

My House is Your House / Nire etxea zurea ere bada / Mi casa es tu casa

Chiharu Shiota

Chiharu Shiota (Osaka, Japan, 1972) began her artistic journey in painting at Kyoto Seika University in 1992. However, she soon realized that traditional painting could not express her deeper artistic impulses.

During an exchange program in Canberra, Australia (1993-1994), she created her first performance, *Becoming Painting*. This marked a shift from conventional painting, where Shiota transformed her creative process into a direct and personal extension of her own existence.

After completing her studies in Japan in 1996, Shiota moved to Germany to expand her artistic horizons. She studied at Braunschweig University of Art (1997-1999) and later at the Berlin Academy of Arts (1999-2003). By 2015, Shiota had become one of the leading figures in contemporary art, making history as the first artist living outside Japan to represent her country at the Venice Biennale.

Chiharu Shiota's work explores universal themes such as home, memory, migration, life, and death, using everyday objects—clothing, furniture, and other personal items. These objects are enveloped in intricate webs of yarn, creating large-scale installations that invite viewers to reflect on the passage of time and the fragility of existence. Her works transcend spoken language, nationality, or religion, offering a universal narrative about loss, connection, and the preservation of memory.

My House is Your House at Azkuna Zentroa in Bilbao provides an opportunity for Shiota to respond to the building's unique architecture and history. Originally designed as a wine warehouse, the redesign introduced architectural spaces within the existing structure, creating a striking juxtaposition of overlapping houses that seem to embrace one another, blending past and present in a dynamic dialogue. This transformation mirrors Shiota's artistic evolution, where new forms emerge from existing structures, reflecting themes of reinvention and connection.

The exhibition spans Shiota's career, from her early works in the 1990s to new site-specific installations inspired by Azkuna Zentroa and Bilbao. Shiota's large-scale works, often dominated by the color red, engage in a dialogue with the building's red brick façade. In Japanese culture, red symbolizes life, energy, and the sun, and it is used here to evoke the bloodline, life force, and connection between beings. In the Atrium, monumental red dresses will evoke the body as both a cocoon and a protective skin—concealing and revealing the self.

In the gallery space along with an overview of works produced in the last three decades, Shiota's installations weave intricate patterns of thread, referencing both traditional weaving and oriental calligraphy. The threads create a complex, expanded drawing that has no clear beginning or end, symbolizing paths, histories, and experiences. Suspended objects, such as

clothing and windows, represent absent presences, evoking the fragility of life and the power of memory. The spectators are invited to explore the narrative potential of an appealing work architected in an open and seductive network, stimulating the creation of new bonds. The installations themselves are also transitory, since they are destroyed at the end of each exhibition. Only the memory and the record of the spatial artworks remain.

My House is Your House invites viewers to explore Shiota's immersive world, where personal and collective histories intersect. The exhibition is a powerful meditation on human connection, the preservation of memory, and the ephemeral nature of existence.

Tereza de Arruda

Curator