

The Super Flat Manifesto

Takashi Murakami 2000

Takashi Murakami, "The Super Flat Manifesto," in *Super Flat* (Tokyo: Madra Publishing: 2000).

The world of the future might be like Japan is today—super flat.

Society, customs, art, culture: all are extremely two-dimensional. It is particularly apparent in the arts that this sensibility has been flowing steadily beneath the surface of Japanese history. Today, the sensibility is most present in Japanese games and anime, which have become powerful parts of world culture. One way to imagine super flatness is to think of the moment when, in creating a desktop graphic for your computer, you merge a number of distinct layers into one. Though it is not a terribly clear example, the feeling I get is a sense of reality that is very nearly a physical sensation. The reason that I have lined up both the high and the low of Japanese art in this book is to convey this feeling. I would like you, the reader, to experience the moment when the layers of Japanese culture, such as pop, erotic pop, otaku, and H.I.S.-ism, fuse into one.¹

Where is our reality?

This book hopes to reconsider "super flatness," the sensibility that has contributed to and continues to contribute to the construction of Japanese culture, as a worldview, and show that it is an original concept that links the past with the present and the future. During the modern period, as Japan has been Westernized, how has this "super flat" sensibility metamorphosed? If that can be grasped clearly, then our stance today will come into focus.

In this quest, the current progressive form of the real in Japan runs throughout. We might be able to find an answer to our search for a concept about our lives. "Super flatness" is an original concept of Japanese who have been completely Westernized.

Within this concept seeds for the future have been sown. Let's search the future to find them. "Super flatness" is the stage to the future.

¹ H.I.S. is a discount ticket agency in Japan. By lowering the price of travel abroad, the company had a profound effect on the relationship between Japan and the West.