



NEGOTIATING THE GLOBAL, ENGAGING WITH THE LOCAL

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NOTE

In standard Japanese word order, the surname is given first, followed by the personal or artist name. Here, the Japanese word order is followed for people born before 1868; but for modern artists and writers, names are in Western word order, with the surname last.

Traditional Japanese multipart works and handscrolls are meant to be viewed right to left.

The giving to art objects a cultural significance is always a local matter.

—Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge*.¹

Creator, social critic, entrepreneur, and media star Takashi Murakami (born in 1962) is one of the most celebrated artists of our day. Although his works have achieved their highest critical acclaim in the United States and Europe and have also been collected and exhibited primarily in the West, Murakami has been at the forefront of articulating a non-Western vision for contemporary art. Central to his thinking about his identity as a Japanese artist in the context of a global art market has been his recognition of the importance of American and European contributions to his production but also of the legacies of Japan's own past. This formulation has been greatly informed by the experiences of his undergraduate and graduate studies at Tokyo University of the Arts (formerly Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music) and his ongoing consultations with the preeminent art historian Nobuo Tsuji (born in 1932, fig. 2). Over the last forty years, Tsuji—in groundbreaking exhibitions, lectures, and writings—has constructed new narratives that have made it possible for audiences to bridge the historical and the contemporary in the art of Japan.

Since 2000, when Murakami issued his *Superflat Manifesto* outlining his own approach to image making and acknowledging the contributions of Tsuji's heralded book *Lineage of Eccentrics* (1970) in the development of his ideas, scholars and critics alike have frequently commented on Murakami's relationship with the art of the past, but often without detail. This book and the exhibition that inspired it, *Takashi Murakami: Lineage of Eccentrics, A Collaboration with Nobuo Tsuji and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, juxtapose Murakami's works with those from the Museum's traditional Japanese collections. In today's museums, transhistorical explorations have often been promoted as a means to engage audiences in new ways of seeing that transcend the standard investigations of connoisseurship, iconography and iconology, and social history. By juxtaposing works from different periods, cultures, and genres they challenge audiences with unorthodox questions suggested by the inherent formative powers of the art itself.²