



Finding the Center: Works by Echiko Ohira

September 29, 2019 – January 5, 2020



Echiko Ohira, *Untitled (Red #5)*, 2013. Paper, acrylic, wire, glue, and wood backing, 39 x 39 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Gean Ogami.

LOS ANGELES – Craft Contemporary presents *Finding the Center: Works by Echiko Ohira*, the first solo museum exhibition of Los Angeles-based artist Echiko Ohira, on view from September 29, 2019 to January 5, 2020. The exhibition examines her prolific artistic production over almost three decades, centered on the exploration of paper as a medium.

At the core of Echiko Ohira's practice is paper. Intimately tied to the artist's childhood memories growing up in Japan, paper both represents and embodies a medium that is accessible, flexible, and malleable; because of these unique qualities, paper provides an infinite array of possibilities for the artist, at once minimal and maximal. "Though manifested in different ways, the unifying theme behind the work remains the same; Echiko Ohira works to transform—and by extension, reveal the unaltering nature of—paper. By working with such an everyday material, Ohira seeks to find the poetry in the mundane," articulates Exhibitions Curator Holly Jerger.

The starting point of Ohira's practice is rooted in her daily experiments with paper, small-scale objects, and found materials, which act as documents of both her artistic and personal reflections. Over the course of her career, the artist has filled dozens of sketchbooks as if they were diaries, some of which will be exhibited for the first time. She initially began with the idea of paper as a placeholder for the self and a displacement for pain. Early works such as *Untitled (Torso)*, 1995 and *Black Torso*, 2000 speak to this approach, emanating a strong corporeal presence with their vertical lines reminiscent of the undulations of vertebrae or the tapering of a spine. Since then, Ohira's practice has gradually unfolded to encompass broader meanings of paper, incorporating everyday materials such as pencil, thread, and nails. Her production has also expanded, shifting from



Top: Echiko Ohira, detail of *Untitled (Paper and Thread)*, 2016-2017. Tea stained blueprint paper, cardboard, thread, and glue, 39 × 39 × 11 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Minoru Ohira.

Bottom: Echiko Ohira, *Untitled (Paper and Thread)*, 2016-2017. Tea stained blueprint paper, cardboard, thread, and glue, 39 × 39 × 11 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Minoru Ohira.

flat works to sculptures, always with the same relentless curiosity towards paper—whether in the guise of cardboard, blueprint drawings, notebook pages, newsprint, receipts, or paper bags. Indicative of her more recent practice is *Untitled - paper and thread*, 2016-2017, made from tea-stained blueprint paper, thread, cardboard, and glue. The piece is comprised of delicately folded bits of blueprint paper, wrapped together with almost-invisible lines of white thread, built up in concentric rings to create a massive, unwieldy, yet balanced, sculpture: the result is paper transformed into something beyond itself.

Ohira's heavily worked artworks are constructed through a process of gluing, tearing, staining, painting, and layering. "Through sheer repetition, the artist creates a structure that can expand either infinitely outward or inwards, evoking both microcosms and macrocosms. The repetitive nature of her works suggests cyclical themes, prompting the viewer to imagine ideas such as lost/found, creation/destruction, or birth/death," describes Jerger. Indeed, these themes resonate strongly with Ohira's practice, as they present two opposite ends of the spectrum which, in reality, are the same—separated only by the act of transformation.

Born in Tokyo, Japan in 1949, Echiko Ohira studied Graphic Design at Musashino Art University in Japan before moving to Mexico with her husband, Minoru Ohira, and settling in Los Angeles in 1982. Since then, she has developed a rigorous practice around the investigation of paper as material, creating drawings, collages, and sculptures. Ohira has shown extensively in the greater Los Angeles area, including at the Offramp Gallery in Pasadena, the Armory Center for the Arts, and the Art Center College of Design. Craft Contemporary has previously shown her work in the group exhibition, *Paperworks*, curated by Howard Fox in 2015. Her works appear in collections in both the U.S. and Japan.

OPENING

An opening reception for *Finding the Center: Works by Echiko Ohira* will take place on Saturday, September 28, 2019 from 6 – 9 PM.

PROGRAMS

Gallery Talk: Finding the Center with Echiko Ohira and Holly Jerger

Sunday, October 20 | 1 PM | Free

Echiko Ohira joins Exhibitions Curator Holly Jerger for a walkthrough of the artist's first solo exhibition, *Finding the Center: Works by Echiko Ohira*. Meet the artist and learn about the history, processes, and ideas behind her elaborate paper works.

CREDITS

Finding the Center: Works by Echiko Ohira has been organized by Craft Contemporary and exhibitions curator Holly Jerger. This exhibition is supported, in part, by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles. All works are shown courtesy of the artist and Craft Contemporary, Los Angeles.



Located on Los Angeles' historic Miracle Mile since 1965, Craft Contemporary reveals the potential of craft to educate, captivate, provoke, and empower. With a focus on contemporary art made from craft media and processes, Craft Contemporary presents dynamic exhibitions by established and emerging artists and designers who are often underrepresented in larger art institutions. Through a robust roster of regular programs and events, Craft Contemporary offers creative opportunities for the public to participate in hands-on workshops led by professional artists. Craft Contemporary cultivates an environment for people in Los Angeles to deepen their relationship to art, creativity, and one another. For more information, visit www.cafam.org

LOCATION: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

ADMISSION: FREE every Sunday

REGULARLY: \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; free for Craft Contemporary members

HOURS: Tuesday - Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; closed Mondays. Every first Thursday of the month, extended hours 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

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