

What Memories are Made of: Shinro Ohtake's Scrapbooks at STPI

BY CLAIRE BOUCHARA | SEPTEMBER 28, 2016



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Shinro Ohtake, "Book #1/Layered Memories," 2015-2016, Acrylic, lacquer, spray paint, deer skin, aluminum tape, silkscreen print, paper, stainless steel, 106 x 85.5 x 26.5 cm, approx 130kg, 320 pages

(Courtesy the artist and STPI)

Creative workshop and contemporary art gallery STPI is hosting Shinro Ohtake's first solo exhibition in Singapore, showcasing the Japanese artist's greatest achievements in print and papermaking.

"Paper-Sight," which runs through November 5, unveils the body of work produced by Ohtake during his residency at STPI last year. It resulted in experimental large-scale fluorescent paper pulp paintings, including a 320-page sculptural scrapbook encompassing 160 individual artworks.

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Among these latest creations, his paintings “Yellow Sight” and “Smell” possess an abundant layer of yellow neon color juxtaposed with imagery. Such an acerbic gradient is intentionally employed to reference uranium and radiation following the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima disasters in 2011. The aim is to evoke recordings of radioactive contamination and the consequences surrounding nuclear energy and environmental threats. Recurrent themes and motifs can be detected, featuring elements of nature as well as collected memories from the artist’s everyday life, in an

amalgam of new materials, techniques, and multi-neon colors.

These bold and luminous pieces also recall Ohtake’s acclaimed “Scrapbooks” series, in which the artist collected, chronicled, and pasted found imagery into fragmented compositions on each page, adding hand-painted figures to finish. This series began in 1977 and became the core of Ohtake's practice. To this day, he has made 68 unique books, which include from 50 to 882 pages.

“They are a reflection on the ways in which images have been used to organize knowledge and shape our experience of the world, said Massimiliano Gioni, Artistic Director of the New Museum in New York. Perceived as sculptural objects in their own right, a complete presentation of the “Scrapbooks” was previously exhibited at the 2013 Venice Biennale as part of the “Encyclopaedic Palace.”

Shinro Ohtake is one of Japan’s leading contemporary artists. His oeuvre embodies studies of materiality, form, and chance processes, creating a collection of drawings, collages, paintings, and large-format assemblage pieces.

“Paper-Sight” runs through November 5 at STPI, Singapore.

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