ghibli/Disney/Photofest. ©Studio Ghibli/Walt Disney Pictures.
(Bottom): Directed by Katsuhiro Otomo (b. 1954), *Akira*, 1988. Streamline Pictures/ Photofest. ©Streamline Pictures.

Just as woodblock prints (see page 4) represent the popular culture of Japan's past, Japanese comic books, called *manga*, and Japanese animated films, called *anime* (AH-nee-may), have become the face of Japan's new popular culture. Japanese comic book artists and animators use a visual style similar to that of woodblock artists—**solid areas of flat color** combined with **black outlines.** All three art forms tell stories that express complex themes.

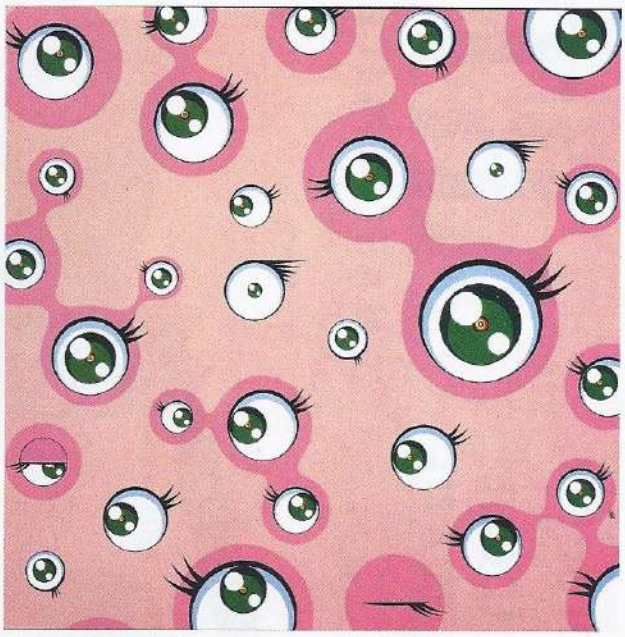
To understand manga and anime, it helps to know their history. Both began to take off after World War II, when the United States, an enemy of Japan during the war, was put in charge of Japan's reconstruction. During this time (1945–1952), Japanese artists were inspired by the comic books brought into the country by American soldiers, and by the cartoons (especially those made by Walt Disney) being shown on TV and in Japanese movie theaters.

As manga and anime developed, they began to express some of the stress caused by the war. Following its defeat, Japan was no longer a major military power. In fact, the country was completely powerless. The oversized eyes, childlike features, and cute creatures seen so often in manga and anime, such as the characters in the animated film *Spirited Away* (top), seem to visually represent the helpless, childlike role of postwar Japan.

Manga and anime images also have a darker side. Monstrous mutants appear as often as cute creatures do. During the war, the United States destroyed two Japanese

cities with a new and terrible weapon: the atomic bomb. Many of the people who escaped these blasts later suffered from mysterious illnesses caused by the invisible effects of radiation. In *Akira* (opposite page, bottom), an animated film which takes place after an atomic explosion, a character transforms into a mutant made up of out-of-control, **biomorphic** (bodylike) **shapes**. The unstable, constantly changing **forms** of such mutant characters seem to represent the frightening, unknown effects of nuclear radiation on the human body.

▶ How does Murakami combine cute and monstrous qualities in this image?



Takashi Murakami (b. 1962). *Jellyfish Eyes*, 2001. Acrylic on canvas mounted on board, 39 3/8 x 39 3/8 x 2 in. Courtesy Marianne Boesky Gallery. ©2001 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

Because Takashi Murakami's art deals with both past and present Japanese culture, manga and anime are as much a part of his work as are traditional woodblock prints. In *Jellyfish Eyes* (right), Murakami combines cute and monstrous elements by **repeating** manga-style eyes to make a kind of living wallpaper. Eyelike **concentric circles** float eerily on a pink background that suggests skin. The **three-dimensional** quality of the eyes set against the **flat background** adds to the viewer's sense of discomfort. The artist makes the eyes express different human emotions by varying each eye's **scale**, **placement**, eyelash, eyelid, and the direction of the gaze. The **organic** bright pink shapes around some eyes suggest the fluid **movement** of jellyfish.

The images seen in the painting below and the one on the cover show different versions of the same character. Murakami named this character Mr. DOB after a Japanese phrase that roughly translates to "why?" Mr. DOB is Murakami's mascot, the way that Mickey Mouse is the mascot for Disney. His round ears even make him look like Mickey. But unlike that always recognizable mouse, Mr. DOB is constantly changing shape. The work on the left contains three versions of Mr. DOB. The small Mr. DOB standing on the larger one's tongue has cute, childlike proportions, and a body made of **simple, rounded shapes**. The giant mutant Mr. DOB that fills the left side of the image is made up of **swirling shapes**, **repeated** eyes, and has a mouth full of **jagged, angular** teeth. A third, tiny Mr. DOB peers out from the bottom of the painting.

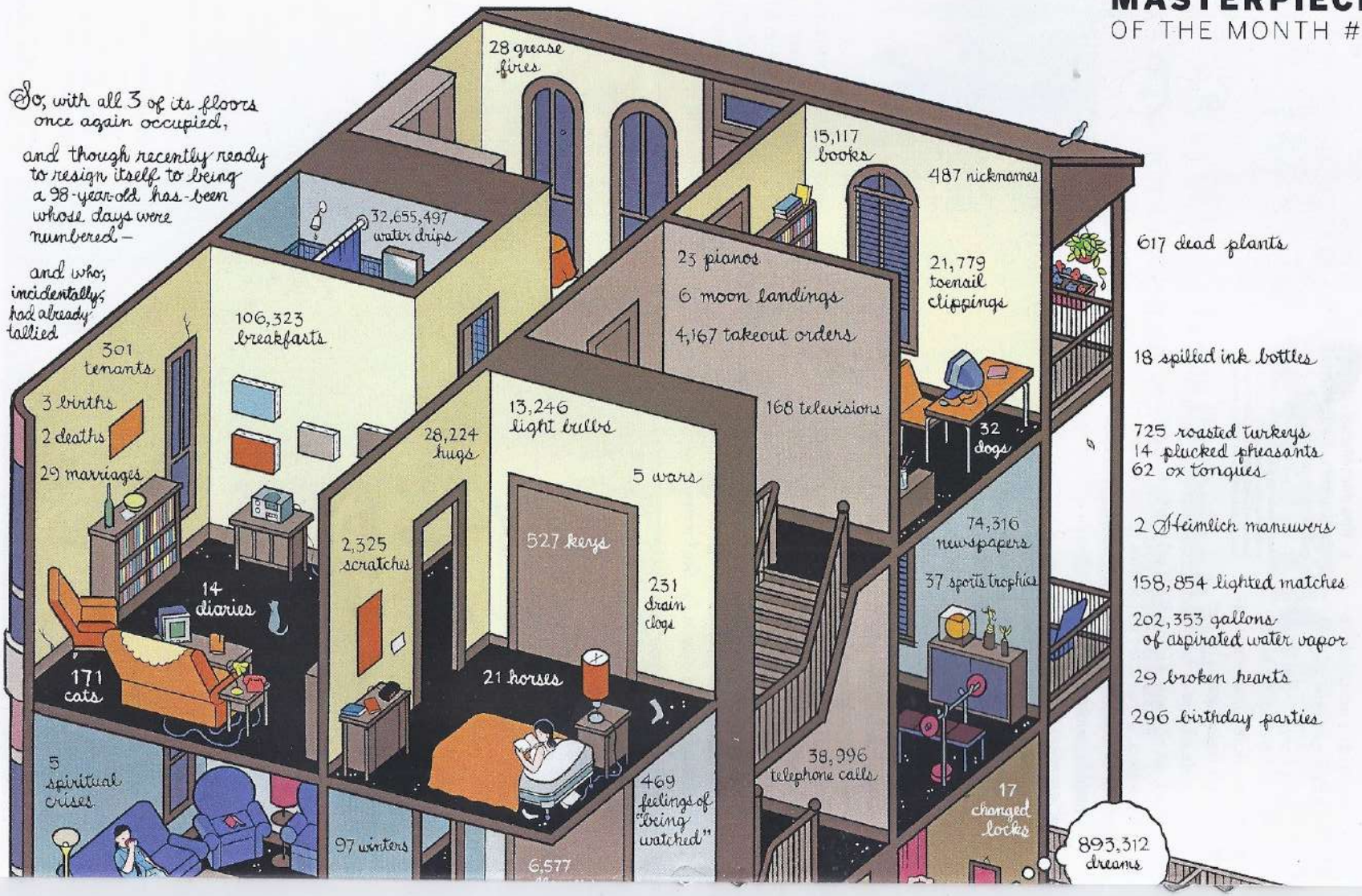
Unlike the **clear, precise** look of the images on this page, the cover image looks as worn as an ancient painting. The Mr. DOB on the cover seems to have traveled back in time to prewar Japan. Maybe this shape-shifting, time-traveling mascot represents Murakami himself: an artist whose work captures the changing shape of Japanese culture past and present.

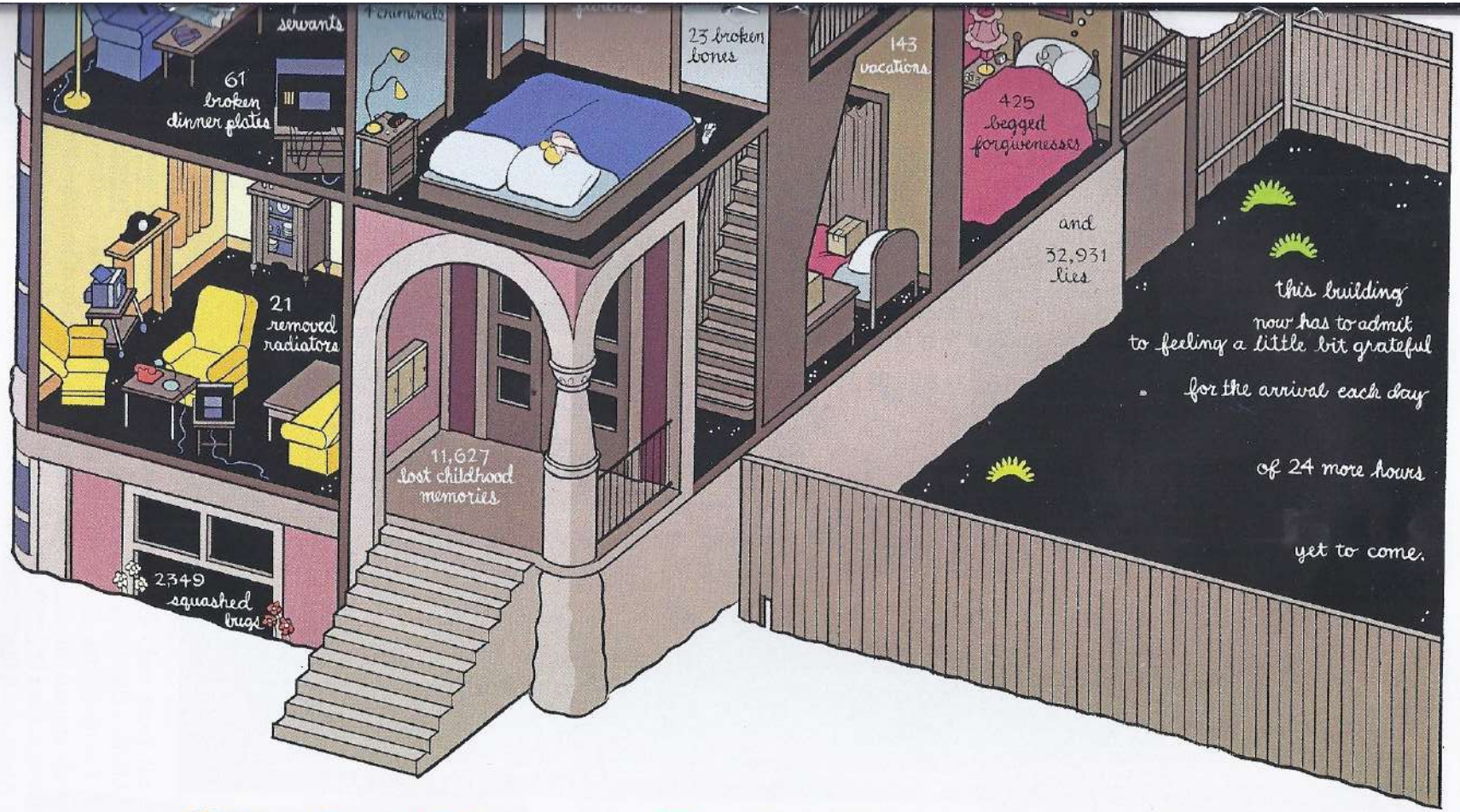
◀ Scale shifts help bring out the differences among these different versions of Mr. DOB.

Takashi Murakami (b. 1962). *Homage to Francis Bacon (Study of Georges Dyer)* (detail), 2002. Acrylic on canvas on board, 47 1/4 x 47 1/4 x 1 15/16 in. Courtesy Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris & Miami. ©2002 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

"The 'essence' of comics is the weird process of reading pictures, not just looking at them."
–CHRIS WARE

SCHOLASTIC ART
MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH #6





Chris Ware (b. 1967), *Building Stories* (September 23, 2000), Introduction Part III, 2005. © 2009 Chris Ware.

Chris Ware: Building Stories

You have seen how Elizabeth Murray and Takashi Murakami bring art inspired by comic books into museums and galleries. You can find Chris Ware's art in museums and galleries, but you can also find it for sale in comic book stores. Chris Ware is an American comic book artist whose work plays to the strengths of his medium.

Unlike paintings or sculptures, comics progress in a sequence of images, letting the artist's ideas take shape as the viewer scans from panel to panel. This makes them the perfect medium for telling stories. Chris Ware's comics tell stories, but not about superheroes. Instead, they follow ordinary people whose "adventures" are the experiences of everyday life. Some stories unfold over many panels and pages, and jump around in time from the present to the past and back again.

In *Building Stories* (above), Ware stops time to show the entire history of a building in a single image. This building is missing its walls and roof, allowing the viewer a glimpse of the lives of the residents. Ware uses both visuals and words to tell his story: his detailed drawings show everything that's happening in the present, and his words give a form to the now-invisible events each one of these rooms has seen.

Pop Inspirations

Three contemporary artists who create images based on pop culture

"MY NAME IS INVADER. MY MISSION IS TO INVADE THE PLANET WITH VIDEO GAME CHARACTERS MADE WITH TILES THAT I PUT ON WALLS IN CITIES ALL OVER THE WORLD." —INVADER

VIDEO GAMES

The Paris-based artist known only as Space Invader gets his inspiration (and name) from the classic video game *Space Invaders*. Unlike the latest video games—which have realistic **three-dimensional** graphics—first-generation games like *Space Invaders* are **two-dimensional** and blocky. It's easier to tell that their graphics are made of pixels—the tiny dots on a TV or computer monitor that make up an image.

In *Space Invaders*, a swarm of tiny space aliens invades Earth. Invader "invades" Earth by carefully hiding video game characters in many unexpected locations throughout the world's major cities. He makes his characters out of square tiles, with each colored tile meant to represent a pixel. In the image above, rows of blue, red, tan, green, and black tiles form a recognizable image: Mario, a classic Nintendo character. But if you stare at this image for a while, it will break down into a **geometric abstraction** that looks a little "alien." Invader's characters can be found in cities all over Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, and the United States. Space Invader's message is expressed each time a person in one of those cities turns a corner, sees a tiny tile character, and takes a moment out of his or her day to think about where it came from and why it's there.

▲ Space Invader, *Mario*, 2004. Mosaic tiles on wooden board. 50 x 40 cm. ©Space Invader. Image courtesy of Jonathan LeVine Gallery.

"MY FIGURES ARE DRAWN WITH MINIMAL DETAIL, BUT RETAIN THE QUIRKS THAT REVEAL THE IDENTITY OF THE MODEL." —JULIAN OPIE

COMICS

What is it about our faces that makes each of us look different and lets our friends and relatives recognize us instantly? Some clues can be found in the pages of comic books, where characters made up of **bold lines** and **flat color** show distinct personalities that stay true from panel to panel. To explore what it is about people that makes them unique, American artist Julian Opie uses the visual style of comic books to create portraits that strip away **details** and **simplify** what's left. In his portraits, Opie uses the absolute minimum needed to identify an individual.

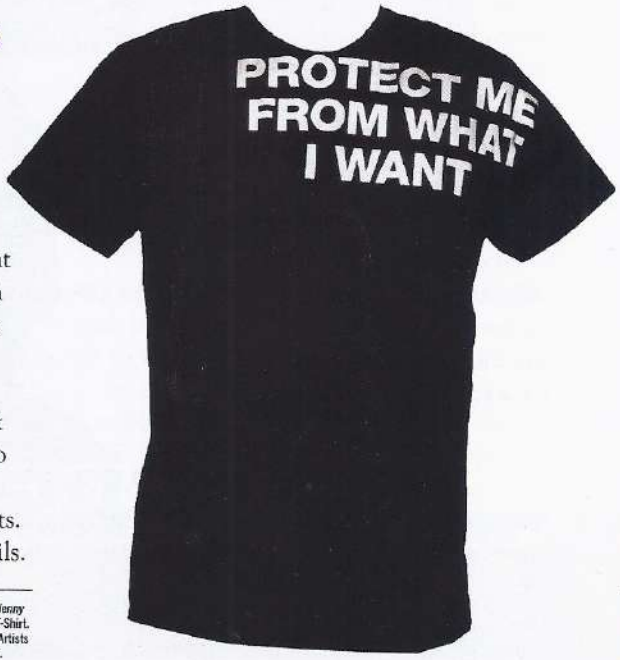
The two portraits above—*Bijou, Model* and *Gary, Popstar*—have a lot of similarities. Both consist of only two colors plus black and in both, simple shapes define facial features: dots stand for eyes and noses, and horizontal lines represent mouths and eyebrows. But the personalities expressed by these portraits are as different as can be, thanks to **placement**, **shape** and **proportion**. Imagine how different Bijou would look if the lines of her lips were thicker or shorter, or if the shape of her eyebrows were flatter and less arched. Imagine how different Gary would look if the dots that make up his eyes were larger, or placed closer together. Other elements in the portraits act as cultural symbols. Bijou's stylish haircut paired with her arched neck make it easy to believe that she's a model. What might Gary's haircut and beard tell you about him?

▲ (Left): Julian Opie (b. 1958), *Bijou, Model*, 2004. Vinyl on wooden stretcher, 192 x 171 cm. ©Julian Opie, www.julianopie.com. Courtesy of the Barbara Krakow Gallery. (Right): Julian Opie (b. 1958), *Gary,Popstar*, 1998. ©Julian Opie, www.julianopie.com. Courtesy of the Barbara Krakow Gallery.

"I WANTED TO SEE IF I COULD MAKE ANYTHING THAT WOULD BE OF USE TO PEOPLE ON THEIR WAY TO LUNCH, PEOPLE WHO DON'T CARE ABOUT ART." —JENNY HOLZER

T-SHIRTS

Like Space Invader, American artist Jenny Holzer makes art that people encounter in unexpected places. But Holzer works with words instead of images. She begins by composing sayings that express a truth or insight. One example is "Your oldest fears are the worst ones." Whether or not you agree with that statement, it's designed to get you thinking. In fact, it's something people might think to themselves but not say aloud. Holzer brings such thoughts out into the open and surprises people by attaching her words to objects that people encounter in everyday life, including baseball caps and T-shirts. Although she works with words, Holzer pays attention to visual details. In the T-shirt pictured to the right, the **bold**, silver text seems to leap off the black cloth, and its **asymmetrical** placement grabs the viewer's attention.



▶ Jenny Holzer (b. 1950), *Jenny Holzer: Protect Protect*. Men's T-Shirt. ©2009 Jenny Holzer, member Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Designing Award-Winn

As a student at Sunset High School in Portland, Oregon, Perry Maple earned some extra money by designing and selling skateboards, like the award-winning boards featured on the opposite page. But money isn't what drives 19-year-old Perry's passion for art. He loves telling stories through his characters and illustrations, and sharing those stories with others.

Currently a junior at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, Perry dreams of someday directing his own animated films. "It's a great feeling to create things that make people smile," Perry says. "It's a gift for them, and a gift back to you."

How did you first get involved in art?

As a child, I constantly doodled and made flipbooks. I would draw little people on each page and flip through the pages to see the characters come alive. Eventually, I started to design characters and write stories. I loved being able to create a world through my illustrations.

How did you create these award-winning images?

I was looking around for a skateboard with images from a video game that I liked. Instead, I found a Web site that let me have my own image printed on a skateboard deck. Eventually, I realized I could make money from my art, and I started to sell skateboards with my graphics on them. The board on the right and the images around it are some of my skateboard designs.

How did you get your ideas?

I'm really into music, especially jazz. Most of these designs were inspired by the energy, spirit, and lyrics of my favorite jazz songs. The character on the skateboard and in two of the other designs is based on the great jazz singers Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. The design on the top left was inspired by the open blue skies and hip, funky people who live in my hometown, Portland.

What makes a good character?

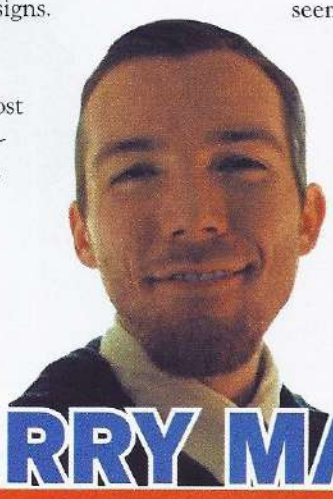
I think a character's silhouette is really important. There's something about Hello Kitty or Mickey Mouse that sticks in a person's mind. Their silhouettes are instantly recognizable. When I create a character, I try to use lots of varying shapes: large head against a small body, a square head balanced by triangular feet. Combining elements that don't necessarily go together will create a character that is interesting to the eye and sticks in a person's memory.

How do you arrange your compositions?

I try to create visual interest, so I place my characters at an angle or slightly off center. In the design on the top left, the characters are way on one side, and they're balanced by a lot of negative space to emphasize Portland's big blue sky. The shape of a skateboard deck also influences my compositions. Some compositions expand outward horizontally. Others, like the two on the right (seen horizontally), are vertical and seem more calm and stationary.

How does your style reflect your subject?

Music is sharp and clean. I like to design using that aesthetic. Jazz can be mellow. It can also be very exciting, especially when the orchestra and singer belt out a tune. In the design on the large skateboard (center), bright yellow rectangular shapes burst outward from the singer's head to create the feeling of a musical explosion. I extended the burst even



PERRY MAPLE

"I think a character's silhouette is really important. There's something about Hello Kitty or Mickey Mouse that sticks in a person's mind. Their silhouettes are instantly recognizable."

ing Skateboards

Perry Maple (b. 1989), *Skateboard Soul*, 2007.

further with energetic circular shapes that look like records or CDs. In some of the other designs, I used the same character with muted tones to show the mellow side of jazz.

How did you make the image on this skateboard?
I used a computer program called Adobe Illustrator, which allows you to draw outlines and shapes and fill them in with color. I began by drawing the shapes of the singer's facial features, and then shifted and adjusted them to get her expression just right. When I was happy with her face, I made her hair, body, and microphone, and laid the images on top of each other. I created the background last. I went in this order because the singer's image drives the piece. Once I had her, the most-important element, in place, I could build up and create her world.

What was your biggest challenge with these designs?
Making the images look like the ideas I had in my head.

Do you have any advice for aspiring artists like yourself?
Look at the work of other artists and find parts of their style that speak to you. It will expand your artistic knowledge and help you to develop your own style. Also, be confident and ambitious. If you're inspired to do something, try to do it. You can't really dream too big.

Perry's designs won a Gold Award in The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. To find out more about this program, ask your teacher to write to The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, Inc., 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-3999; call 212-343-6892; or go to www.scholastic.com/artandwriting.

▲ The **random pattern** of **overlapping** bubbles in Celina's **asymmetrical composition** flows from her character—a bright-orange fish. Celina has added more characters by filling some bubbles with orange's color opposite (blue), and giving them eyes.

▲ A **pattern** of back-to-back **mirror-image spirals** seems to swirl around Crits's cartoon character. The **solid, simple shapes** of the figure stand out from the **swirling, organic lines** that make up the background.

▲ The childlike figure in Joseph's **symmetrical composition** forms a **triangular shape.** This triangle is **echoed** and **repeated** in the three circular objects above. The **repetition** of shapes and colors (blues and reds) creates a visual link between the figure and its thoughts.

SCHOLASTIC ART WORKSHOP

Create a Cartoon Character

Create a bold pop image you can wear on a T-shirt

MATERIALS

- No. 2 pencils
- 8 1/2 x 11 in. 20lb copy paper
- 12 x 18 in. 60lb white sulfite paper
- Scotch removable tape
- Colored pencils or markers
- Hand-held pencil sharpener
- Vinyl eraser
- Newspaper comics, comic books, manga comics
- Tracing paper
- Variety of drafting tools: T-squares, rulers, compasses, templates, protractors, French curves
- Variety of stencils with interesting silhouettes
- Access to a copy machine (enlarges and reduces)
- Masking tape

Prepared by Charlie Dubnick and Nicholas R. Bonneur, Brooks Middle School, Bolingbrook, IL; Ned J. Nesti Jr., Morrison Junior High School, Morrison, IL. Assisted by Zachary N. Johnson, University of Chicago; Joshua C. Gunderlock, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL; Andrew J. Holt, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL; Galatea Kontos, Boston University, Boston, MA. Photos by Larry Gregory, Northern Illinois University, and Wade Duerkes, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL.

This issue has featured some contemporary artists who create characters inspired by popular culture. For this workshop, you'll create your own pop character, then adapt your image into a T-shirt design.

STEP 1 CREATING YOUR CHARACTER

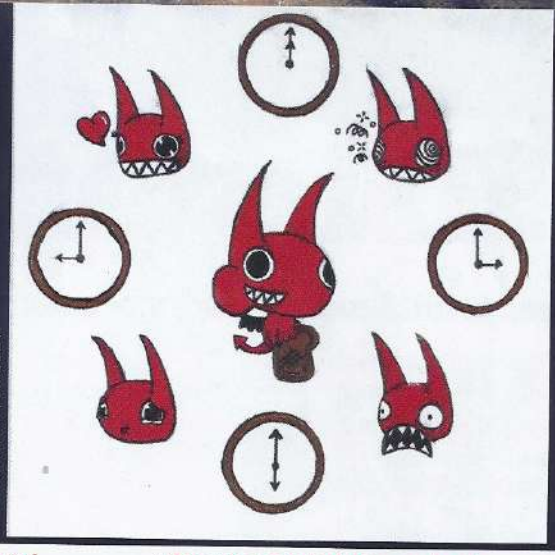
Begin by making preliminary sketches of stylized two-dimensional characters that express a mood or state of being (joy, prosperity, neediness, hunger, etc.), or a theme or idea (getting lost in a crowd; American cultural identity; etc.). Remember that cartoon characters have simple, easily readable visual characteristics. Cute ones are usually round and symmetrical, aggressive ones are angular and asymmetrical. Your character can be human, animal, plant, object, or various combinations of all.

STEP 2 COMPOSING THE IMAGE

Choose one character, and work with stencils and other drafting tools on copy paper to develop design elements for it to interact with. Explore different ways to relate your design elements to your character. You can make a large character surrounded by smaller shapes, a small character with a background formed by large shapes, or

NNEKA ORTEGANA

▲ **Warm colors** (red and yellow) and **organic shapes** give Nneka's design a happy, friendly quality. The flowerlike shape released from the toy panda's paw **repeats** and increases in **scale** until the flowers seem to take over the entire composition.



CHRISTIAN TOMSLEY

▲ The character at the center is the **focal point** of Christian's **radial composition**. The **repetition** and **variation** of the **circular** clock shape and the **angular** shapes of the figure seem to represent the artist's moods as they change throughout the day.

DEVIN MORRISSEY

▲ **Straight, geometric shapes** dominate Devin's **asymmetrical composition**. The **negative** sky **balances** the **green shape** towering over the tiny figure. The character's **scale** and gray **cast shadow** hint at his state of mind.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- Your character must have meaning to a broad audience. The simpler the image, the more people will relate to it.
- Create your character first, then develop other related or contrasting design elements.
- To create bold, flat areas of uniform color with colored pencil, use even pressure. Don't let white paper show through. When using markers, maintain uniform color by avoiding overlapping.

something in between. Experiment with various compositions. Use a photocopy machine and/or tracing paper to repeat, reverse, combine, enlarge, or reduce your shapes. Consider how your design would look on a T-shirt. Will it go only on the front of the shirt, or on the back and sleeves as well? Consider the shape of your design (square, circle, L-shape, etc.) and its composition (diagonal, symmetrical, or asymmetrical). Make sure your image is no larger than 8 1/2 x 11 in. so that it fits on a T-shirt.

STEP 3 FINALIZING THE DESIGN

Transfer your finished design onto sulfite paper. (To do this, place tracing paper over the image and trace the lines. Blacken the other side of the tracing paper with a pencil, then tape it on sulfite paper with the black side down. Retrace the original lines to transfer the image.)

You can also transfer your design using a window or light box. Limit your color scheme to black and two colors. If you transfer your design to a colorful T-shirt, the shirt's fabric will add a third color. Consider tracing or making additional photocopies of the design so you can experiment with various color combinations. Use markers or colored pencils to create bold, flat areas of uniform color. To keep colors clean, draw the black outlines last.

STEP 4 (OPTIONAL) MAKING A T-SHIRT

The simplest way to create your own T-shirt is to transfer your final design to a blank shirt and redraw it by hand using permanent markers. If your class has access to a computer, an inkjet printer, and an iron, you can transfer your design using low-cost kits such as Strathmore Iron-On Transfer Sheets or Avery Ink Jet T-shirt Transfers.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Pop Statements

How have the artists featured in this issue used popular culture to express ideas?

The artists in this issue use elements of popular culture to express ideas. But what are they saying? Below are some of the works featured in this magazine, along with a list of ideas, pop culture elements, and artists. Next to each word or phrase, write the letter of the image (or images) you think is most appropriate.

____ **1.** Clothing as art

____ **2.** Inspired by advertising

____ **3.** Japan's cultural identity

____ **4.** Playing with scale

____ **5.** Julian Opie

____ **6.** Inspired by video games

____ **7.** Individual getting lost in a crowd

____ **8.** Takashi Murakami

____ **9.** Art people encounter in unexpected places

____ **10.** Jenny Holzer

____ **11.** Cute and monstrous

____ **12.** Space Invader

____ **13.** What makes a person unique?

____ **14.** Creating a classic character or mascot

____ **15.** Superflat

____ **16.** Making private thoughts public

____ **17.** Inspired by anime

____ **18.** Andy Warhol

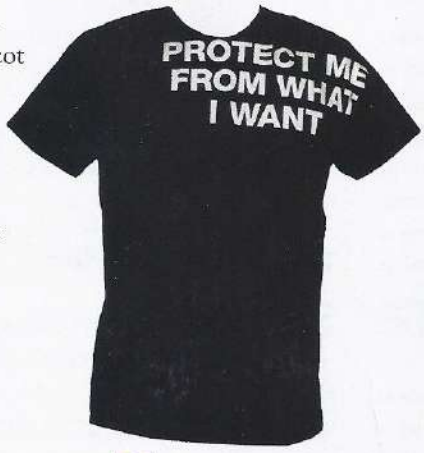
____ **19.** Inspired by silly popular images

____ **20.** Jeff Koons

A

B

C



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