

Godzilla's Children:

Takashi Murakami, Makoto Aida, and Tabaimo -
the Unholy Trinity of Horror and Violence in the Heisei Era

Aya Louisa McDonald

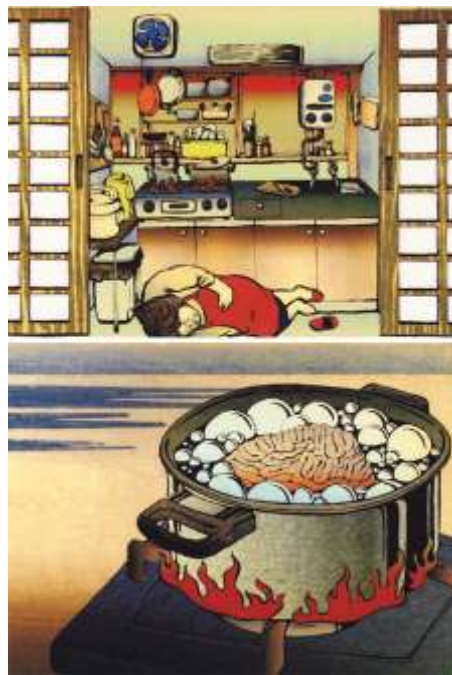
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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Room 301, 3F, Building 10, Sophia University

Dystopia, galactic battles, and technological nightmares have dominated the popular culture of the Heisei Era (1989-2019) contributing to what has become a widespread international pop-cultural phenomenon. The explosive violence and themes of mayhem that runs amok in Japanese film, anime, video games, and manga, appear equally and frequently in Japanese contemporary art. This paper explores the violent imagery of three major artists of the Heisei era – Takashi Murakami, Makoto Aida, and Tabaimo, whose distinct artistic strategies push the boundaries of contemporary *high art* toward horror, violence, and the grotesque.

As members of a generation born well after the end of the Pacific War into an affluent, peaceful, and technologically advanced global Japanese society, they enjoyed a youth and adolescence that granted unimpeded access to the rich, imaginative visual world of fantasy in television, anime, manga, and video games – a world where apocalypse and dystopia flourish – a world that I argue



With kind permission of the artist herself: a still from Tabaimo "Kitchen" (1999)

eerily recalls and bears comparison with the pre-war taste for *erotic grotesque nonsense* - critical concepts already explored in depth by Mark Driscoll and the late Miriam Silverberg.

Aya Louisa McDonald received her PhD at Stanford University having written her dissertation on Heian painting: Onna-e and Otoko-e and their relation to Chinese Painting. Former Chair of the Department of Art and Professor of Art History at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Professor McDonald's research and teaching interests have shifted to modern and contemporary Japanese art and the complex relationship between art and war. A former Research Associate of the Harvard Reischauer Institute, she has co-edited *Art and War in Japan and its Empire 1931-1960* (Brill, 2012), and is completing a monograph on the modern Franco-Japanese artist, Foujita Tsuguharu (1886-1968).

This talk is organized by Professor Michio Hayashi (FLA)
Lecture in English / No RSVP required

Institute of Comparative Culture (ICC) Sophia University
7-1 Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8554, JAPAN
Web: <http://icc.fla.sophia.ac.jp/>