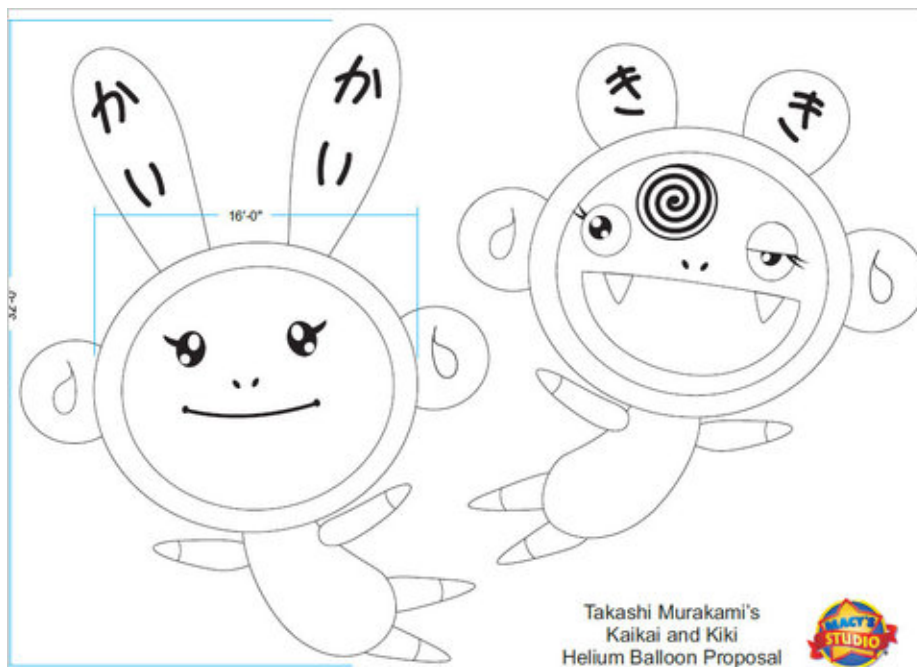


GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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From Mickey to Murakami: Kaikai and Kiki to Join Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

By DAVE ITZKOFF



All Artwork including Kaikai and Kiki (c)Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. A concept illustration of the Takashi Murakami characters Kaikai and Kiki that will appear as balloons in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

If familiar figures like Kermit the Frog and SpongeBob SquarePants are simply too jejune for you as their larger-than-life, helium-filled representations wind their way toward Herald Square on Thanksgiving morning, the organizers of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade have added two new entrants to the 2010 lineup that they hope will appeal to more erudite tastes. Kaikai and Kiki, two weirdly cute (or is that cutely weird?) characters created by Takashi Murakami, the Japanese pop artist, are being turned into balloons that will mix it up with the traditional cartoon stars and

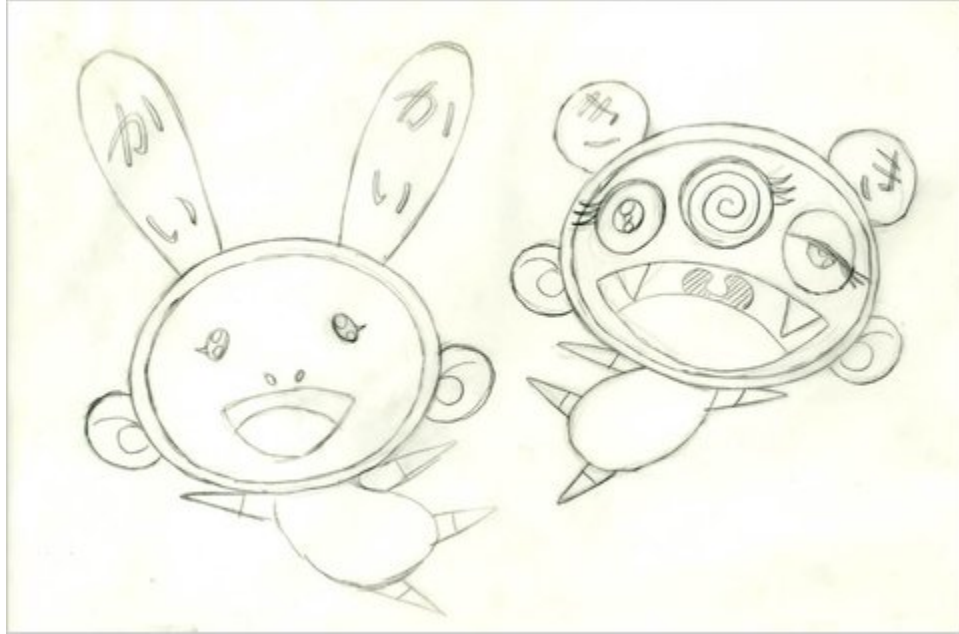
corporate trademarks that will populate the parade's 84th annual run on Nov. 25, the parade's producers said on Thursday.

Kaikai, a childlike character in a rabbit costume, and Kiki, a companion with three eyes and sharp fangs, are examples of Mr. Murakami's signature superflat style, but their balloon likenesses will be about 40 feet long when completed, and about three stories tall when filled with helium. Since the spring, Macy's parade studio and Mr. Murakami and his Tokyo-based team have traded notes on two-dimensional sketches that were used to create clay models, which were then further refined and colored before the fabrication of the balloons (now underway).

Mr. Murakami will be the fourth contemporary artist in recent years to have his work translated to the Macy's parade-balloon medium, following Tom Otterness (whose upside-down Humpty Dumpty made its parade debut in 2005), Jeff Koons (whose inflatable bunny followed in 2006) and Keith Haring (whose estate contributed to a figure-with-heart balloon in 2008).

Asked in a telephone interview if Mr. Murakami's characters might be a tad unsettling for younger parade viewers, Robin Hall, the parade's executive producer said: "Fangs are very hot right now, if you've missed this trend. This is an excellent year for Murakami. And these balloons are adorable. They have a charm to them."

Mr. Murakami's sketches for the Kaikai and Kiki balloons, as well as photographs of their clay models and Mr. Murakami's work on them can be seen below:



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