

DAILY CONCESSION

ZONE **1**

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN
JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC



DAY

1 2 3

4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 31

No. SC 1384633



DAILY CONCESSION

ZONE **1**

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN
JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC



DAY

1 2 3

4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 31

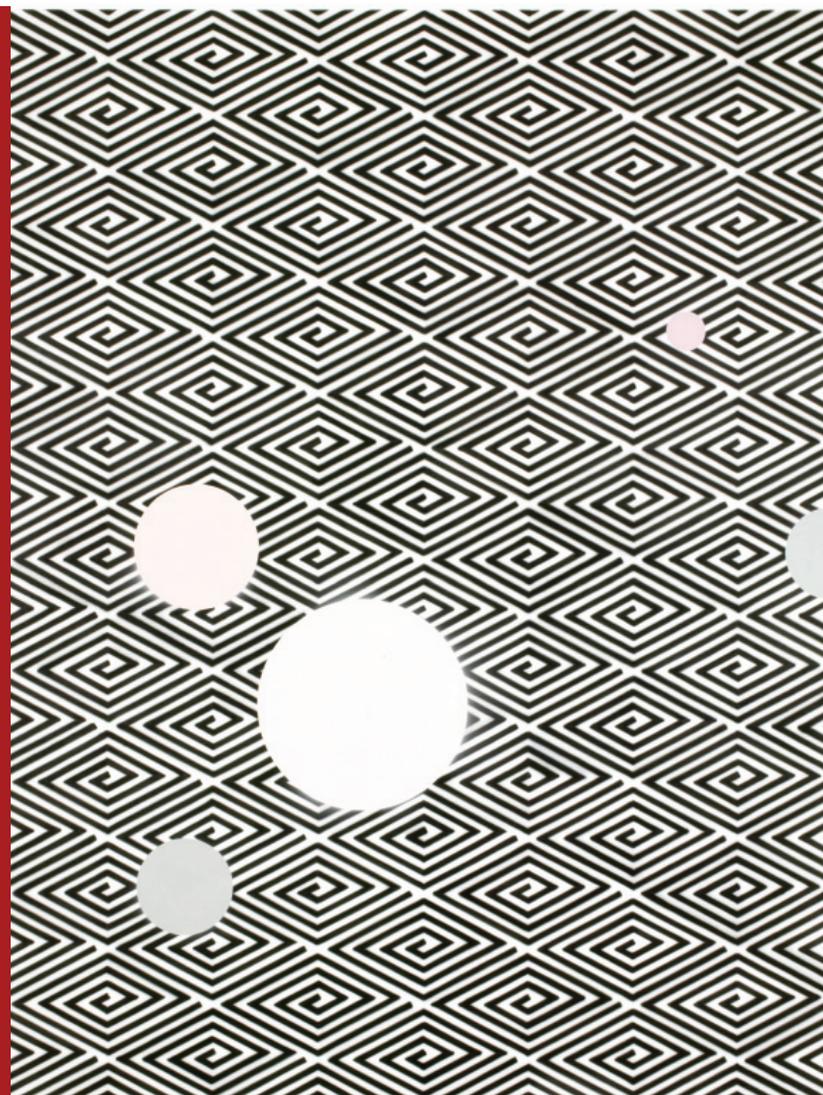
No. SC 1346363

In the past, Marcel Cousins' relentlessly pop-styled reworking of Japanese imagery may have earned him Japanophile status. The Japanophile obsesses (to varying degrees) over the Other's cultural imagery: manga, anime, bonsai, fashion, advertising, shrines, temples, and so on. The interest, in this case, is reciprocated - like Cousins says: "put a 25 year old, Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual male in the middle of Tokyo and suddenly they're exotic".

Superflat is, or was, a Japanese contemporary art movement. Takashi Murakami, the hugely successful artist and author of the Superflat Manifesto writes: "Society, customs, art, culture: all are extremely two-

dimensional. It is particularly apparent in the arts that this sensibility has been flowing steadily beneath the surface of Japanese history... "Super flatness" is an original concept of Japanese [people] who have been completely Westernized."

Drawing on diverse traditions including Japanese courtly painting, manga and Western pop art, Superflat renders these aspects of high and low culture onto a 2D plane. By absorbing and assimilating the Superflat style while working and studying in Japan over several years, Cousins may have become the Westerner who has, in turn, become Japanese.



Following this (speculative) shift, Cousins has consciously moved away from the identifiable 'Japanese' imagery. His new work is still sourced from pop cultural imagery, but not for any obvious striking graphic qualities or exotic aura. These works are at first glance the distilled, contemporary art versions of signs. For example "tree", "metcard ticket", the numeral "5". It's a kind of "Zero-degree" art making, where 'communication' is no longer its primary function, and instead, a range of 'surface effects and internal textual relations' are brought forward.

The images, rendered in muted greys, blues and fluorescent pinks and greens, hover on glaringly white backgrounds. Cousins' airbrush technique has achieved a nearly nauseating balance between the perfection of a repetitive mechanized gesture and the inevitable, but slight, home-made blemishes. Beyond the coolly banal world of the sign system, the intensity of this now consummate Superflat series of work is in the detail - in the subtle manipulations and distortions that describe the sometimes-marginal difference between representation and misrepresentation.

Written by Michael Ascroft 2006

¹ Murakami, Takashi, Superflat, pg 5 (Tokyo: MADRA, 2000), ² Kearney, R. & Rainwater, M. (eds) The Continental Philosophy Reader, pg 361 (London: Routledge, 2000), ³ ibid.