San Francisco just got stranger: Takashi Murakami at the Asian Art Museum

BY SHARON ANDERSON

Celebrated artist Takashi Murakami will have his first-ever solo exhibition in the Bay Area. “Takashi Murakami: Unfamiliar People — Swelling of the Bay Area.” Takashi Murakami: Unfamiliar People — Swelling of the Bay Area will run through Feb. 12 at the Asian Art Museum.

Monstrosities and Digital Age Anxieties

Born and raised in Tokyo, Murakami was influenced by manga and anime culture. Monsters took hold of his psyche at a young age. At the age of 8, he first saw Goya’s terrifying 19th-century Saturn Devouring His Son in which a wide-eyed, open-mouthed specter consumes a bloody, dismembered figure. “The monsters that Goya painted...”


President and CEO of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, John O’Hara, says that Murakami’s exhibition is the first of its kind at a major U.S. museum.

“Takashi Murakami has a unique ability to engage viewers with his work, which often incorporates elements of cultural history and contemporary society. This exhibition at the Asian Art Museum will provide an opportunity for people to explore Murakami’s creative process and his approach to his art.”

Bay Area artists featured in community art exhibition

The de Young Open, which debuted in 2010, has returned to the museum this fall. The juried exhibition features the work of Bay Area artists and “aspires to magnify the voices and visions of those who are rooted locally, but thinking globally, both about the world we live in and the world of art.” It is the only exhibition of its kind at a major U.S. museum.

“The de Young Open,” 2023. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST. © 2023 TAKASHI MURAKAMI/KAIKAI

Bay Area Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco curators and other Bay Area artists selected nearly 900 works from over 7,500 submissions in a blind jury process. The artworks represent a wide range of styles, subjects, and mediums, and are displayed salon style — installed closely together floor to ceiling — which makes for a dramatic and presentation. They are arranged thematically (contemporary political and social issues, the urban environment, human figure, nature, abstraction, and surreal imagery) throughout several galleries.

Paul Gordon’s “Sierra Echo,” (2023) appears in “The deYoung Open.” IMAGE: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.
I SEE YOU
Several decades ago, there was a lot of pontification about Americans’ lost social connections, exemplified by a trend of (as the book title said) Bowling Alone. Younger Americans were supposedly not doing these neighborly social activities, and this somehow was a harbinger of the “collapse” of American community. Well, later researchers argued with that thesis, pointing out that Americans’ participation in group sports, such as softball leagues, had been increasing during the time of supposed national dissociation.

Similarly, our current dysfunction does not represent a permanent change in humanity. I don’t think humanity fundamentally changes. But enough people can be seriously discombobulated by social disruptions like a pandemic or war that it can create medium-term problems, and what we’re going through has echoes of another pandemic, the 1918 Spanish Flu, which also killed millions of people around the world.

Following the 1918 flu pandemic, people became more religious, according to a paper written for the London School of Economics and Political Science: “On the one hand, religious faith can provide a coping device to deal with personal distress following a negative shock . . . . On the other hand, individuals may turn to religion as a source of social insurance . . . . Intrinsic religiosity — rather than churchgoing — responds to unexpected negative events. Second, the increase in religiosity persists for up to a decade after the shock, suggesting a change in behavior rather than a temporary need for social insurance.”

Much ado has been made about recent surveys showing a decline in religious affiliation, even before the pandemic. But critics of religion have been wrong to interpret that as meaning there was some huge upswell of scientific rationalism taking center stage. People haven’t been dropping religious belief; they’ve been dropping participation in religious organizations. They’re dropping the ties that built their communities, self-image and self-worth. During and after the pandemic, what rose in popularity in its place? Arguably another religion: QAnon and other far-fetched conspiracy ideologies.

Similarly, the 1920s, coming on the heels of the big flu epidemic, also saw the rise of racial extremism, “Scopes Monkey Trial” fundamentalism, and the resurgence of the Klan.

In 2017, Dr. Murthy was in San Francisco talking about stress and social connection. “As we think about how to build a more connected society, which I believe is an essential part of building a country that has a high level of emotional well-being, we have to think about how to build more opportunities to create those mutually beneficial relationships, because that’s ultimately what’s going to help to reduce our rates of loneliness.”

Go shopping. Eat out. Return to a church or synagogue. Overtip your waiter or waitress and smile at them. We can do this.
CHEETOS AND TEQUILA

Reynolds Rap continued from cover

Sources (who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retribution) told me that SFPUC chief strategy officer and assistant general manager of external affairs Juliet Ellis decided which nonprofits would get money, and Kelly stood by his beleaguered deputy supervisor of eight trips together per year with an annual price tag of nearly $24,000, all billed to SFPUC ratepayers. (Not long after Ellis stood by that column, the FBI subpoenaed their travel records.)

Ellis and Kelly go back a long way. In 2014, KidSton was hired as a business developer and counting on Daniels and the OEWD Economic Recovery Unit. Remember, when Jones was arrested, a source told me that Jones had “a multitude of city employees to whom he gives kickbacks in exchange for doing his ‘dirty work.’ ”

This whole sordid tale is reminiscent of a telenovela.

CheeTea and Tequila

As if this whole sordid tale wasn’t already reminiscent of a telenovela, it turns out Ellis wasn’t just Kelly’s assistant general manager of external affairs, she was his literal affair. I got word about the couple in a March 2020 column regarding their frequent trips together, including a personal junket to Mexico where they snacked on tequila and earned the best scores from Juliet, “her go-to middleman. “Dwayne told me of their travel records. (Not long after Ellis stood by that column, the FBI subpoenaed their travel records.)

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MAJOR EVENTS

**Fleet Week**
Daily, Oct. 2-10
Various S.F. venues
Air show: Friday, Oct. 6, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Sat.-Sun., Oct. 7-8, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Featuring the U.S. Navy’s Blue Angels and Parasol Team; Patriot Jet Team; and assorted jet and plane demos, including the Coast Guard. Additional events include the Parade of Ships, ship tours, K-9 heroes, a neighborhood concert series, and more. Visit website for details or download the app. Most events free. Fleet Week Press, 101 Green premium admission seating $125-$395, 415-366-2911, fleetweek.org

**LiftQuake 2023**
Monday, Oct. 2-5
Various Bay Area venues & livestream
Join over 500 authors at over 90 mostly free literary events including author conversations, discussion panels, and more, including LitCrawl and KidQuake. Some LitCrawl events have been held in unusual places, such as tattoo parlors, launderettes, and psychics. Visit website for schedule/ticketing 415-640-4177, liftquake.org

**Italian Heritage Parade**
Sunday, Oct. 8, 12:30 p.m.
Fisherman’s Wharf (Jefferson & Powell Sts.) to Washington Square
This longest continuously running Italian Heritage Parade in the United States will feature Italian and Italian-American dignitaries, music, performances, floats, and more, including the Bank of America Concours Italiano Auto Show and Petal Fit Shows (visit website for locations). Free. 415-202-9888, sfitalianheritage.org

**40th Annual Fall Show**
Thursday, Oct. 12-15
Festival Pavilion, Fort Mason Center
View glamorous decorative and fine arts from many styles and periods, including furniture, jewelry, art, sculpture, carpets, and more at this long-running art auction, antiques, and design fair on the West Coast, renowned and respected worldwide. $20, 415-989-9019, sffallshow.org

**Halloween Hauntings**
S.F. Ghost Hunt Walking Tour
Wed.-Sun., through Oct. 31, 8 p.m.
Starts: Healing Arts Center (1801 Bush St.)
Wed.-Sun. through Oct. 31, 8 p.m.
Ghost. Starts: Healing Arts Center (1801 Bush St.)
Wed.-Sun. through Oct. 31, 8 p.m.
A medieval epic with sword fights and witchcraft, War Memorial Opera House & livestream
Select dates, Oct. 15–Nov. 1

**MUSIC**

**S.F. Jazz**
Thelonious Monk Festival Thu.-Sat., Oct. 10-15
S.F. Jazz Center (201 Franklin St.)
Celebrate with the Marcus Shelby New World Orchestra, Aaron Bennett trio, Sassafras, the Side-by-Side, Larry Hucks Trio, $25, 866-920-5299, sfjazz.org

**S.F. Opera**
Lohengrin Select dates, Oct. 15-Nov. 1
War Memorial Opera House & livestream
A medieval epic with sound effects and witches, this Wagnerian masterpiece pairs legends about the Holy Grail with songs that have become opera-culture staples, including “Here Comes the Bride.” $28-$426, 415-884-3330, sfopera.com

**S.F. Symphony**
MTT Conducts Beethoven 9 Thursday, Oct. 19 & Sat.-Sun., Oct. 21-22, 7:30 p.m.
Davies Symphony Hall
Also on the program is Shango Memory, Olly Wilson’s tribute to a Nigerian deity and the cultural contributions of the African diaspora.
$79-$835, 415-864-6000, sfsymphony.org

**DANCE**
Alonzo King Lines Ballet Fall Season Thu.-Sun., Oct. 12-15
Blue Shield of California Theater, YBCA (700 Howard St.)
Now in its 42nd year, the internationally acclaimed contemporary ballet presents moments from its repertoire that showcase the range of King’s works. $40-$115, 415-863-3040, 415-392-4400 (tickets), lineweblog.org

**Oct 20 2023 S.F. Trolley Dances**
Sat., Oct. 21-22, 10 a.m.-10:45 a.m., 11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. & 1 p.m.
Starts: Downtown; Ends: Fisherman’s Wharf
Enjoy a tour of site-specific dance performances along the historic F-Mile. Visit website for details. Free–free with Muni fare (reservations required), 415-447-1443, sfjazzdance.org

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**POTABLES AND EDIBLES**

**Brews on the Bay**
Saturday, Oct. 14
S.S. Jeremiah O’Brien, Pier 35
Enjoy bay views, fresh local craft beer, and food from Monk’s Kettle gastropub to benefit the Bay Area Brews Guild and the World War II-era S.S. Jeremiah O’Brien. $35-$125, drinkbaybeer.com

**Foodwise Sunday Supper:** A Farm to City Feast
Sunday, Oct. 15, 5-10 p.m.
Grand Hall, Ferry Building
Enjoy an opening reception, a four-course feast prepared by 30 of S.F.’s top chefs and a silent and live auction to celebrate the farmers’ market community and support local farms, community food access, and Foodwise’s education programs. $400 & up, 415-291-3276 foodwise.org

Visit marinatimes.com for an expanded event calendar. Email: calendar@marinatimes.com

**EDIBLES**

**City Feast**
Eastern night sky
The Orionids are named after one of the most recognizable constellations in the sky, Orion, from which these meteors appear to radiate, and are some of brightest and fastest streaking stars. A dark sky with no moon will make for good viewing. Free, earthsky.org

**OCTOBER EVENTS NOT TO MISS THIS MONTH**

Editor’s note: Covid regulations vary by event; visit individual websites for up-to-date information.
have traumatized me for life. At the same time, I have been fascinated by the specters in Shigeru Mizuki’s manga and the grotesqueness of the mon- sters in Ultraman, the TV sci-fi series. When I submerge myself in my own primordial feeling and draw spontaneously, what springs forth effortlessly are images of monsters."

The artist developed a paint- ing approach to surfaces he called “superflat,” a theory of not only the flat use of color found in his work, but also a flattening of culture, a flattening of class differ- ences, and a flattening of time.

Murakami’s playful figures — which seem simultaneously cute and menacing — live in a vibrant candy-colored world. In Unfamiliar People — Swelling of Monsterized Human Ego, these distorted figures mimic a dark- er side of human identity. The swelling of ego refers to indi- viduals who promote themselves relentlessly on social media, and live in front of screens in the place of real human interaction. The trappings of virtual realms, consumerism, and alienation in the 21st century are the elemen- tial causes of “monsterization.” Murakami explains, “After the pandemic started, some people who used to lead normal lives started to hold and loudly voice strong opinions, or turned out to be vaccine conspiracy theo- rists, or started attacking others out of an astonishingly intense sense of fear. Some who used to seem absolutely kind had abruptly changed, and I felt that it was impossible to understand human beings just by looking at the surface.”

**Recent Monsters and Older Demons**

“Swelling of Monsterized Human Ego” showcases more than 75 works including a selec- tion of art from the late 1990s to the early 2000s demonstrating Murakami’s enduring interest in monsters while illustrating his ongoing evolution. Themes of digital anxiety and monstros- ity are explored through NFTs, paintings, sculptures, and his- toric artistic motifs. Unfamiliar People (2020-22) is an acrylic on canvas mounted on an alu- minum frame. The exhibition is named after this painting, and is populated with psyche- delic “monsterized” characters possessing extra sets of eyes, extra heads, curious thought balloons, jagged teeth and vary- ing ghostly appendages growing out of their bodies while seem- ingly having no awareness of one another.

History is the inspiration behind Quinquag: Grass Carp, Chinese Perch and Lotus Flowers (2019-23), a gallery-spanning 31-foot-wide painting shimming with iridescent fish scales and plant life rendered in a style reminiscent of tra- ditional ceramics. The space becomes a rich ornamental environment of swimming fish in blue, green and pink. The Asian Art Museum’s collection of Ming Dynasty wares moti- vated Murakami to paint a pic- ture based on the design Lidded Jar with Design of a Lotus Pond (1522-66).

Red Demon and Black Demon with 48 Arhats (2015) also con- nects to history through refer- encing late Edo period imagery. Two massive demons are sur- rounded by arhats, tradition- al saint-like Buddhist figures who possess enlightenment and assist with their advanced spir- itual powers and ability to heal. The demons confront the viewer with fanged teeth and bulging eyes, reminiscent of guardian animals placed in the gateways of Buddhist temples. The grotesque and the pious combine to create a mesmerizing image composed in the devastating aftermath of the March 2011 Tohoku earth- quake and tsunami.

The metaverse is the perfect escape zone, and Murakami acknowledges our need to take flight into fantasy worlds. The artist’s mash-up of historical imagery mixed with contem- porary forms and values acts as a signpost, telling us where we are and where we can go from here through imagination. "Artists have the capacity to help expand this cognitive field... in the metaverse, the inherent duality between reality and fic- tion dissolves, creating a hyper- real existence that is buoyed by the imagination we bring to it.”

**Takashi Murakami: Unfami- liar People — Swelling of Monsterized Human Ego**

Thursday 1–8 p.m., Fri.–Mon. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. through Feb. 12. Free (first Sunday) $20, Asian Art Museum, 200 Larkin St., 415-581-3800, asianart.org

Sharon Anderson is an artist- and writer in Southern California. She can be reached at mindtheimage.com

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**PAPERBACK NONFICTION**

1. Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI, by David Grann
2. Everything I Know About Love: A Memoir, by Dolly Alderton
3. Bay Curious: Exploring the San Francisco Bay Area, by Olivia Allen-Price

**YOUNG READERS**

1. Picture Book: Dare to Question: Carrie Chapman Catt’s Voice for the Vote, by Jasmine Stirling
2. Graphic Novel: Family Style: Memories of an American from Vietnam, by Mr. Thien Pham
3. Young Adult: Good Girl, Bad Blood, by Holly Jackson

**NEW AND NOTABLE RELEASES**

The Longest Minute: The Great San Francisco Fire of 1906, by Matthew Davenport

“Davenport’s superb narra- tion, meticulously researched and written with quiet respect for the multiple experienc- es of the San Franciscans he follows, presents a sweeping portrait of a city as it endures a devastating earthquake and fire. Avoiding the hyperbole and hysteria which pervades disaster literature, he builds his story by listening intently to the voices of many and combing through city documents to give both a kalei- doscopic and a comprehensive view of what happened and why.” — Stephen Tobriner, Professor Emeritus of Architectural History, University of California Berkeley

**Roman Stories, by Jumps Lahiri**

Writing in Italian, her adopted language, Pulitzer Prize-winning Lahiri offers nine stories steeped in Rome's sights, sounds, and scents in her first collection since 2008’s Unaccustomed Earth, taking readers from a staircase uniting the now tumbledown Starling House, inhabited by its last moody heir, Arthur. Opal takes a job there, hoping to earn money to help her brother. But the house starts feeling like home, and soon she’s teaming up with Arthur to uncover its secrets.

Visit marinatimes.com for a complete list of New and Notable Releases.
Helpful apps for parents

BY LIZ FARRELL

The beginning of a new school year is exciting but it also can be hectic, especially for parents. There are carpools to organize, lunches to pack, and new homework to tackle. This year I decided to test some new apps in hopes of easing some of the stress of school-year planning. The good news is there are a lot of them out there so the key is to try a few and see which ones work best for your family. Here are a few of my favorites:

LALA BREAKFAST & LALA LUNCHBOX
One of the most stressful parts of a new school year for me is meal planning. The struggle is making healthful balanced meals that my kids will actually eat. It is always hard to find a balance between food that is easy and convenient but also nutritious. Lala Breakfast & Lunchbox makes planning these meals fun — and yes, that is possible. What I like most about this app is it gets your kids involved. It uses cute little monsters and bright colors to appeal to kids. Your children can select from a variety of fruits, veggies, proteins, and healthful snacks to help plan their breakfasts and lunches. The app even takes all your selections and puts them into an easy-to-organize grocery list.

PHOTOMATH
Helping your child with homework can sometimes be a frustrating task that requires limitless patience. If you are like I am, this is especially true for math homework. A lot of times the way math is taught now is different than how I was taught leaving us both feeling frustrated and helpless. Photomath is the ChatGPT of math homework and was recommended to me by a math teacher as a great tool for students and parents if used correctly. It can be a support to get over feeling stumped, but parents need to watch to make sure it is being used as a support and not as a shortcut to completing an assignment. The app allows you to scan the problem and get step-by-step solutions to the answer. It is free but there is a subscription for more detailed explanations. The app is great for all levels and has solutions for just about every mathematical question including challenging graphs and geometry.

TEAM SNAP
Sometimes organizing your child’s after-school activities can feel like a full-time job. Keeping track of practice times, games, and the related logistics, it is easy for things to slip through the cracks. Team Snap is a great app to help organize your child’s busy schedule. It has contact information for other players’ parents, directions to games, and enables you to share photos. This app is especially helpful if you are a team mom/manager, because it allows you to monitor who has paid fees, to set up a snack schedule, and it even lets you message your team quickly and easily with text alerts and e-mail. This app isn’t just for sports teams; it can be used to manage any club or organization, such as Chess Club or Girl Scouts. The app’s basic features are free, but for access to some of the more advanced options there is a fee.

LIFE360
If you have older children who have a device and are walking, biking, or driving places on their own, this app is a lifesaver. Life360 is the most downloadable GPS tracking app available on Apple and Android devices. The app allows family members to share their location, and it also tracks driving speeds and allows you to create geofences so you can choose to receive alerts when a member in your network enters or leaves a location such as school or work. So while my children think I use it to keep tabs on them, it gives me great peace of mind from a safety perspective. I also encourage my children to use it to see my location so instead of calling or texting me asking where I am or how long until they are picked up, they can see I am on my way. But, just like any technology we want to use this as a tool and not in place of communication or in a way that breeds distrust by inhibiting their independence. Talking as a family about how and when it is used is a great start.

Getting settled into a new school year is a family affair that requires everyone’s support. Whether it is the latest app or just a good old-fashioned family calendar, finding ways to help you save time and keep the stress level to a minimum are key. Having some extra time and feeling like life is somewhat organized will allow you to focus on your child and all the fun and exciting things that go along with the start of a new school year.

Liz Farrell is the mother of three children and the founder of TechTalks, a consulting group to help schools and families have productive conversations around social media and technology. Feedback: letters@marinetimes.com
Elevated mortgage rates have pushed the price of a starter home, down 4.5 percent ($11,300) from a year earlier, " according to Redfin. A homebuyer in San Francisco must earn $241,200 per year to afford the typical U.S. starter home, up 13 percent ($7,200) from a year ago. That's due to the one-two punch of higher mortgage rates and higher home prices. San Francisco, Austin, and Phoenix buyers don't need to earn quite as much as they did a year ago to afford a starter home, as those are the only three major U.S. metros where prices have declined.

According to Redfin, starter-home prices are falling in these three metros after skyrocketing in 2020 and 2021. Bay Area prices soared because buyers used record-low mortgage rates as an opportunity to jump into the expensive market, and Austin and Phoenix prices went wild because of the influx of remote workers moving into those places.

Now that mortgage rates have more than doubled, the initial surge of remote work relocations has passed, and new listings are scarce due to homeowners locked in by low rates, the housing markets in Austin and Phoenix have fallen back down to earth.

Meanwhile, demand in San Francisco has dropped because rising rates have made ultra-expensive homes even more expensive, and because it's still not as important as it once was for tech workers to live in or near the city.

Sugar Babies

Who can afford San Francisco's very expensive starter homes these days? According to an article recently published on Forbes.com, it may very well be a nepo baby. It turns out that 38 percent of recent U.S. homebuyers under age 30 used either a cash gift from a family member or an inheritance in order to afford their down payment.

"First-time homeownership has become increasingly expensive, which has shut the door to homeownership for young people without family money. As a result, a large share of young homeowners can be labeled 'nepo-homebuyers,'" meaning they received family money to purchase a home," writes Daryl Fairweather in the Forbes piece. "This phenomenon contributes to intergenerational wealth inequality and limits economic opportunities for young people and their families."

It is rare for a young person to be able to afford a home. Senior Americans (65 and older) are about two times more likely to be homeowners than young Americans (under 35).

The Hollywood Reporter refers to these same privileged young buyers as nepo babies, and says there is a home-buying spree going on in Los Angeles.

What's more, research from economists at the University of Chicago found that children born to homeowner parents are significantly more likely to be homeowners in adulthood. And according to a 2021 Redfin survey of about 1,500 homeowners, 79 percent of current homeowners had a parent who owned a home, and 67 percent had a grandfather who owned a home.

Surely some of this is taking place in San Francisco. The widening gap between the have and have-nots is certainly troubling, but it seems inevitable that this would be the case when home prices are so high, and out of reach for so many.
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SINGLE-LIFE GIFT ANNUITY*

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Cynthia Hizami, Esq.
chizami@jnf.org • 888.563.2008