Animation: *Flower Ball* (Grades 6–8)

*Flower Ball*, 2002, Takashi Murakami
Acrylic on canvas, Diameter: 98 1/2 in. (250.2 cm), Gift of Richard and Elizabeth Hedreen, 2016.24.1, Photo: Elizabeth Mann.

Find online at: [https://tinyurl.com/yazmhpw4](https://tinyurl.com/yazmhpw4)

**LOOKING QUESTIONS**
Take a minute to look at the artwork and take in everything that you see. Then think about, write down, or discuss these questions with other people.

- What do you see in this artwork? What do you think about that? What do you wonder about this image?
- How would you describe the mood of this artwork? How would that change if the flowers didn’t have faces or if they had different expressions?
- How would you describe the colors in this artwork? What do you think inspired the artist to choose those colors?

**INFORMATION**
Takashi Murakami, a celebrated Japanese contemporary artist, is best known for his colorful paintings, sculptures, and designs. His work is influenced by Japanese animated television series and films, like *Studio Ghibli* movies ([https://tinyurl.com/ydyfcm2v](https://tinyurl.com/ydyfcm2v)). The inspiration for these smiling flower faces began when he worked as an art instructor in the 1980s. Every other day, the artist would buy fresh blooms for his students to practice drawing. After repeating this lesson plan for nine years, he found himself imagining the individual personalities of the flowers. Throughout his career, Murakami has collaborated with labels such as Supreme and Louis Vuitton, as well as Pharrell Williams, Billie Eilish, and other musicians. Speaking about this process in an interview with Artnet ([https://tinyurl.com/y7agjn8e](https://tinyurl.com/y7agjn8e)) he states, “Collaboration is mostly a fun time, because I can get in touch with other artists and have a very intellectual experience. It’s like going into another artist’s brain, as another artist comes into my brain—very deep communication, brain to brain.”
LEARN MORE
- Watch the artist, Takashi Murakami, talk about his influences, both in and outside of Japanese culture: https://tinyurl.com/y972opp4
- Watch the artist give a tour of his exhibition dedicated to the character Doraemon: https://tinyurl.com/y9cbg9kj
- Read this list of Murakami’s various collaborations with clothing labels, magazines, artists, and more: https://tinyurl.com/y7uyaygv

VISUALIZE
Are you inspired by any animated television series, films, or video games? Like Takashi Murakami, you might be a fan of anime and manga from Japan, including Pokémon and My Hero Academia. Maybe you’re more familiar with Spongebob Squarepants or Phineas and Ferb. Think about the animated characters you like the best. What do you like about them? How does their appearance communicate their personality or abilities?

ART ACTIVITY
Create a cartoon character based on something you see every day.

Materials
Paper, pen/pencil, and markers, crayons, oil pastels, or colored pencils.

Steps
1. Choose an inanimate object that you see frequently. An inanimate object is something that is not a person or animal, such as a chair, lamp, or the flowers that Takashi Murakami saw almost every day as an art instructor.
   - Optional: Ask a friend to join you by choosing something that they see frequently. Complete this activity together in person or over video chat. When you’re done, compare the characters you made!

2. Create a simple sketch of your object on a piece of scratch paper. Then think about your feelings towards this object and sketch a face that expresses the mood. Try out different expressions to see what fits best!
   - To help you brainstorm faces and moods, take a look at the emojis on a computer or smartphone.
   - You can also recall the different ways that the animated characters you visualized in the section above show their emotions.

3. On a separate piece of paper, use a pen or pencil to draw a cartoon character inspired by your chosen object with its facial expression. If you like, you can add more detail, like clothing or a speech bubble. As Flower Ball and other cartoons show, you don’t need a lot of detail to create a memorable character.

4. Color in the character you created with markers, crayons, oil pastels, or colored pencils. Try using only a few colors for your character, like in Flower Ball.
   - Optional: Repeat this process for one or more inanimate objects that are near the one you chose or related to it. Will they have similar facial expressions or different ones? Why?

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