

# Japan Buddhism and Shinto

- The two main belief systems that framed Japanese Art and Idea were...Buddhism and Shintoism.
- Buddhism which entered Japan in around 535 from Korea focused on ways to end the cycles of death and rebirth.
- Buddhist values had to be placed in some relationship with the indigenous Japanese tradition that we know today as ‘Shinto’, or ‘the Way of the Gods’.
- Shinto is sometimes called the indigenous nature and spirit worship of Japan. It is associated with **shamanism** with its beliefs in astral divinities, nature spirits and the power of wandering ghosts or spirits of the dead.

Within Japanese Buddhism we see an interest in a focus on the transience of existence, a sensitivity to the passing of life and beauty in all too fleeting a world. Interest in the Western Paradise as a symbol of resurrection and immortality and the Pure Land concepts .

Pure Land concept is that Nirvana has become only possible to look to Amitaba Buddha who will guide one to be reborn in the Pure Land, a perfect realm in which enlightenment is guaranteed.



**Hungry Ghosts related to Pure Land---Ghosts, 800-1200 Japan**  
**Shinto in Japan, grew from shamanism** with its beliefs in astral divinities, nature spirits and the power of wandering ghosts or spirits of the dead influenced Buddhism in Japan.

## Japanese Buddhist art (1200-1800)

Beginning in the thirteenth century, the meditative Zen school of Buddhism takes root in Japan, brought to the country in part by Chinese monks fleeing the Mongol invasion.

Enthusiastically received in Japan, Zen becomes the most prominent form of Buddhism in the country between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/zen/hd\\_zen.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/zen/hd_zen.htm)



Hokusai, *Kabuki*, 1799

Ukiyo-e, as practiced by artists focused on images of the courtesans and Kabuki actors who were popular in Japan's cities at the time.

Usually the word *ukiyo* is literally translated as "floating world" in English, referring to a conception of an evanescent world, impermanent, fleeting beauty and a realm of entertainments (kabuki courtesans, geisha) divorced from the responsibilities of the mundane, everyday world; "pictures of the floating world", i.e. ukiyo-e, are considered a genre unto themselves.



*... Living only for the moment,  
turning our full attention to the  
pleasures of the moon, the snow, the  
cherry blossoms and the maple  
leaves; singing songs, drinking wine,  
diverting ourselves in just floating,  
floating; ... refusing to be  
disheartened, like a gourd floating  
along with the river current: this is  
what we call the floating world..*

*Asai Ryoji, poet*

*A woman playing a large suspended  
drum (tsuridaiko) by Yashima  
Gakutei, c. 1827*





Hokusai, *Bathers from Hokusai Manga*, The first book of Hokusai's *manga*, sketches or caricatures that influenced the modern form of comics known by the same name, was published in 1814. Together, his 12 volumes of *manga* published before 1820 and three more published posthumously include thousands of drawings of animals, religious figures, and everyday people.

Hokusai was a member of the Nichiren sect of Buddhism, who see the North Star as associated with the deity *Myōken*.

**Mount Fuji has traditionally been linked with eternal life.**

**This belief can be traced to *he Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*, where a goddess deposits the elixir of life on the peak.**

**As Henry Smith expounds, "Thus from an early time, Mt. Fuji was seen as the source of the secret of immortality, a tradition that was at the heart of Hokusai's own obsession with the mountain."**





Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, from 36 views of Mount Fuji, 1820. shows the integration of man in nature.



Later *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* is the title of a two series of woodblock prints by the Japanese ukiyo-e artist Andō Hiroshige,

Utagawa Kuniyoshi's vivid scenes from history and legend, wildly popular 150 years ago, are a major influence on the work of today's manga and anime artists.

His work includes depictions of giant spiders, skeletons and toads; Chinese ruffians; women warriors; haggard ghosts; and desperate samurai combat.



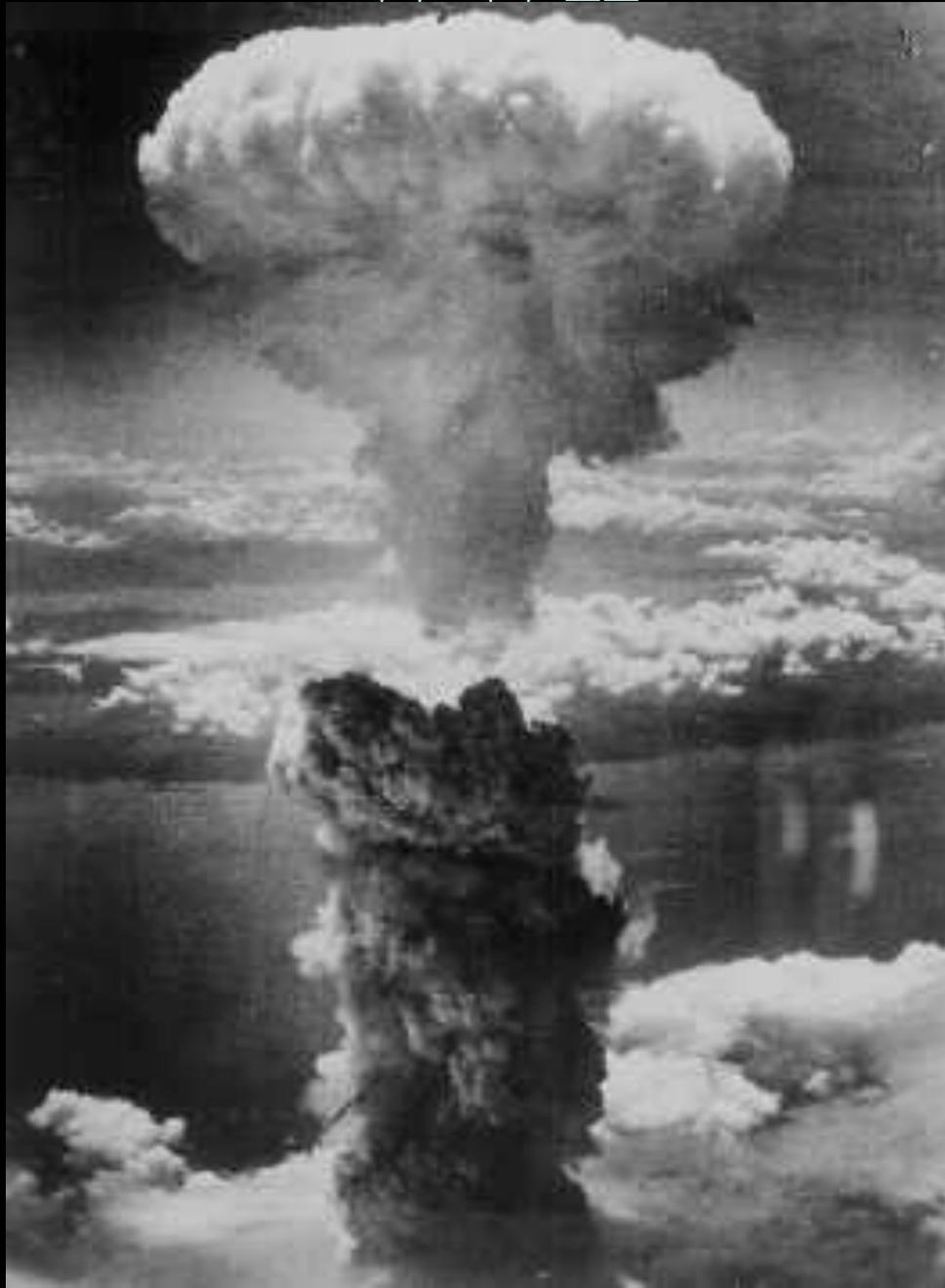


These new thematic styles satisfied the public's interest in the ghastly, exciting, and bizarre that was growing during the time.  
108 Heroes of the Suikoden (classic Chinese novel)

His warrior prints were unique in that they depicted legendary popular figures with an added stress on dreams, ghostly apparitions, omens, and superhuman feats. he manages to invoke an effective sense of action intensity in his depiction of the combat between Yoshitsune and Benkei (two famous warriors.



# WWII



On Monday, August 6, 1945 President Harry Truman ordered the dropping of an Atomic Bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima

On August 9, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

Within the first few months of the bombings over 200,000 people died. Many died in the months following due to radiation sickness.

At the end of World War II, Japan was left in ruins and a relative cultural void. During the next quarter century, Japan endured the legacy of the atomic bomb, as well as the experiences of foreign occupation and a rapid transformation into a metropolitan society.

- **Kawii--**
- In the 1970s ‘cuteness’ arose in a new style of writing. Many teenage girls began to write using mechanical pencils that produced very fine lines, as opposed to traditional calligraphy that varied in thickness and was vertical.
- Also, the girls would write in big, round characters and they added little pictures to their writing, such as hearts, stars, smiley faces, and letters of the Latin alphabet. These pictures would be inserted randomly and made the writing very hard to read.
- As a result, this writing style caused a lot of controversy and was banned in many schools. During the 1980s, however, this cute new writing was adopted by magazines and comics and was put onto packaging and advertising.
- Although it was commonly thought that the writing style was something that teenagers had picked up from comics, it was found that teenagers had come up with the style themselves, as part of an underground movement.

Later, cute handwriting became associated with acting childishly and using infantile slang words. Because of this growing trend, companies, came out with merchandise like Hello Kitty, which was an immediate success. The 1980s also saw the rise of cute idols, such as [Seiko Matsuda](#).

Women began to emulate Seiko Matsuda and her cute fashion style and mannerisms, which emphasized the helplessness and innocence of young girls. No longer limited to teenagers, however, the spread of making things as cute as possible, even common household items, was embraced by people of all ages.



Mariko Mori,  
Come Play With Me



Birth of a Star



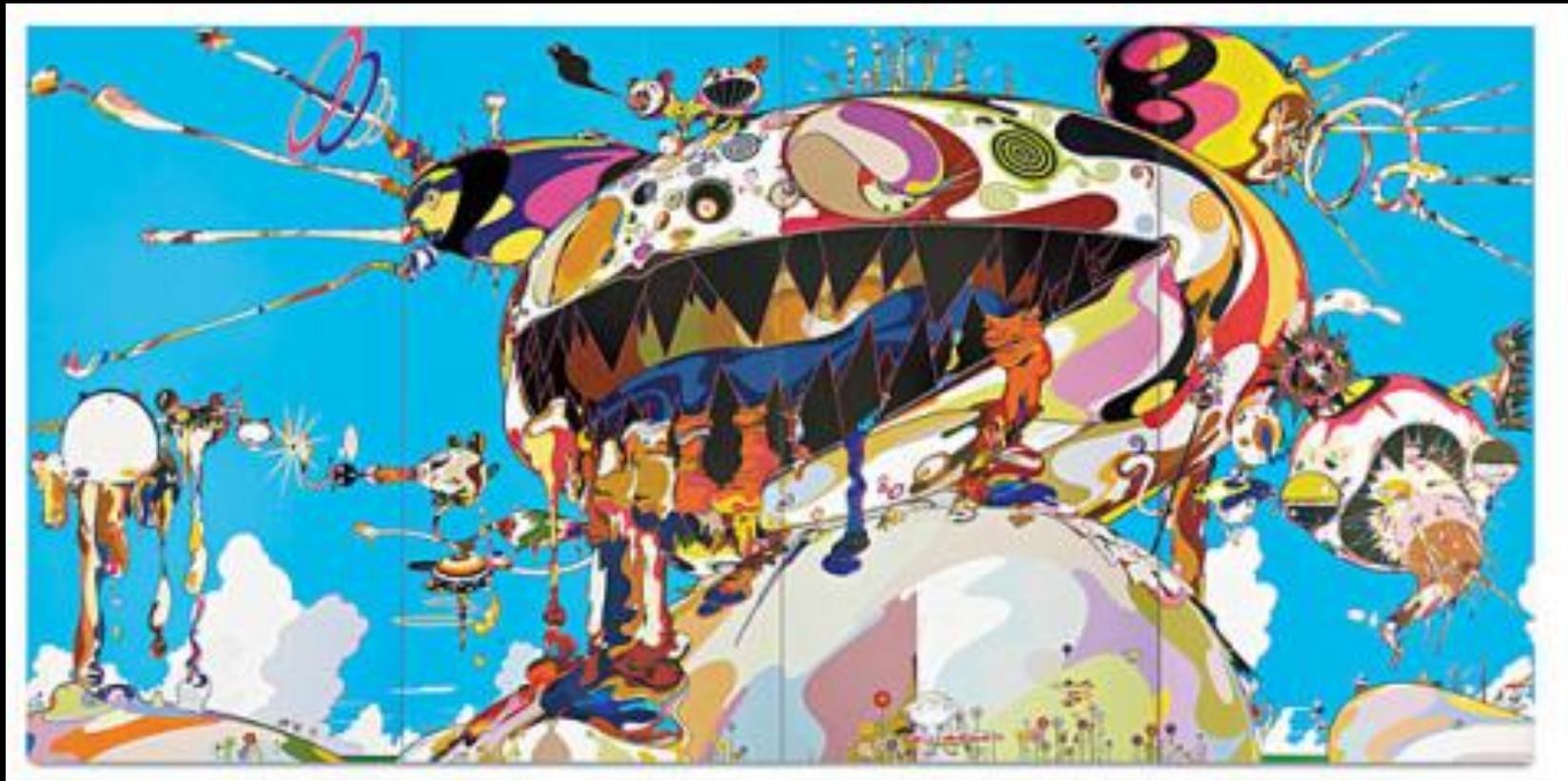
Pureland



Beginning of the end,



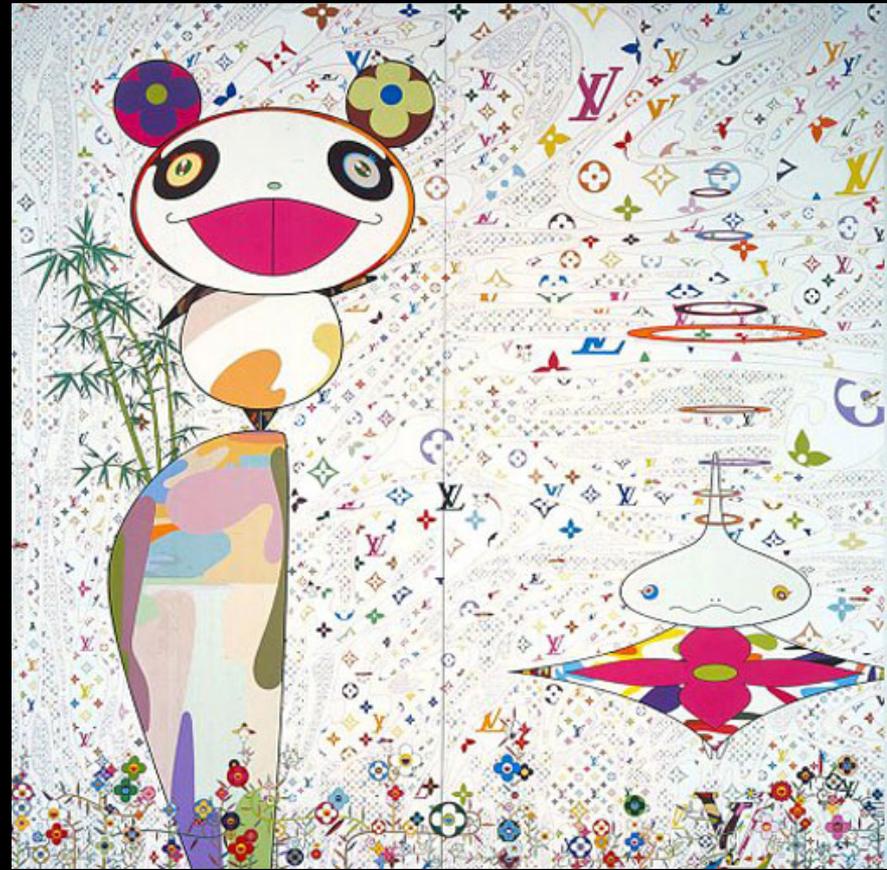
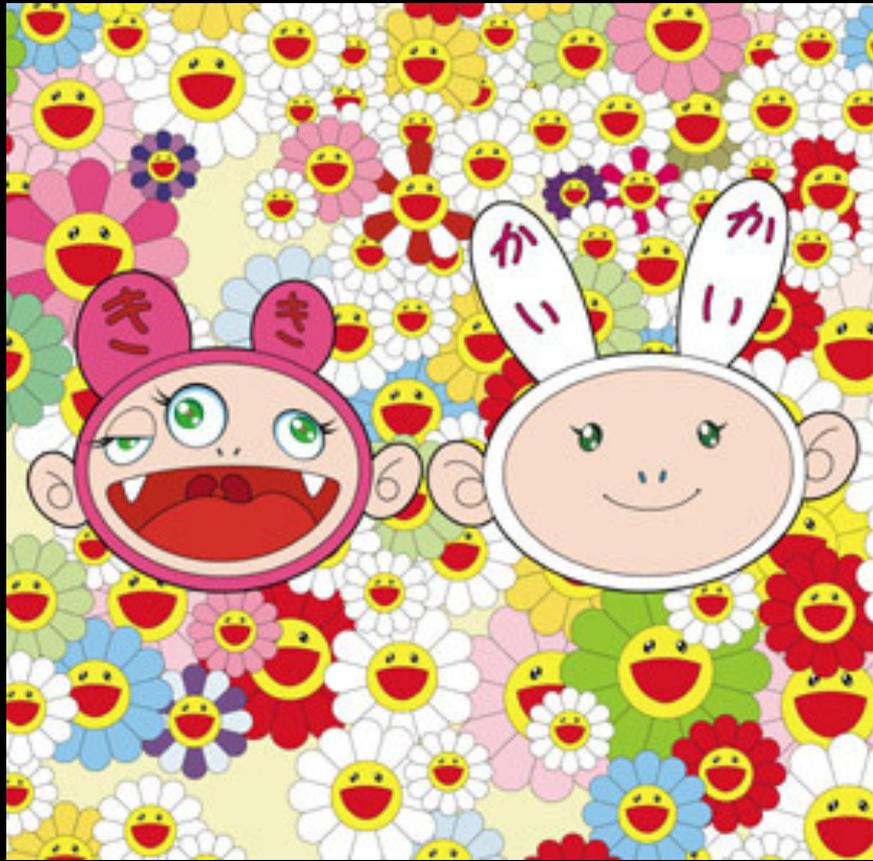
Takashi Murakami



Inoci



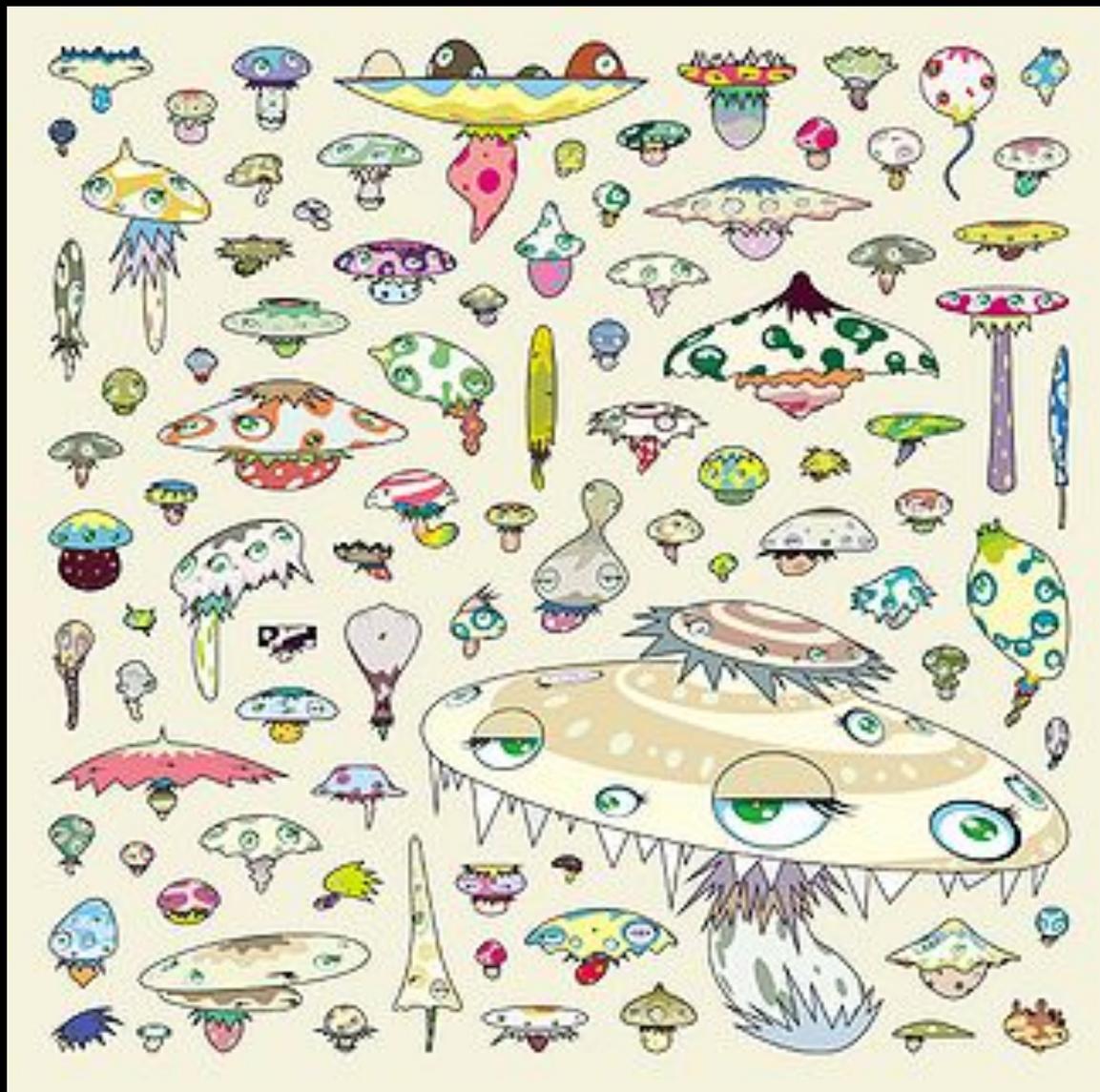








Yoshitomo Nara , White Kitty



Yoshitomo Nara, Mushrooms

Yoshitomo Nara  
What's going on In the Floating  
World

