

Memory, Dreaming and Death

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Human life will probably merge with the cosmos.

*Perhaps death does not mean that we disappear, but that we fuse with infinity.*¹

Chiharu Shiota

To speak about Chiharu Shiota, one must become fluent in the language of the sublime. In the presence of her webbed or windowed installations, anxiety bubbles and breaks the still surface of one's consciousness. Her environments attempt to stabilize something, to contain or protect or restrain it. Or perhaps us. A threat is issued, and it is silent. But was it always? Once upon a time a piano caught fire and burned itself into soundlessness. In the end, the object was silent, but the process of its immolation was not. The piano belonged to a neighbor, and the sound of it burning broke through nine-year-old Shiota's dreams, and woke her in the night. As an adult, Shiota is not a mystic. But she repeats the story of the piano and the fire and the night often, as if rubbing a talisman. At its most basic, the story is what remains of a decades-old memory. If we allow it to gain complexity, it becomes a question, or many questions, like the ones Shiota asks in her work.

What is the nature of human consciousness? What are its limits? What more is a person than a collection of particular memories? What more is a relationship than a collection of shared memories? What becomes of a person when those memories cannot be contained? If the primary function of a piano is to produce sound, is it still a piano, when the strings inside have been reduced to ash, and sound exists only in memory? What then, of human consciousness, whose cracks and slippages leave holes in that collection of particular memories defining it? Are you still who you are today if your memories begin to fade tomorrow? And is it possible to let loose certain memories while holding tight to others? What of dreams? What of nightmares? These are only a few of the questions Chiharu Shiota's work inspires.

In this paper, I trace one of many potential conceptual threads running through Shiota's work: the exquisite tension between the human desire to hold on to dreams and memories, which threaten to float away as quickly as they are grasped. To do so, I will present a selection of her works chronologically, exploring how one builds from the foundations set out by another, but also the many returns and oscillations her work has undergone since the early 1990s. I will also consider the way in which Shiota has integrated the impossibility of representing that which is unrepresentable—the invisible, ephemeral, and otherwise intangible phenomenon of being human—into the conceptual program of her practice.

Shiota was born in Osaka in 1972, but her parents came from Kochi, an area far to the west. In the summer they would take Shiota there, where she was responsible for pulling the weeds from her grandmother's grave. The knowledge that the body was there, beneath the surface in which the weeds were rooted terrified the young artist. "I can still feel this fear in my hand," she recalled in a recent interview. "On pulling out the grass, I felt I could still hear my grandmother's breath".² Even then, she perceived the plant life as an extension of the body below. To pull at one was to disturb her resting grandmother. This notion of the interconnectedness of all things—of a girl's fear of touching grass rooted in the earth that covers a corpse—is as important in Shiota's work as the burning piano. But the story is one she tells less frequently, perhaps because it alludes specifically to her family, and thus, her Japanese origins. For Shiota, it is not important that her origins are Japanese; it is important that she has origins, as do we all. "[W]hen I create," she says, "I do not think about Japan or my background. Once I have completed a work, however, I see that there is a Japanese element in everything I do. It is like a passport, a visit card, an inseparable sign. I have been living in Europe for many years. This is where I have my exhibitions and where I live my life, but I still miss Japan. However, when I go back there, I do not find what I seek".³

Though she speaks of Japan, the sentiment is a universal one. From her interviews, we might mythologize Shiota, and assume that she was born of the flames that burned her neighbor's grand piano in 1981. With equal legitimacy, we might say she was born before the sun had risen in a hotel room in Kerguéhennec, when she wrote the word –Japan– on a sheet of clean paper for Marina Abramović.

When she was 19 years old, Shiota was very much affected by an exhibition of Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz's work; probably her traveling retrospective, which stopped in Tokyo in 1991. "The works were made of coarse fiber," she recalls.

"[T]hey weren't beautiful but they emanated immense inner strength. This was a time when I was considering whether to continue or not studying art. Before that, I had studied painting. That encounter helped me to understand that art is not only there to be looked at: it is also about what it radiates from inside".⁴

She entered Kyoto Seika University⁵ the following year and, through her program, did a term abroad at the Australian National University's Canberra School of Art in 1993. It was there that Shiota, looking at a catalogue of Abakanowicz's work, was approached by a Hungarian student who mistook the artist's name for that of her own professor back in Hamburg. That professor was Marina Abramović, and the student, believing Shiota had an interest in her work, offered to make introductions. Shiota prepared a portfolio and, believing it was on its way to Abakanowicz, sent it to Hamburg with her classmate. Eventually, she received a letter from Abramović inviting her to go and study in Germany. "I wasn't sure at the time if they were two different people," Shiota recalls.⁶ Nevertheless, she accepted the invitation and made her way to Hamburg, where Abramović's tutelage would change the flavor of her work.

In 1998, Shiota was in Kerguéhennec, France with Abramović, fasting as part of her current project. –On the fifth day,– she recalls, «after four days of fasting, Marina came to my bed at five o'clock a.m. and gave me a piece of paper and a pencil. She asked me to write down just one word. It was difficult because I hadn't eaten for four days, and was now completely weak and my consciousness was very blurred. Then I wrote down a word on the paper. The word was "Japan"». ⁷

Shortly after and in the same area of France, Shiota completed *Try and Go Home*, a gritty performance piece which, despite an obvious relationship to Abramović's bodily practice, grapples with issues that are distinctly Shiota's. During the silent performance, the artist carved out a hollow in the dark earth atop a cliff. Naked, she attempted to crawl into the space there, smearing her pale body with soil and leaves as she fell, again and again from the cave-like structure of her own creation. More than a decade later, she spoke about the work's repercussions. "After the performance," she said, "I wash my soil-covered body. No matter how much I wash it, there's something that cannot be washed away that remains in my heart".⁸

The title of the work, of course, implicates that unreachable hollow as a place of origins, a womb like volume to which it is impossible to return. The desire to do so seems to plague the artist, who does violence to her body through her efforts, which seem all the more hopeless through repetition. Covered in black soil, it must have seemed as though the earth was trying to reabsorb her as its own creature.⁹ As her statement suggests, that residue (whether real or imagined) lingered on the body long after the performance was complete, and, perhaps, lingers still; the earth, it seems, was reluctant to release her.

The year after *Try and Go Home*, Shiota performed her *Bathroom* piece in her own bathtub at home, pouring muddy water over her hair and skin again and again, cleaning and dirtying in a single gesture. From the earlier performance piece, Shiota had distilled the unshakability of the human desire to return to one's origins from the attempt to return itself. The lingering sensation of uncleanliness as the aftermath of *Try and Go Home* was, in *Bathroom*, magnified and expanded so that it became the work itself. When Shiota speaks about the piece, her words obviously recall statements about *Try and Go Home*, but as she elaborates, an idea expands and becomes infinite: "...I washed my body. It was dirty everywhere. I would try to wash, but it either never became clean

or else it was already clean but something had been left behind. Normally, I am extremely busy with my day-to-day life. When I have nothing to do or if I am at an ambiguous stage, I suddenly get a fear. I have a feeling that my body is going somewhere. This is neither a question nor an answer about death, just my body accepting everything, even death. When I see a blue sky or the ocean, I have the same feeling. It is a similar feeling to the one I have after a performance. There is always something that couldn't be washed away. It is neither abandonment nor desire, but something that stays in my body and will never be cleared".¹⁰

She struggles to pin down the feelings that accompany "accepting everything," which she compares to her inexplicable need to "try and go home"—a need that, like layers and layers of muddy water, cannot easily be washed away. Facing "the blue sky or the ocean" like Friedrich's monk or a faceless witness to Turner's churning waters, perhaps it is the feeling of smallness, of surrendering to one's powerlessness in a vast and callous world. The effect seems not to be a rediscovery or reclaiming of an originary center, but, on the contrary, a self engulfed by the infinite blue. A place of origins that has vaporized, and left no point of orientation for those who began there. And so, they too begin to disintegrate.

In 2001, Shiota showed *Memory of Skin*¹¹ at the Yokohama Triennale. The installation featured five homespun dresses, each 13 meters in length and suspended like banners from the high ceilings of the Pacifico Yokohama Exhibition Hall (the event's main venue). Stained—from neckline to hemline—beyond all hope of restoration, a steady stream of water nevertheless rained down on the dresses from above. The sleeves of adjacent dresses were joined, left to right, to make a row of silent sentinels, overwhelming in scale and menacing in the low light of the space. One of the event's artistic directors, Akira Tatehata, compared the garments to a line of solemn tombstones, standing in as "empty sign[s]" of the wearers' "absent bodies"; "those who had once been here", but who, unlike the deep-set stains on the gowns, had faded. "The mud," Tatehata remarked, "signifies a blasphemy to the white dress; however, like the memory that cannot be wiped away, the cloth=skin has already been soiled. The showering drops of water in a cleansing attempt in vain remind us, that the fetish of the unworn dress remains an empty sign..."¹² Shiota literally removes her own body from the equation, thus universalizing the metaphorical stain and the futility of any attempt to wash it away while creating a potent index of the phantom who once wore it. "The dress for me is like a second skin," Shiota explained. "The body connects to our first skin. The second skin is the clothes. Sometimes clothes explain the owner, and there are a lot of memories inside a dress. I never use a new dress. For me, with a new dress, I cannot start anything, and I am not interested in using a new dress because there are no memories or stores inside it".¹³ Like their past owners, the dresses of Shiota's imagination are sponge-like, absorbing memories, enduring wear, and changing as they do. For the western viewer, the gowns evoke a white wedding; a demarcation of time and of new beginnings. In the Japanese culture of the artist, however, white signifies death. The dark smears of earth become an attempt to cover up that signifier, to disavow and deny it. At the same time, the constant shower from above offers purification while it threatens to reveal pristine white beneath the grime.

The first large-scale installation in which Shiota employed her signature black wool webbing came about in 2002 during a fellowship at the Akademie Schloss Silex in Stuttgart.¹⁴ Despite the generous accommodations and ample studio space allowed by the fellowship¹⁵, Shiota was never "truly content" there "I was happy and unhappy at the same time," she remembers.¹⁶ It was a good place, to work and to live, but the constant comings and goings of the academy's other residents kept her restless; reminding her, perhaps, that the post was only a stopping-off-point on the way to somewhere else, to some place of origins or belonging. "I had to say 'hello', 'goodbye', 'hello', 'goodbye'" [to the other residents], she recalled, "and then, at a certain point, I met my own solitude"¹⁷. After Shiota had first arrived in Germany, years earlier, she moved nine times in a span of three years. "When I woke up, I didn't know where I was," she told James Putnam. "I started weaving around my possessions, like a dress or maybe marking my territory. Later, I started working with things that had already been used by other people, things that had their own

memories. This is how the works using thread developed”¹⁸. To stabilize the objects to which she was connected—and to keep herself from dissolving with them—she began weaving her webs.

The large-scale work in question was *In Silence*, a forty-chair semi-circle surrounding a charred grand piano. Obscuring it all was a thicket of black wool thread, pulled taut and stretched from floor to ceiling again and again like spider silk. The work was revolutionary in Shiota’s oeuvre, for, as Andrea Jahn points out, it was the first piece that featured an object “that neither recalls the human form nor suggests its presence”.¹⁹ But Shiota’s mark was, nevertheless, violently upon it. Prior to the opening of the exhibition, Shiota had taken the piano out in front of the museum and set fire to it, ritualistically recreating that event from her child that had been both personally and artistically formative. Photographs of that recreation greeted museum visitors at the entrance of her exhibition, priming them for what lay beyond. Francis Parker has argued that the photographs functioned much like the infamous eye-slicing imagery at the beginning of Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí’s 1928 film, *Un Chien Andalou*²⁰; indeed, the photographs are violent in a way that operates almost psychologically. Through the documentary medium, Shiota forces the immolation of the piano into the viewer’s consciousness, distilling for each a version of her own unshakable memory. Upstairs, a video was looped to show Shiota herself, shrouded in white and lying prostrate in a tangle of plastic tubing, which ran red as it circulated her blood.²¹

The piano, Shiota claims, symbolizes “the things which lie hidden in the innermost recesses of my heart, which, no matter how hard I try to express, I cannot put into shapes or words. Yet they clearly exist as mysterious spirits. The more I think about them, the quieter the sound emanating from my heart becomes, and the greater their presence”²². Such a statement illustrates the way in which those “mysterious spirits” within the artist compel her to discover and to cultivate them, but also foster in her a measure of fear. The more she nourishes them, the more powerful they grow and the closer they come to overwhelming her. It is a fear of oblivion; of disappearing, which is worse than death because existence itself is voided. The piano is this unnamable force, the thing that nags and the dirt that will not be washed away. But it is also a memory, burned black in the mind of a child.

In her first installation of *In Silence*, Shiota kept the wool webbing close to the objects themselves, leaving the space between the piano and the grouping of chairs open and almost entirely untouched. Around the instrument, the threads circle and rise up like the dark funnel of a cyclone, and, were the threads not such a stabilizing force, we sense that it might float up and out through the gallery ceiling. Around the chairs, the sensation is the same, with the curious unthreaded no-space between suggesting either a site of loss—where memories have already succumbed to forgetfulness—or a site of comparative expendability, where details fall away to leave cerebral space for the more salient events of a person’s life. Perhaps it represents the spaces in a cognitive map where strong feelings fail to attach to the memories there and their associated objects. Shiota once spoke about her threads as the physical markers of feelings: “The creation with threads is a reflection of my own feelings. A thread is a cut or a knot, a loop or it is loose or sometimes tangled. A thread can be replaced by feelings or human relationships. When using it, I do not know how to lie. If I weave something and it turns out to be ugly, twisted, or knotted, then such must have been my feelings when I was working.”²³

The dark woolen twister that overtakes the piano, then, is a perfect illustrator of the way in which Shiota’s memory functions like a vortex, pulling her constantly backward, refusing to release her. One critic remarked that the webbing constitutes “neither an obstacle course nor a network.” That there is no potential for movement. “[Shiota]”, he continued “weaves things into her net” with a sense of finality... as if these threads could freeze a moment in time”.²⁴ The tension between stasis and the violence of motion is almost dizzying. Memories and objects fall into the strange maelstrom too; other points of clarity and meaning in Shiota’s past. After all, everything must be connected.

Perhaps the most intriguing feature of the *In Silence* installation is the way in which it physicalized the ineffability of Shiota’s childhood memory. How does one replicate, in silence, every note a

piano has ever played before its voice burned clear away? How does one represent the swan song of an object? Andrea Jahn says it most eloquently: “By removing the outer skin [of the piano], an inside becomes apparent, one can see that it is constructed, that it can be injured, and it is ephemeral. Such a reflection does not suggest a description of a musical instrument as utilitarian object but as the experience of a living thing... Shiota uses fire to liberate the piano from its everyday appearance—and hence from its functionality. It becomes a body in space that finds its extension in the web of threads of an exhibition. The instrument robbed of its voice, of its sound, is thus interesting not as an isolated artistic object but as part of a process of transformation in which the object—the piano—as once defined loses its meaning in order to represent something that cannot really be represented: the memory of the sound in a silent room.”²⁵

While Shiota exposes the insides of the instrument to demonstrate its vulnerability—and thus its potential for loss—she also works outward. By including her grouping of forty chairs in the installation, Shiota conjures a phantom audience. She reduces the potential for listening to a state that mirrors the lost potential of the piano to produce music. What we encounter is a functional limbo, where neither the accommodations for an audience nor the instrument that might entertain its members are inhabited. They exist as empty-shells, mere indices of sound and presence that have been denatured.²⁶ The relationship of the photographs of the fire that lead into the exhibition to the installation itself spatializes the cognitive distance between an event and its afterlife in memory, while above, the looped video of Shiota, with her blood flowing all around her, illustrates a circulatory system that extends beyond the body in a tangle much like her woolen webbing. The repetition of her childhood memory becomes one with the beating of her heart; the webs she uses to contain it become the network of veins and arteries that pump her lifeblood.

The black web would reappear in Shiota’s 2002 installation of *During Sleep*²⁷, a variation of her “Breathing From Earth” solo exhibition, which at least one critic has argued is her “most significant work”²⁸. For the installation, Shiota tucked “sleepers” soundly into rows of sterile iron beds made up with uniform white linens. She wove her web around them, anchoring the threads to every available purchase across the entire volume of the gallery space. The still bodies beckon us forward; we feel the need to kneel beside each sleeper and check for a pulse, or to wake the one who seems fitful from whichever nightmare into which they’ve stumbled. But the black wool holds us at bay, presenting a structure that, perhaps for the first time, truly evokes the predatory snare of the spider’s web.²⁹ If the sleepers are, in fact, dreamers, then the treacherous landscape of the dreamworld is projected all around them into an environment that we are left to navigate. “[T]he thicket of the dreamworld,” Harald Fricke claims, “transforms into a physical threat”.³⁰

If, with *In Silence*, Shiota aimed to represent the unrepresentable (the memory of sound in a silent room), she may here have a similar endgame. Here she toys with dreams, visible and utterly real to the dreamer while she dreams, and yet completely inaccessible to both outsiders and the dreamer who has awoken: we have all experienced that slippage between sleeping and wakefulness, when visions that were, moments ago, our unquestionable realities, fade and float away and, sometimes, are lost entirely. Chiharu Shiota once spoke of her own experience in the interspace. “When I dream I am in Japan,” she said, “I have the feeling this is Japan. The dream is like a reality; unlike the man who became a butterfly in his dream, I feel the dream as reality. I cannot distinguish the dream from reality. When I wake up, I have the feeling I am still dreaming”³¹. The webbing in *During Sleep* becomes the manifestation of not only a labyrinthine dreamscape, but of the barrier between it and those who are excluded from it and its clarity—including the dreamer herself. The barrier is a thin one, more membranous than anything else, and Shiota’s piece seems to dare the museum-goer to test its permeability.

As Akira Tatehata points out, *During Sleep*’s set-up readily evokes “a scene from a mental hospital, a prison cell, or barracks”, the “spaces secretly tangential to death”³². The potential for permeability expands to movement between the dream-world and the world of death; hospitals are, after all, “the place where people are born into this world and later pass into the next world”.³³ As the boundary between dreaming and dying, it is also, Mami Kataoka (the Mori Museum’s chief

curator) argues, “the boundary between awakening and sleep, and consciousness and unconsciousness, and sleep and unconsciousness, or the dark of the night—all clearly linked to the fear of death. However, if the word boundary signifies not a border between these dualistic concepts but a permeable membrane through which these concepts breathe, enabling an exchange between the inside and outside of the body, then in fact the two merge and constitute a single world.”³⁴

Permeability is realized and membranousness becomes oneness. The binaries disappear, and we are left with a single, frightening world in which we cannot discern the difference between dreams and reality and death because there is no difference.

In 2004, Shiota’s threads turned red.³⁵ The piece was titled *Dialogue From DNA*, and it was the most literal artistic statement Shiota had made to date about the indelibility of one’s origins. Over a period of many months, Shiota had collected 450 pairs of used shoes from Germany, Poland, and her native Japan, asking their owners to write down their stories on the soles before giving them up. To each she attached a long red thread, connected at the other end to a single, central point; a point of origins, common to all of them despite differences of size, appearance, wear, and story. In her 2008 version of the installation at the National Museum of Art in Osaka, entitled *Breath of the Spirit*, Shiota found herself faced with a great stone pillar at the center of the gallery space. Though she might easily have adjusted the scale or position of her installation to accommodate it, she instead allowed its threads to burrow through it, allowing them to retain their straight paths. Nothing, the work seems to suggest, is stronger than the pull of that central point of origins. Not even stone.

Shoes and the indices of their owners’ lives had been on Shiota’s mind since at least the previous year, when she told Ika Sienkiewicz-Nowacka that returning to Japan after six years of living in Europe was “like trying on a pair of shoes worn down a long time ago: you suddenly find that they no longer fit. I decided”, she continued, “...to search for my place because I am convinced that all people carry such a need inside them”.³⁶ She imagined too small shoes as that which could physically mark how far she had traveled; so far that she could not comfortably return. The shoes of *Dialogue From DNA*, however, have a straight and unwavering path traced out for them. When I asked her about the color of the wool, Shiota responded that these brighter threads “refer to blood. Black threads refer to a more universal, all-embracing space – as a night’s sky and the universe”.³⁷ She seems to imagine the threads as delineating either a personal or a universalized space. Red, with its associations to blood, suggests lineage and the physiological way in which we trace our ancestry and origins. Black, suggesting, as Shiota says, the darkness of the night sky, enters those of her works that demonstrate universal truths and ideas that tend more toward the abstract. There is, to be sure, overlap, but Shiota makes no decision arbitrarily.

In 2009, the white gowns Shiota had muddied in *Memory of Skin* were overtaken by her webbing. The dresses, this time, were pristine; the webbing had gone dark again. *Unconscious Anxiety* saw the garment reduced to more human proportions, and standing upright in the space of Paris’s *Galerie Christophe Gaillard* as though on an invisible dress form. The webbing was all around it, not magnetized to the object as it had been in that early incarnation of *In Silence*, but filling the space, refusing any part of it as a no-space. With its puffed-sleeves and wide skirt, the gown at the center of it all made a more insistent allusion to bridal wear than the dirty homespuns of *Memory of Skin* had, while the title, again, brings in that reminder of death. “*Unconscious Anxiety*,” in the context of the bridal gown, might have a dozen or more meanings. As stated earlier, weddings demarcate time; a new beginning, and a celebration of life. But they also necessarily conjure the idea of life’s inevitable endpoint. Whichever anxiety Shiota is dealing with, the web stabilizes it while simultaneously protecting the viewer from a direct confrontation. Death is there, and though we are shielded, there is the sense that we will encounter it again.

Shiota showed her *After the Dream* installation at the Hayward Gallery of London in the same year, returning to the monumentality and homespun appearance of *Memory of Skin*’s dresses, but

leaving them clean and dry. Bowing in part, she claims, to the physical conditions of the space itself, Shiota created a path through her web, opening up the viewer's potential for movement. Here was a dreamscape or a deathscape or a space of complete reality that could be navigated. Overhead, a few white lights pulsated, visualizing the aural output of a human heartbeat. We recall Shiota's blood, circulating through a tangle of plastic tubing in the video that looped above *In Silence*, pumping despite a disconnect from the human heart that was its source. We consider how the artist's heart rate must have escalated with the exertion of her repeated attempts to pull herself into the earthen hollow on the side of a French cliff in *Try and Go Home*. We imagine our own hearts syncing to the Long, rhythm of the lights, and we become one with the installation. We traverse the path Shiota has laid out for us, and we move beyond it, allowing the gowns to slide into our memories.

What does it mean that Shiota's gowns have finally come clean? Has the dirt and grime of *Try and Go Home* finally washed away? Or is it, as the Hayword Gallery work's title suggests, a vision "after the dream," held in the moments just before waking when the dream lingers and continues to taunt its beholder with white-washed gowns that cannot possibly be real? I am not sure, and I think it is likely that Shiota, too, remains uncertain. The path, quite literally, is open. Take it or leave it, Shiota seems to say. She will not, in the work, provide us with any answers. We are on the boundary between sleeping and wakefulness, between reality and memories of which we cannot be certain. Perhaps we lie between life and death, hovering on the hair-thin line between. Which is also a space of infinity.

¹ Dachy, Marc. *Chiharu Shiota, Unconscious Anxiety* (exposition, Paris, Galerie Christophe Gaillard, 24 Mars-25 Avril 2009). Trans. Charlotte Lejeune. Paris: Galerie Christophe Gaillard, 2009. 18.

² Putnam, James, and Chiharu Shiota. "A Conversation Between Chiharu Shiota and James Putnam." Chiharu Shiota. By Chiharu Shiota, Mami Kataoka, and James Putnam. Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011.

³ Sienkiewicz-Nowacka, Ika, and Chiharu Shiota. *Chiharu Shiota: A-I-R Laboratory*: December 2003. Warszawa: CSW Zamek Ujazdowski, 2003. 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵ Tatehata, Akira. "The Allegory of Absence." *Chiharu Shiota: The Way Into Silence*. By Chiharu Shiota. Stuttgart: Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, 2003. 38. At University, Shiota studied under Suburu Muraoka. Tatehata, who was one of the artistic directors at the 2001 Triennale in which Shiota showed *Memory of Skin*, has written of Muraoka's "disquieting sense of the object that enables him to treat materials as detached allegory."

⁶ Sienkiewicz-Nowacka, 18.

⁷ Shiota, Chiharu. "Chiharu Shiota." *Marina Abramović (Student Body: Workshops 1979 - 2003; Performances: 1993 - 2003)*. Comp. Marina Abramović and Antje Müller. Milano: Charta, 2003. 354.

⁸ Shiota, Chiharu. "Art and Exhibition The Actual Spot 2." *When Mind Takes Shape*. Tokyo: Shinjuku Shobō, 79.

⁹ Jahn, Andrea. "Chiharu Shiota's Way Into Silence: An Eternal Triangle In Art." *Chiharu Shiota: The Way Into Silence*. By Chiharu Shiota. Stuttgart: Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, 2003. 14. Jahn remarks in her essay that, during the performance of *Try and Go Home*, Shiota's body "became part of the landscape and thus part of the elemental phenomena of nature."

¹⁰ Shiota (Marina Abramović), 356.

¹¹ Jahn, 20. *Memory of Skin* was a larger-scale development of a 1999 work called *After That*. The earlier piece featured a single dress, homemade and seven meters long, hanging on a wall below a working showerhead. Jahn argues that the water-soaked, mud coating on the dress gave it its own "fabric skin," an idea upon which Shiota would elaborate with *Memory of Skin* in 2001.

¹² Tatehata, 39.

¹³ Putnam, 215, 217.

¹⁴ Jahn, 19. The very first appearance of the black webs was in Shiota's 1996 work *Return to Consciousness*, in which the threads extended "unchecked" from floor to ceiling around a tiny vial of the artist's blood at the center of the space. Jahn points out that the vial seems to stand in for the artist herself.

¹⁵ Sienkiewicz-Nowacka, 11. In her interview with Ika Sienkiewicz-Nowacka, Shiota remembered with wonder that her living quarters had seven windows.

¹⁶ Sienkiewicz-Nowacka, 11.

¹⁷ Sienkiewicz-Nowacka, 5.

¹⁸ Putnam, 219. In his interview with the artist, Putnam brought up her work's obvious superficial relationship to Marcel Duchamp's *Sixteen Miles of String* installation at the 1942 *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition in New York. Her response, detailing how her thread works developed, illustrates the tremendous conceptual distance between Duchamp's work and her own. While the elder artist sought, presumably, to undermine the space of the museum as a space for easy and traditional viewing, Shiota's motivations remain much more personal, despite the work's communication of sentiments and ideas that are truly universal.

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- ¹⁹ Jahn, 20.
- ²⁰ Parker, Francis. "Chiharu Shiota: In Silence." *Art and Australia* 48.4 (2011): 741.
- ²¹ Parker, 741.
- ²² Kataoka, 212-213.
- ²³ Sienkiewicz-Nowacka, 31
- ²⁴ Zucker, Stefan. "Chiharu Shiota: Rotwand Gallery." Trans. Oliver E. Dryfuss. *Art Forum International* 48.4 (2009): 250. Academic OneFile. Web. 23 Feb. 2012.
- ²⁵ Jahn, 21-22.
- ²⁶ Kataoka, 210. Kataoka rightly compares *In Silence* to John Cage's *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), remarking that the installation, like Cage's walnut box/speaker construction, demonstrates "presence in the midst of absence."
- ²⁷ Shiota herself appeared as the sole "sleeper" in one of four beds at a 2000 version of this work at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, and in a variation of both works, once sat silently on a web-enclosed bed, naked and with her back to the audience for a period of several hours. However, for several reasons, I wish to focus on the later, more expansive incarnation.
- ²⁸ Tatehata, 40.
- ²⁹ Fischer, Peter. "Chiharu Shiota, Subjekt im Raum." *Another World: Zwölf Bettgeschichten*. By Susanne Neu-bauer. Lucerne: Kunstmuseum Luzern, 2002. 16-18. Fischer comes to a similar conclusion about the installation in his article on Shiota.
- ³⁰ Fricke, Harald. "Chiharu Shiota." *Art Forum* 44.8 (2006): 261-62. ProQuest International Academic Research Library. Web. 16 Mar. 2012. 61.
- ³¹ Platow, Raphaela. "Chiharu Shiota." *Dreaming Now*. Waltham, MA: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 2005. 53.
- ³² Tatehata, 40
- ³³ Kataoka, 212.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ Shiota had also used red thread in an untitled 2001 performance in Iceland, where she entangled her naked body in the fibers and photographed it against the green of the grass. In the photographs that exist of the performance, the thread resembles roots, as if it were growing up out of the ground and reclaiming Shiota.
- ³⁶ Nowacka, 23, 25.
- ³⁷ Shiota, Chiharu. E-mail interview. 20 Mar. 2012.