

## Tomoko Obana and Toru Otani

July 23 - August 27, 2022

Tomoko Obana and Toru Otani do not know each-other, however their artistic procedures are neighborly, relishing delight in form and in color; *earthy* to *Victorian* from the hands of Obana, and from Old World towards Fauve in the hands of Otani.

For her vitrine sculptures, Tomoko Obana collects vintage, industrially produced wares such as water and perfume bottles, jugs, bud vases and more. She makes a mold of these found objects by which she produces one hundred casts; ten each of ten different types of clay slip, kiln fired with various woods, amounting to one-hundred unique “ash glazed” iterations. The artist contemplates the nuances of sooty and dappled surfaces of her objects and settles on arrangements which may, in the Western canon, resemble the paintings of Giorgio Morandi, but which, for the artist, give a nod to the aesthetic disciplines of Japanese Ikebana flower arrangements or dry, rock gardens.

For his mixed-media artworks, Toru Otani collects vintage printed packaging and building materials such as 2x4s, plasterboard and especially, sandpaper. He cuts and assembles these found materials to create the grounds on which he works with various instruments, mainly colored pencils. The artist isolates details of the pre-printed and patterned materials often found on the back-side, chooses what to reveal, what to conceal and what to connect, and settles on compositions which employ a positive / negative space logic with roots in Surrealism.

The paired presentations by Tomoko Obana and Toru Otani mark the first overseas solo exhibition for each artist. Nonaka-Hill has previously exhibited Obana’s work in *not titled not untitled* and Otani’s work in *Busy Work at Home*. Both artists live and work in Japan.

Tomoko Obana was born in Kyoto, Japan in 1985. She graduated from Kyoto University of Art and Design, Department of Arts and Crafts. Her works have been exhibited at Gallery Fukka, Tokyo and Gallery Sokyō, Kyoto. She held a one-year residency at the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park.

Toru Otani was born in Kanagawa, Japan in 1988. He received his BFA and MFA from Tokyo University of the Arts. His solo exhibitions include *spectrum*, imlabor, Tokyo (2020), *planet*, Kodama Gallery, Tokyo (2017) and *Casablanca*, Kodama Gallery, Kyoto (2015). Toru Otani’s works are courtesy of XYZ collective.

## Tomoko Obana

### Biography

- 1985 Born in Kyoto, Japan  
Live & works in Iga Japan
- 2008 Graduated from Kyoto University of Art and Design, Department of Arts and Crafts,  
Ceramics Course  
One year residency at the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park

### Artist Statement

Ever since I was young, I've noticed how people such as my grandmother, mother, sister, and I all possessed a kind of impulsive obsession or attachment towards a certain subject. I had a vague feeling that this impulse would never die out. Despite always feeling a little bit of disdain towards this impulsive emotion, I still needed to quickly find a subject towards which I could direct my own obsessions. Using my limited knowledge and experience, I searched for something to obsess over and I came to the discovery of art.

After entering college, I studied two-dimensional and three-dimensional art, crafts, colors, concepts, and people. When I casted a glass bottle with clay and fired it in a wood-fired kiln for the first time, I knew that the journey of finding a subject to obsess over has reached its destination.

My next step was to observe, collect, record, and preserve.

And so, I began to work on recording, preserving, and crystallizing what happens in life, what I feel, what happens when the clay is fired, what changes, and the changes that continue to happen to me every day, in the form of ceramic vases.

The daily routine of looking back and accepting the phenomena that occur each day, transforming them into arrangements of physical objects ensued. In the beginning, I was aiming for a perfect arrangement, but little by little, I was able to create enough space for light and wind to pass through.

And now, I've come to think that it's permissible to even have butterflies flying between the bottles. I've also started to look at very small things so I can continue to work even when my hands lose its strength one day.

For me, chips and cracks are also a part of change for my works, and I sometimes intentionally choose to use them to create arrangements. When I was firing a kiln in Shigaraki, there was a potter who looked at a bottle with cracks and chips and said, "It tells a story". I like that phrase very much.

Selected Solo Exhibitions    2022 *Tomoko Obana*, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles  
                                          2017 Gallery Fukka, Tokyo  
                                          2013 Gallery Sokyō, Kyoto

Selected Group Exhibitions    2022 *not titled (not "Untitled")*, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles  
                                                          FELIX, Los Angeles

Display Work                      2014 Hyatt Regency, Kyoto

Workshop                            2015 International culture art dialogue, Turkey  
                                          2015 International macsabal woodfiring symposium, Turkey  
                                          2014 The 4th arctic clay symposium, Finland

## Toru Otani

### Biography

Toru Otani uses the back side of sandpapers, empty cigarette packages and vintage maps as a canvas and guide for his interventions. The objects, such as prewar textbooks, used notes and postcards, which become the foundation for his works are often sourced in internet auctions. Attracted to enigmatic marks and images such as human hand, the sun, eyeballs, etc., Otani uses colored pencils to erase the excess elements and information which might identify the marks' meaning. Otani says this process reminds him of *"the feeling of seeing an abandoned billboard for a brief moment while driving down a national road, but somehow you cannot get it out of your head"*. For Otani, an artwork is something like this; it's hard not to look at and think about, even though you don't understand the importance of its existence.

Born in Kanagawa, Japan, 1988

Lives and works in Tokyo

2015 MFA, Tokyo University of the Arts, Tokyo 2013 BFA, Tokyo University of the Arts, Tokyo

### Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 *Toru Otani*, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles
- 2020 *spectrum*, imlabor, Tokyo
- 2017 *planet*, Kodama Gallery, Tokyo
- 2015 *Casablanca*, Kodama Gallery, Kyoto

### Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2021 *Busy Work at Home*, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles
- 2020 *Mutation station*, imlabor, Tokyo
- 2019 *Speculation ⇄ Real*, Kodama Gallery, Tokyo
- 2018 *Use*, Kodama Gallery, Tokyo
- 2017 *Mud*, Tokyo and swimming, Park Tower Hall Gallery1, Tokyo
- 2016 *Landscape Space*, Kodama Gallery, Tokyo
- 2015 *Chain Reaction*, Kodama Gallery, Tokyo
- 2014 *After Appropriation*, Kodama Gallery, Tokyo