

The palace of versailles and contemporary art: takashi murakami

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Palace of Versailles located approximately twelve miles outside Paris, France and is viewed as a place to showcase modern art. Much of the art that the palace has put on exhibitions over the years has brought a lot of controversy including the most recent one by Japanese artist Takashi Murakami. Looking back at the 400 years of history at the Palace of Versailles it was once a home for the French royal family, a center for political power and today is a symbol of absolute monarchy. King Louis XIV viewed Versailles also as a showcase for the artists he supported.

Louis and his successors were passionate about contemporary art and were constantly having parts of the palace demolished and rebuilt and redecorated by the newest and finest artists of their day. Versailles serves as a place where the newest ideas in art are showcased and served as a trendsetter for other palaces as well such as The Louvre; with its over the top decorations showing the monarchy's wealth. Today, the palace is constantly having some of the currently most popular artists showcase their work at Versailles for the public to view.

The most recent exhibit at the palace by Takashi Murakami ran from September 14, 2010 to December 12, 2010 has sparked a lot of controversy. This exhibition is called Murakami Versailles features 15 statues placed in different rooms of the palace. Murakami is a contemporary artist from Japan and has been billed as the new Andy Warhol, who is also Murakami's mentor. The showcase features big, brightly colored cartoonish figures, flowers, globes and other inanimate objects. The style is far from the Baroque style of the palace, leaving most critics to deem the show inappropriate.

Some groups visiting the Chateau complained that Murakami's work has no place in rooms once residence to historical figures such as King Louis XIV, France's Sun King and Marie Antoinette. Prince Charles-Emmanuel de Bourbon-Parme, an heir of Louis XIV, tried to get the exhibit banned stating that it dishonored his family and their past but the courts dismissed his bid. One of his most tasteless pieces is a sculpture titled Hiropon, a large-breasted girl in a bikini who is skipping through a " rope" made of breast milk, this piece is not included in the exposition but it shows that Mr. Murakami is undeserving of Versailles. Muarakami spoke at a news conference and discussed the controversy. " When I hear such things, I say to myself that when a (sports) team scores a goal, there are always people who aren't happy about it and who express that discontent... The exhibit's meant to be a sort of face-off between the Baroque period and postwar Japan, and I hope it will create in visitors a sort of shock, an aesthetic feeling" (Barchfield).

Jean-Jacques Aillagon, president of the Chateau de Versailles defended the showcase saying he believes it is " his duty to open the palace to the artistic creation of our times" (Barchfield). He also stated it gives the " visitors to historic monuments the chance to discover art that is less familiar to them" He added that the protests " come from far-right fundamentalists circles and from very conservative circles who see the museum as a reliquary of nostalgia of Ancient Regime France, of a France, that is turned in itself and hostile to modernity" (" Protesters").

Aillagon also stated “ the palace and Murakami’s work are both joyful- the palace was not a place of penitence, not a place to be sad” (“ Takashi Murakami's Versailles”). Versailles curator, Laurent Le Bon, stated “ most of the visitors come for the chateau, not for Murakami, and are unfamiliar with contemporary art” (Von Uthmann). Several online petitions gathered thousands of names online even before the exhibition opened to the public. Two years ago a similar controversy occurred when Aillagon brought in contemporary American artist Jeff Koons.

Call me a far right fundamentalist and conservative but I agree with all of the criticism surrounding this issue. This past November I got the privilege of traveling to Paris and visiting the Palace of Versailles. I had not heard anything about this exhibit occurring until getting to the Palace, walking into one of the first rooms and seeing it firsthand. I was appalled when seeing the first statue, my family and I thought the statues took a lot away from the beauty of the chateau.

It also prevented us from seeing parts of the rooms and taking pictures of ceilings, walls, specific architecture that was being blocked from the statues. One visitor stated “[w]e are in a historic place, we want to see how history happened here, but every time you see a doll or a crazy monster it takes you completely out of the climax of the place” (“ Takashi Murakami's Versailles”). Another stated, “ it totally detracts from everything that’s here.

It’s almost insulting to the palace and to visitors” (“ Takashi Murakami's Versailles ”) My least favorite was a piece called Tongari-Kun, also known as Mr. Pointy, inside one of the state rooms because it was so tall it blocked me

<https://assignbuster.com/the-palace-of-versailles-and-contemporary-art-takashi-murakami/>

from seeing the entire ceiling. Moreover, another piece called Flower Matango in the Hall of Mirrors was just awful in this room. The hall of mirrors is one of the most famous and beautiful rooms in the entire palace rich in beauty and history but it was all masked because of this statue.

The sculpture of a bunch of bright, animated, ugly flowers. We could not step back and see the entire hall in its original beauty without seeing this statue smack in the center and the beauty of the mirrors was taken away because this statue was being reflected off of almost every one at that end of the hall. The statues were too brightly colored and too in your face from the mood of the rest of the palace. I have no personal pictures of the artwork because I, along with everyone else in my family, made sure Murakami's art was out of every picture frame.

I can understand why they have the exposition and the cultural exchange, the fact that they want to keep the tradition of showing the world modern art but unlike when the palace was being used for residence and power today the palace is an enormous historical landmark and is visited by over three million people per year. People do not go to the Parthenon in Greece or the Colosseum in Rome to see other artists or even have other artists intruding on its beauty.

Likewise, these visitors do not go to see modern art but to see the old beauty of the palace and walk into a bit of history for a day. There are so many other museums in Paris that show modern art that the Palace of Versailles does not need to be one of them. The Palace is a piece of art on its own and does not need to have these controversial exhibits constantly demolishing its

beauty. After seeing this overall I was disappointed with the exhibit and I wish I could go back another time when there will not be such a distraction.