



exhibition 2
katsuyuki shirako

2011.11.04 (fri.) - 11.27 (sun.)
open on fri., sat., and sun. 12:00-18:00
weekday appointments also available
opening reception on 11.05 (sat.) 18:00-20:00

When creating works, I try to obtain unique motifs by laying multiple images of objects in the nature.
My creation is nothing specific but something unlimited.

Katsuyuki Shirako

Katsuyuki Shirako obtains motifs from living things from the nature. For Shirako, his works are always the beautiful collaboration of those motifs and Japanese lacquer. Shirako says that his works are something impossible to specify but something able to be defined as anything depending on viewers points of views. Truly beautiful creations have attracted a lot of attentions since his first solo exhibition, "exhibition1" held at eN arts in June 2010. eN arts had a solo booth at SCOPE BASEL 2011 where his works were well received in European art scene as well.

Naomi Rowe
eN arts

Here is the text written (originally in Japanese) for BT-Bijutsu Techo 2010 AUG. by Professor Minoru Shimizu about Shirako's works.

The reason almost all efforts in "Modern Lacquer" or "Contemporary Lacquer" end up being boring is that either simply copy the concepts of modern art in Japanese lacquer or they just produce uniformly standard shapes from being brainwashed by the ideology of "modern" (under such flowery concepts as "free form", "natural", "flow of consciousness")

One of the very few artists who have severed the ties to this type of modern artistic crafts is Katsuyuki Shirako, a member of the new generation of 21st century lacquer artists.

Carefully selected shapes, carved from base materials (MDF, Japanese Oak and/or Lime tree) are minutely assembled together into a delicate objet onto which the absolute minimal lacquer is applied that nonetheless produces the most beautiful and brilliant shine. With absolute and painstaking attention to the concept of his objet, starting from the creation of the base wood and extending to the application of the lacquer, his three dimensional works surprisingly have the silent tension that fills traditional lacquer. This tension is still further crystallized in his photographic works that pair the eternity of lacquer with the transience of flowers to create a beautiful contrast of two different times.

Professor Minoru Shimizu
Doshisha University

Katsuyuki Shirako separates his works into four different series: CONNECT, SCATTER, SCRIBBLE, & ASSEMBLE.



CONNECT

In CONNECT series, Shirako expresses, in photography, the beauty of the nature with Japanese lacquer in a unique way. He believes the balance of the nature and human being on this planet should be kept by co-existing in harmony. Instead of recreating a living object with Japanese lacquer, he combines the object in its natural form and his work made of lacquer. He photographs them to capture the transience of living things and the eternity of Japanese lacquer and to take advantages of the beauty in both artificial (in his case, it is Japanese lacquer) and the nature. In CONNECT series, their exquisite harmony is demonstrated in his photographs.

The work shown above: the stem of the feather in Japanese lacquer mounted into the real feather whose fluffy texture is impossible to express with lacquer. The lacquer part is created only for this photography work.



SCATTER

SCATTER is Shirako's latest series. These works are made of Japanese lime tree. The shapes are derived from the complex images of islands, flowers, moss, butterflies, and clouds... again things he finds fascinating in the natural world. In the SCATTER series, he applies natural pigments such as ground rocks and shells that are typically used in traditional Japanese paintings. The colours that he chooses are so subtle that they show various shades, depending on the surroundings, lighting, and the times of the day. While exhibiting these small works, he realized that their shadows become the part of the works, and began to gather them on the base to create a larger more complex works. By utilizing minimal materials with his maximum techniques, he challenges to express tranquility in the soul and flowing times that we enjoy in a small garden in a Japanese temple.



SCRIBBLE

The designs for SCRIBBLE series come from hundreds of the line drawings of Shirako's actual pencil scribbles. He scribbles at random, acting on instinct, more or less, and chooses his favorite ones. Then he presents his natural action, scribbling, in three dimensions by carving them out of blocks of Japanese lime tree or medium density fiberboard (MDF) all by hand. After being carved, each line (amazingly, all the lines are connected merely at one point) is shaved and sanded meticulously. Then he applies Japanese lacquer in different colors. Each piece requires about the applications of 20 layers of lacquer in order to create the depth and the luster of colors to complete the work. The works in SCRIBBLE series are minimalistic yet incredibly articulate.

The work shown above is the smallest piece (about 10 cm long) and should be mounted on a wall directly. Shirako's scribble looks like floating in the air and demonstrates an incredible 3D effect.



ASSEMBLE

Originated from the shapes of ferns, thorns of cacti, and flower petals, the designs of ASSEMBLE series are transformed into tiny pieces. Not only each piece but also connecting parts are all hand carved, out of Japanese lime tree and/or oak, and perfectly fitted into each other. Shirako applies different Japanese lacquers in colours and shines to bring out the different textures of each piece. The complete works boast his original designs and architectural beauty.

The work shown above is one of the smallest works that were created very recently. Hard to see but Shirako used two different kinds of trees (Japanese lime & oak) and applied two different lacquers: one is mat and the other is shiny black.