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Takashi Murakami Brings *Jellyfish Eyes* to Hirshhorn

U.S. Tour of Artist's First Live-Action Feature Film Comes to D.C. May 22

Known for defining Superflat, an artistic tendency that both embraces and critiques elements of Japanese popular culture, Takashi Murakami introduces and discusses his first live-action feature film at the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden May 22 at 8 p.m. The artist is accompanying *Jellyfish Eyes* [Mememe no kurage] (2013) on a nine-stop screening tour of art institutions and cultural venues across the United States. The film combines Murakami's trademark anime-inspired visual aesthetic with broader themes of social change and self-empowerment. Blending computer-animated graphics and live-action cinematography, *Jellyfish Eyes* is a coming-of-age tale set in a post-Fukushima world, recalling Japanese monster films of the 1950s while embodying the promise of generational hope.

Jellyfish Eyes tells the story of Masashi, a young boy who moves to a sleepy town in the Japanese countryside with his mother in the wake of a natural disaster. After returning home from his new elementary school one day, Masashi discovers a flying jellyfish-like creature whom he befriends and names Kurage-bo. Masashi soon discovers that all his classmates have similarly magical pets, known as F.R.I.E.N.D.s, which are controlled by electronic devices that the children use to battle one another. Despite their playful appearances, however, these F.R.I.E.N.D.s turn out to be part of a sinister plot that will threaten the entire town.

Following the screening, Murakami will discuss the film and other aspects of his artistic practice with Hirshhorn assistant curator Mika Yoshitake. Simultaneous translation will be provided.

The free screening is held in the Hirshhorn's Ring Auditorium. Seating is limited and is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Presented in Japanese with English subtitles, the film is appropriate for both adults and children, but parents should be advised that bullying is depicted.

Jellyfish Eyes merchandise will be available in the Museum Shop. Costumed actors will greet visitors. "Gravity's Edge" galleries and the Museum Shop will remain open until 8 pm. The Ring Auditorium will open at 7:45 pm.

About the Artist

Murakami was born in 1962 in Tokyo and received his B.F.A., M.F.A. and Ph.D. from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. In 1996 in Tokyo, he founded the Hiropon factory, which later evolved into Kaikai Kiki Co., a large-scale art production and art management corporation. In 2000 he organized a paradigmatic exhibition of Japanese art titled “Superflat,” which traced the origins of contemporary Japanese visual pop culture to historical Japanese art.

Related Publication

A fully illustrated English-language book, “Jellyfish Eyes: A Takashi Murakami Film,” will be available for purchase at the screening. Featuring character, cast and crew bios and an Encyclopedia of F.R.I.E.N.D.s, the book also includes behind-the-scenes production stills and an interview with Murakami.

Public Programs

The Hirshhorn offers a range of interactive educational experiences designed to engage people of all interest levels in contemporary art; consult hirshhorn.si.edu for a complete schedule. Also available on the website is the museum’s archive of podcasts, which makes gallery walk-throughs and interviews with artists accessible internationally.

About the Hirshhorn

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Smithsonian’s museum of international modern and contemporary art, has nearly 12,000 paintings, sculptures, photographs, mixed-media installations, works on paper and new media works in its collection. The Hirshhorn presents diverse exhibitions and offers an array of public programs that explore modern and contemporary art. Located at Independence Avenue and Seventh Street S.W., the museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). Admission to the galleries and special programs is free. For more information about exhibitions and events, visit hirshhorn.si.edu. Follow the Hirshhorn on Facebook at facebook.com/hirshhorn, on Twitter at twitter.com/hirshhorn and on Tumblr at hirshhorn.tumblr.com. Or sign up for the museum’s eBlasts at hirshhorn.si.edu/collection/social-media. To request accessibility services, contact Kristy Maruca at marucak@si.edu or (202) 633-2796, preferably two weeks in advance.

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