

Galerie Daniel Templon

Paris

CHIHARU SHIOTA

THE ART NEWSPAPER.COM, 5 May 2015

NEWS

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First look at the pavilions: seven national presentations of note in the Giardini

The Art Newspaper team guide to some of the best things to see at this year's Venice Biennale

by JULIA MICHALSKA , GARETH HARRIS , ERMANNO RIVETTI , PAC POBRIC , LOUISA BUCK , GEORGINA ADAM | 5 May 2015



Chiharu Shiota, *The Key in the Hand* (2015)

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Japan

Details of Chiharu Shiota's project for the Japanese pavilion were made available way in advance of the Biennale preview, so everybody knew what to expect, but this has not lessened the piece's impact, judging by the reactions overheard in the pavilion.



Chiharu Shiota, *The Key in the Hand* (2015), Japan Pavilion

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The Key in the Hand is an immersive installation of thousands of keys, collected by the artist and hung from the ceiling on threads of deep red yarn, which is entangled and spread across the entire top floor of the pavilion, making great use of the entire space. Two wooden boats act as receptacles for a cascade of keys which almost swallows them entirely. Walking through the installation and around the boats, the red seems to pulsate and grow in intensity, drowning out all other light and enveloping the viewer.

The keys, which the artist has gathered, act as a metaphor for secrecy, protection and memory, while the boats symbolise two hands that struggle to contain the deluge of collective memory as it falls down from the ceiling. Meanwhile, on the ground floor of the pavilion, a video installation shows young children looking at keys and attempting to recall their own earliest memories.

The installation has an immediate visual impact and its relatively “easy” aesthetic does not take away from the calm and intensely meditative atmosphere that Shiota has created. This is a great crowd-pleaser with a satisfyingly cerebral backbone, two qualities that are not always found in the same work of art.