

Hobart, 3rd January 2011

In Silence, exhibition by CHI HARU SHIOTA at Detached January 14th to April 30th 2011

DETACHED PRESENTS CHIAHARU SHIOTA FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION IN AUSTRALIA.

A CO-PRODUCTION BETWEEN DETACHED AND MONA FOR MONA FOMA 2011

Curated by Olivier Varenne (MONA), the exhibition *IN SILENCE* shows 2 site specific installations, an early video projection and a new series of 10 drawings made especially for the occasion.

<http://www.chiharu-shiota.com/>

<http://www.detached.com.au/>

Earlier this month Chiharu Shiota set fire to a grand piano, and when it was cool, transported it to Detached. For the next ten days she spun a vast cocoon of black thread around this now unfamiliar and strangely tragic object. The work, "In Silence", is one of four pieces that comprise the artist's first major Australian exhibition.

Shiota was born in Osaka in 1972 and has been based in Berlin since 1997. Over the last decade she has earned an international reputation for her haunting installation and performance practice. Recently, she has exhibited at major commercial galleries in London, Nagoya, Paris, and New York, and in the Third Moscow Biennale and 2009 Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial.

Shiota's early work bears the traces of artists such as Marina Abramovic, Eva Hesse, Ana Mendieta, and Tatsumi Hijaka – the founder of Butoh, a Japanese art and performance discipline that regards the body as a magnet to and filter for the forces of nature. These elements resonate with the work of Abramovic and Mendieta, artists who came to prominence in the 1960s and 70s. Their work explores the way in which our bodies are constantly acted upon, sometimes violently, by language and culture. Like many artists of their generation, they found new ways to register time and experience. Eva Hesse, for instance, explored the properties of unusual materials such as latex and thread and developed a sculptural practice that blurred subject-object relations.

These influence combine with a keen sense of poetry, art history and the surreal to make a unique and intriguing body of work. Visitors to Detached will gain a sense of the range and development of Shiota's practice. An early work is the dark, gritty video "Bathroom" (1999). The trope of the bathing woman has a long history in European art, originally appearing in visual depictions of the Old Testament (Susanna and the Elders) and the Greco Roman myth (Diana et al). Artists as diverse as Titian, Artemesia Gentileschi, Edgar Degas and Pierre Bonnard since explored its intimacy and sensuality. A key element is the ambivalent role of the viewer as voyeur. In "Bathroom", we witness the artist repeat a series of futile actions: smearing and washing her body with mud. The work destabilises traditional symbolic associations of the bathroom as either womb or tomb. Rather than embrace the romantic notions of woman as the embodiment of nature or as the Goddess of the House, "Bathroom" renders abject a private and sacrosanct domestic act. What are the causes of this odd behaviour? The minimal soundtrack amplifies tension and suggests suppressed anger and a possible trauma. The work combines earth and water, an important Butoh motif; indeed, Tatsumi Hijaka speaks of the world "born of mud". However, in this piece Shiota is using mud to draw attention to

imposed socio-cultural rituals, the demands of hygiene, and the distance of nature and the elemental from urban society. Shiota writes: "Pouring muddy water on myself in a bathroom. I hear my breath inside me again. But in today's world I have to buy the mud to do so" (Letter to Akira Tatehata, 2003).

A young girl's dress or smock is a recurring motif in Shiota's work. For both boys and girls, clothes assume special significance in the transition to adulthood. Clothes speak of identity, social and economic status, profession, and gender. New clothes can change or empower their wearer; in fairytale, clothes can harbour magical power. At *Detached*, the artist presents a dramatic variation on a theme: an extravagant swathe of fabric that sweeps down across one of the mezzanine galleries. There is no body to fill the dress. Instead, it is animated by the red liquid that pulses through a tangle of cords.

The interconnectedness of all things, animate and inanimate, inform the drawings made especially for the exhibition, as well as its central installation: "In Silence". Here, Shiota has embroidered space. The blackened carcass of the grand piano and accompanist's chair are trapped in a labyrinth of black wool. The work is a representation of a childhood memory (see artist statement) and conjures a sense of dread and desire, a Gothick intensity most appropriate for Tasmania. Perhaps a latter-day Miss Havisham might emerge from the labyrinth of thread? Its unnerving order might also recall Freud's theory of repetition as the ritual mastery of loss.

Crucially, the work is a mediation on sound and its absence. It resonates with Schopenhauer's description of individual will as a sort of instrument, "the trembling thing that is stretched and twanged".

About the curator:

Olivier Varenne (Paris, France, 1977) is a curator at the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Hobart, Australia. He was also the curator of *on&on* at the Casa Encendida in Madrid in 2010 and the assistant curator for the 2009 edition of the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art and has worked in the acquisitions departments of galleries such as the Gagosian in London and Pace Wildenstein in New York.

In Silence exhibition

OPENING FRIDAY JANUARY 14

DAILY FROM JANUARY 14TH TO 30TH FROM 11AM TO 5PM

THURSDAY TO SUNDAY FROM FEBRUARY TO THE END OF APRIL FROM 12- 4PM OR BY APPOINTMENT

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