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Surface Pattern and Textiles Design

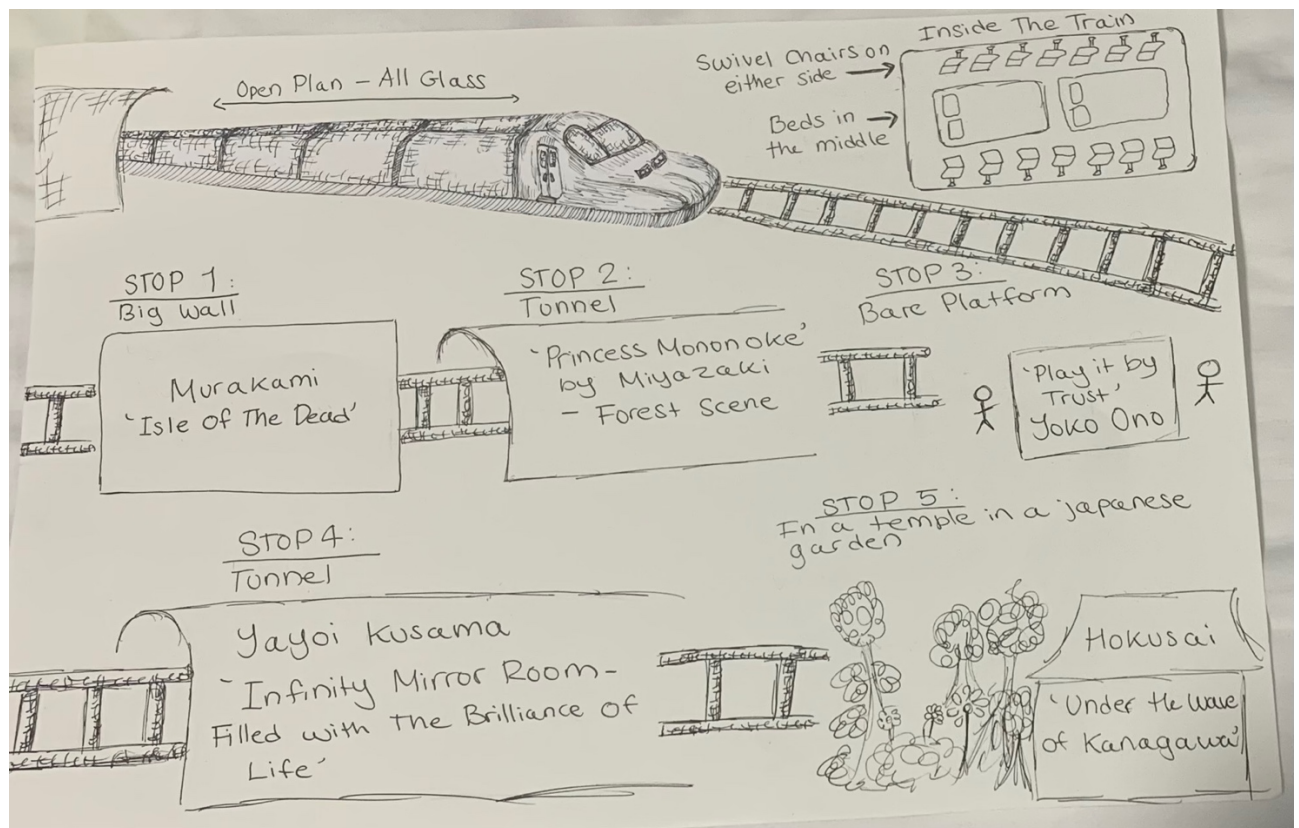
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The Journey of Human Beings in the Universe

This exhibition explores the idea of art as a journey of human experience. It looks at human interactions with natural disasters, the threat of war, man versus nature, the importance of saving the environment, and realizing that humans are a small part of the universe. It touches upon how art is experienced through an understanding of self and our place in the world today. The artists showcased are Takashi Murakami, Miyazaki, Yoko Ono, Yayoi Kusama and Hokusai. All the pieces are from Japanese artists from the 20th and 21st century. The exhibition takes place in a glass open plan Japanese bullet train with rotating chairs along the sides and beds in the center so that the observer may experience the art from all different points of view.



The journey emphasizes that visual art is an immersive and active experience. Some believed that if time is absolute then two events happening simultaneously according to one group of people must be exactly the same for another group of people. Even though our instinct is to believe that this is correct. Einstein believed otherwise, he believed that there could be a different outcome. Einstein's 'Theory of Relativity' created in 1905 suggests that time is experienced differently depending on context. However, if two events happen at the same time and at the same place, a person can experience both simultaneously, which would be considered one event (Sartori, 1996, p. 54). The visitors are not just observing but sometimes immersing themselves in multisensory experiences. The train travels underground where there is nothing in-between each piece but darkness. The first stop will be a wall covered by the very large painting 'Isle of the Dead' by Murakami. The train will then go

through a tunnel where the audience will be surrounded by the forest scene from the Film 'Princess Mononoke' by Miyazaki. "Taken as a document of utopian thinking, Animation shows a nature that is reformulated according to imagination and social prompts from a world that could one day in some form become ours" (Beckman and Beckman, 2014, p. 30). Animation brings life to objects that would not usually be represented in that light. It not only reinvents nature but also changes our perspective on our relationship with nature (Beckman and Beckman, 2014, p. 31). In 'Princess Mononoke', the plot centres around this idea of man versus nature but through the spirits and creatures in the forest, the audience understands the depth and strength of this forest and the importance of its survival. The way in which the trees and the plants are animated emphasises this idea even more and makes the audience think about preserving nature in our world.

Once they have gone through the tunnel, they will make a stop at a bare platform where the viewers take part in an installation by Yoko Ono called 'Play it by Trust'. Then the viewers would then get back on the train and go through another tunnel where the installation 'Infinity Mirrored Room- Filled with the Brilliance of Life' by Yayoi Kusama will be displayed. Finally, they will get off the train and get out of the train station to Hokusai's 'Under the Wave Off Kanagawa' displayed in a temple in a beautiful Japanese Zen Garden. Zen gardens are used as a place for reflection and meditation (Deitz, 2011, p. 296). The Japanese have an appreciation for the beauty of nature which relates to the concept of Zen, suggesting that presenting a romanticized version of nature allows people to experience a state of enlightenment (Carlson, 1997). This is a good place to end the exhibition as it gives the viewers a place to reflect on all the art they have seen and think about the hidden messages in the context of a beautiful tranquil garden, designed for reflection.

'Isle of the Dead' by Murakami is a very large canvas on multiple different wood panels put together to make one piece. It is painted using acrylic paint and gold and platinum leaf. It was initially made for an exhibition in 2014 called "Great Tohoku" (Beitiks, 2017). This piece is a representation of the effects of the earthquake and tsunami that happened in 2011 (Rosenberg, 2015). The message of this piece is about remembering the devastating event but also finding a way to look to the future (Beitiks, 2017). The figures in this piece look sad and have very skeletal and deformed figures (Thomson, 2015). This exhibition was created in the form of a temple influencing the observer "to meditate and heal

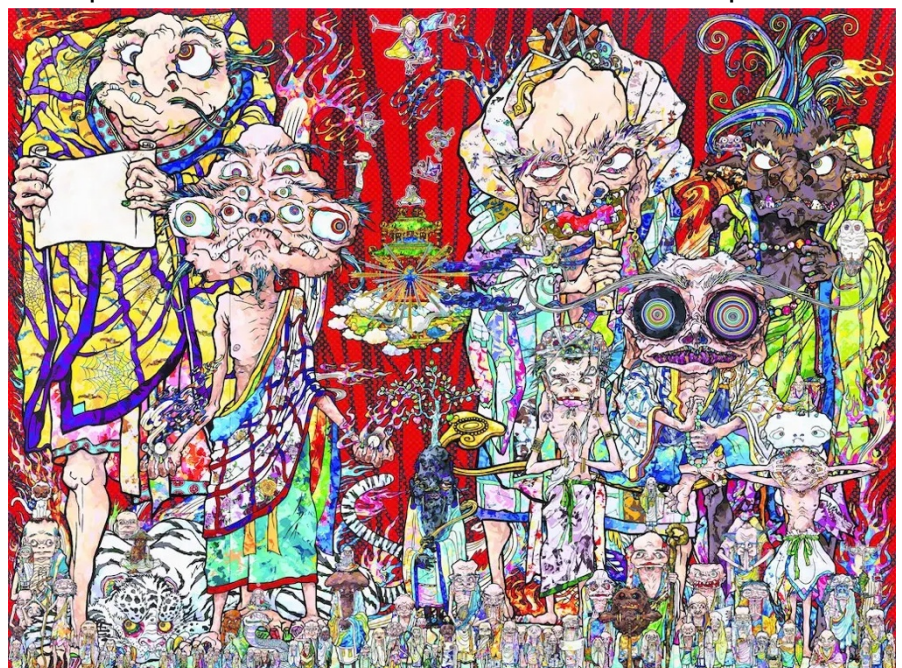


Fig 1. Murakami, 2014

from the trauma of natural disasters” (Rosenberg, 2015). Placing it on a large wall emphasises the magnitude of the natural disaster.

The film ‘Princess Mononoke’, animated by Hayao Miyazaki, was made in 2001 and covers multiple different themes within the plot. It looks further into the idea of the power of nature with a fantastical element with all the different forest spirits and gods and the conflict between these creatures and an industrial town that wants to destroy the forest for its iron (Barnette, 2020). In the film the forest is filled with spirits called the Kodama. They are little white spirits who represent the forest being healthy. The message behind this film is the idea of saving nature (*Princess Mononoke*, 2001). There is a scene in the film where the most important god, the Shishigami, a god in the form of a deer, appears for a brief moment in a big bright haze of light, which adds to the fantastical element. The trees surrounding it are covered in flowers and plants, once again emphasising the strength and health of the forest (McCarthy, 1999, p. 184). Having this scene of the movie play in a tunnel and through a glass train allows the viewer to experience animation in a new way, almost immersing the viewer into the film, making them feel as if they are walking through and being surrounded by the scene. This allows one to experience all different parts of what is happening, experiencing the sounds and the surroundings.



Fig 2. Screenshot from Princess Mononoke, 2001

Yoko Ono's 'Play It By Trust' is an all-white chess set that was first displayed in London's Indica Gallery in 1966 (Hillings, 2015). It invites people to play chess with trust in their opponent, whereas in a regular game of chess there would be black and white pieces, therefore each player could keep track of their pieces on the board. This piece forces the participants to trust each other and come up with different strategies to keep the game going (Mplus Museum, 2022). This piece represents the pointlessness of war and promotes the idea of peace. Without trust in one's opponent the game will evidently fail (Contemporary Art Museum St, Louis, 2011). Putting this installation on a train platform provides a neutral bare environment where the viewers can experience it in its simplicity with no distractions, therefore enhancing the concept of trust (Chase, 2016).



Fig 3. Ono, 1966

The 'Infinity Mirrored Room- Filled with the Brilliance of Life', by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama was made in 2011 and is a dark room formed of mirrors over the walls ceiling and the floor. There is a walkway so that the viewer may explore the space. The ground is covered with shallow water around the walkway. Hung all over the ceiling there are little LED lights that blink in a variety of different colours. The mirrors and water are used to reflect these lights in all different directions, giving the idea of the space being infinite. As a child, she struggled with anxiety and hallucinatory episodes. She began using motifs from her hallucinations and became obsessed with polka dots. These became an iconic symbol of her work. Kusama has always been fascinated by the idea of infinite spaces. This piece symbolizes Kusama's fascination with repetition of one motif and infinity (Fritch, 2015). Placing this idea of an infinite space in a tunnel enhances the idea of endlessness. Adding colourful lights and mirrors amplifies that endless feeling and makes it more atmospheric. In the glass train the viewer has a similar experience as someone walking through an infinity room in a different exhibition, losing yourself in the myriads of light. You lose your sense of reality for a brief amount of time. Visitors who have walked through the space have found it very impactful (Suttell, 2018). As Skumnich says, "Experiencing the creation of art helps humans contextualize their experience and connects them to others through the expression of shared identity" (Skumnich, 2022).



Fig 4. Kusama, 2011

‘Under the Wave Off Kanagawa’ by Hokusai is a coloured woodblock print from the collection ‘Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji’ made in 1830-1833. Mount Fuji was widely adored in the Edo period. Hokusai highlighted the fact that Mount Fuji changes when viewed from different angles and different locations. Every single print in this collection showed Mount Fuji in a different way (Guth, 2015, p. 18). These prints were also targeted at the time to aspiring artists to teach them about landscapes and different perspectives (Guth, 2015, p. 19). Placing this piece in a peaceful Japanese temple in a Zen Garden accentuates the sacredness of Mount Fuji. In the Edo period, Mount Fuji was seen as a sacred place. The form of the mountain for them meant “Majestic serenity” (Met Museum, 2022). Mount Fuji was a place where religious individuals and groups went. This painting emphasises how important Mount Fuji was as a place of spiritual and religious practice at the time (Earhart, 2015, p. 3).



Fig 5. Hokusai, 1830-1833

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Fig 5. Hokusai, K. (1830-1833) *Under the Wave Off Kanagawa* [coloured woodblock print]. Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/45434> (Accessed 22 April 2022)