

An excerpt from the original essay in  
*CriticALL!: (un)professional everyday design  
criticism*. Ed. Joannette van der Veer.  
Onomatopée, 2021.

By Jo Minhinnett

## Instructions for Excited Art Collectors

If one should order a print or poster from Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, it will arrive with an important set of instructions taped to the outside of the package. The instruction sheet is created by the arts production and general trading company, Kaikai Kiki Co. Ltd., founded by Murakami in 2001.

For those untrained in the art of art handling, this oversized pamphlet printed in a pleasant frog-green colour provides step-by-step information on how to safely remove the concealed artwork from its packaging. The four retrieval steps are accompanied by simple illustrations annotated in three languages— Japanese, Chinese, and English.

Unlike most technical manuals that teach someone how to carefully assemble an item, these instructions explain how to *disassemble*. Ironically, the pamphlet describes the part of the item that will be thrown away (the package) as opposed to the part of the item that will be kept (the artwork). If a collector should choose to re-sell the artwork at a later date, these instructions would prove useful in re-packing and securing the print for shipment. Thus, the purpose of the instructions is of the highest order—to maintain the longevity of the artwork and treat it with care in one stage, as well as possible future stages, of its unpredictable lifecycle.

The instructions have become a necessary tool of intervention in the heightened emotional response of the collector. Take the following scenario [...]