

KÖNIG GALERIE

CHIHARU SHIOTA | THE WALL BEHIND THE WINDOWS

KÖNIG GALERIE | 13 SEPTEMBER – 11 NOVEMBER 2023

For THE WALL BEHIND THE WINDOWS, Chiharu Shiota has turned the former Chapel at St. Agnes into one of her intricately threaded sculptures, on a scale that fills every inch of the exhibition space. Rather than entering the space perambulatorily, Shiota has devised a way for the interaction itself with her work to reflect the nature of the objects that feature most prominently within it: windows.

Shiota has been collecting discarded windows around Berlin ever since first arriving in the city in the late 1990s, a place she now calls home. Like the Japanese-born artist's labyrinthine installations that envelop everyday keepsakes in delicate fibers, effectively turning them into materializations of memory, the window holds special significance in Shiota's cosmos as a threshold device: it protects one from the outside and yet allows visual access to all that lies within its purview. Finding windows across the city, torn from the edifices where they once belonged, was a curious site to behold for Shiota.

According to the artist, "even now, thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the city continues to transform itself, showing a different side of itself every day. When I gaze at the windows that have been discarded at Berlin's construction sites, I start to recall how East and West were separated from each other for twenty-eight years and think about the lives of these people with the same nationality, speaking the same language, how they regarded life in Berlin, and what was on their minds." These once pivotal construction elements were now piled in trash heaps, detached from their proper homes. For Shiota, who grew up very far from the territorial divisions that defined Berlin, she lacked immediate access to the kinds of memory that would have been triggered or provided by these windows, and rather than simply erecting her own version of those histories, she found new use for these objects precisely at the moment of their disposal.

The windows have never been displayed within a threaded context before, which makes their appearance in the earlier liturgical spaces of a former church all the more resonant. Collecting and repurposing these windows in this show pays tribute to their heritage both as objects and devices – that once allowed those who stood before or beneath them to experience separation and distance in visual terms. At the center of the installation is a sewing machine, itself a device that recalls the material that surrounds it, pointing to the otherwise invisible networks of associations that Shiota renders visible. This, ultimately, is what Shiota has achieved with THE WALL BEHIND THE WINDOWS – an excavation of something cast aside that in all its obdurate materiality still manages to speak its own language of remembrance.

Chiharu Shiota (b. 1972 in Osaka, Japan) is currently based in Berlin. Shiota's inspiration often emerges from a personal experience or emotion which she expands into universal human concerns such as life, death, and relationships. She has redefined the concept of memory and consciousness by collecting ordinary objects such as shoes, keys, beds, chairs, and dresses, and engulfing them in immense thread structures. In 2015, Chiharu Shiota was selected to represent Japan at the 56th Venice Biennale.

Her work has been displayed at international institutions worldwide including Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland (2023); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA (2023); ARoS Museum, Aarhus, Denmark (2022); K11 Museum, Hong Kong, China (2022); EMMA Museum of Modern Art, Espoo, Finland (2022); Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), Brisbane, Australia (2022); Long Museum, Shanghai (2021), China; ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe, Germany (2021); Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand (2020); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2019); Gropius Bau, Berlin, German (2019); Art Gallery of South Australia, Australia (2018); Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK (2018) among others.

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EXHIBITIONS

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GROUP SHOW
Places and Events
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Soul Scape Seoul
KÖNIG SEOUL
02.09. – 11.11.2023

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Tue – Sat 11 AM – 6 PM