

KÖNIG GALERIE

CHIHARU SHIOTA
I HOPE...

12 JANUARY – 28 FEBRUARY 2021
ST. AGNES I NAVE

KÖNIG GALERIE is pleased to present the first solo exhibition by Chiharu Shiota, a large-scale installation in the NAVE of St. Agnes.

Her spectacular installation in the Giardini at the 56th Venice Biennale has left an indelible mark in our memories as one of the most impressive works at the event. Filling the entire Japan Pavilion, *The Key In The Hand* was instrumental in the international breakthrough of the Japanese artist Chiharu Shiota, who has been based in Berlin for the last 20 years.

On entering the space, there was immediately a strong sense that this was about something quintessential – all too quintessential, in fact – that concerned all of humanity, without exception. Overhead was a handwoven sky of bright red yarn from which hung 180,000 metal keys from all corners of the Earth, floating like stars of life almost close enough to touch. Beneath them, resting on beams like bodies, were two old wooden boats, which, proclaiming the absence of people, had forever fallen out of time.

Rising out of the boats, knotted together like spider webs, the threads reached skywards. They interlinked not only the keys but also the Earth and the universe. In places they were so densely intertwined as to appear dark; elsewhere they were so loosely arranged as to let the light from above shine through like a symbol of hope. Forming a blood-red cloud-spectre, the threads suggested motion, calling to mind an upturned wave, and involuntarily conjuring associations with the oceans and water as the origin of all life. Around the boats, the floor was strewn with keys that looked like fallen leaves, as if their owners had lost part of their lives with them. Symbols of the threshold between inside and out, the keys were reminiscent of the shape of human silhouettes, with heads and feet.

Sounding like a universal poem to perpetuity, this installation bespeaks a wondrous silence that, slowing the pace of the observer, draws them into a meditative mood of reflection on fundamental questions of human existence, between birth and death. Who are we? Where do we come from? And: where are we going? Undoubtedly, human existence precedes this art, which gently gets under the skin and with which the performance artist knocks on the door to our collective unconscious. Everything that Shiota expresses with such loving tenderness and as poetically as in a dream is rooted in lived experience, whether sad and painful or uplifting and hopeful. The tragic crashes of being into nothingness, the experience of our inevitable finiteness and the unbearable foreboding of strokes of fate are as much a source to Shiota as the beautiful things in life. It is almost as if she is working on a harmonious balance between the extreme sides of life. Omitting nothing and integrating everything, she lends her sensuously conceptual works a literally untold complexity comprising individual as well as collective memories that are first and foremost felt and sensed.

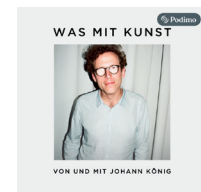
EXHIBITIONS

Chiharu Shiota
I Hope
St. Agnes I NAVE
12.01 – 28.02.2021

Claudia Comte
Jungle and Corals
St. Agnes I CHAPEL
12.01 – 28.02.2021



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Johann König launched his podcast **WAS MIT KUNST** in October 2020. Every week he meets personalities from the art scene, including artists, curators and art critics. Guests have included artist Katharina Grosse, curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and Phillips chairwoman Cheyenne Westphal.

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KÖNIG GALERIE

The same is true of Shiota's latest installation, *I Hope*, which ultimately links back to the Venice work. Again, she has chosen boats as a starting point, derived from the idea of two hands cupped together to form a bowl, which want to pass something on. But this time, rather than being actual, used boats, the artist has created her own vessels, metal constructions with lines like fragile skeletons resembling transparent bodies. And this time, rather than resting on solid ground, the bow of one of the boats is tilted upwards as though about to take off on an epic journey into the unknown, in pursuit of other vessels that have already set off. The present becomes a transition into an as yet undetermined future. Clearly, this journey into the unknown is a metaphor for the ups and downs of life – of a life whose trajectory we cannot know.

Replacing the keys of the Venice work – from which Shiota reads people's multifaceted stories like a tracker, always looking for clues – are 10,000 letters sent to the artist from across the globe. Printed on red paper, they are attached to red threads that no longer form a labyrinthine web but hang straight down like cords from the lofty ceiling. The artist's imagined world is in evidence once again, with its individual mythology that corresponds with the various cultures of the world, transcends the restrictive boundaries of consciousness and dares to venture into the cosmic realm.

As in Venice, Shiota's red fibres – reminiscent of blood vessels and the circulatory system – reveal the hidden inner worlds of humans. But here they also serve to interconnect the letters from almost every corner of the Earth, which came in response to her invitation to people to write down their hopes. In contrast to the opacity the pandemic has suddenly catapulted us into, here it is the principle of hope that's in charge. What's more, having grown from the participation of representatives from all countries and cultures, this is no longer the work of an individual but of a temporary global collective of diverse individuals. It is as though the meaning behind all that she does is underpinned by the desire for a global community characterised by commonality rather than difference. All in all, Shiota could be described as an existentialist from the open-minded spirit of poetry.

Text: Heinz-Norbert Jocks

CHIHARU SHIOTA

Chiharu Shiota was born in Osaka, Japan (1972) and lives and works in Berlin. Confronting fundamental human concerns such as life, death and relationships, Shiota explores human existence throughout various dimensions by creating an existence in the absence either in her large-scale thread installations that include a variety of common objects and external memorabilia or through her drawings, sculptures, photography and videos.

In 2008, she received the Art Encouragement Prize from the Japanese Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Her solo exhibitions across the world include Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2019); Gropius Bau, Berlin (2019); Art Gallery of South Australia (2018); Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK (2018); Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2017); K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2015); Smithsonian Institution Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC (2014); the Museum of Art, Kochi (2013); and the National Museum of Art, Osaka (2008) among others. She has also participated in numerous international exhibitions such as Oku-Noto International Art Festival (2017), Sydney Biennale (2016), Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (2009) and Yokohama Triennale (2001). In 2015, Shiota was selected to represent Japan at the 56th Venice Biennale.

KÖNIG GALERIE

KÖNIG GALERIE was founded in Berlin by Johann König in 2002, and currently represents 40 international emerging and established artists, mostly belonging to a younger generation. The program's focus is on interdisciplinary, concept-oriented and space-based approaches in a variety of media including sculpture, video, sound, painting, printmaking, photography and performance. In May 2015, KÖNIG GALERIE took up St. Agnes, a monumental former church built in the 1960s in the Brutalist style, where museum-like exhibitions take place in two different spaces, the former chapel and nave. In 2017, KÖNIG GALERIE opened KÖNIG LONDON in a former car park in Marylebone, London. In November 2019 KÖNIG TOKIO opened in Japan presenting artists that are based in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

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Sun 12 – 6 PM

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