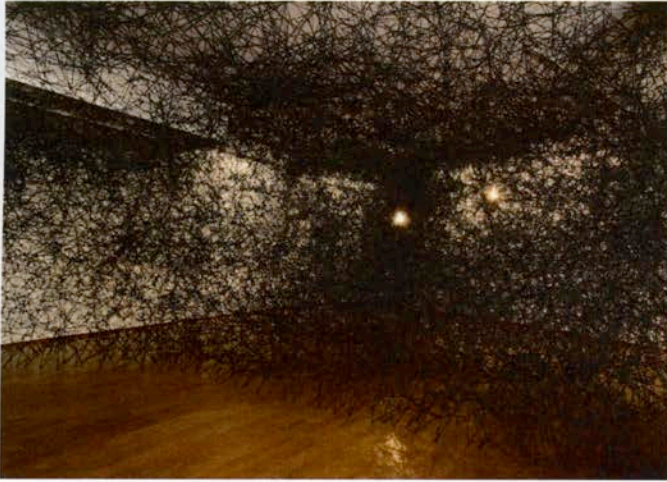


Galerie Daniel Templon

Paris

CHIHARU SHIOTA ART IN AMERICA, April 2012



View of Chiharu Shiota's installation *Infinity*, 2012, wool thread, lights; at Daniel Templon.

CHIHARU SHIOTA DANIEL TEMPLON

In her installations and sculptures, 40-year-old Chiharu Shiota nimbly explores the psychic entanglements of loss and remembrance, dreams and reality, past and present. Though experiences and childhood recollections fuel her imagination, the results are not merely personal. "I want to show universal things," she stated in a video made during the creation of *Infinity* (2012), her newest cocoonlike environment and the centerpiece of a recent exhibition of the same title. "I have a universe inside of me, and there are universes outside. And sometimes they come together." Since 1996, Shiota has connected her world with those of others by suspending ordinary objects imbued with human presence (shoes, hospital beds, a charred piano) in elaborate yarn webs that visually and physically engulf viewers.

Using 150 balls of black wool yarn, Shiota took three days to weave *Infinity*. From the ceiling and upper walls of the gallery, she worked downward and outward to the floor, looping, pulling and stapling to produce a deep, dense thicket of crisscrossing strands that filled and

darkened the space so that it felt like a grotto. Inside this mesh hung four round incandescent lightbulbs that brightened and dimmed at varying intervals. Shiota has compared their rhythms to breathing or heartbeats, symbols of hope and life amid chaos, an idea inspired by a recent visit to her native Japan, where she witnessed the resiliency of her compatriots in the wake of the Fukushima disaster. *Infinity*, therefore, suggests the ostensible boundlessness of human existence as well as the interconnectedness that defines humanity. And Shiota's description of her work—as threads becoming entangled, then torn apart—sounds like a gloss on the challenges that mire many relationships.

In its allusion to bodily functions, *Infinity* also extends Shiota's preoccupation with corporeality, a theme she initially investigated under the tutelage of Marina Abramović and Rebecca Horn. Having moved to Germany via Australia in 1997, Shiota contends that diasporic peoples "live with their bodies as their only real possession." The dresses that she regularly features in her work, a veritable second skin for women and girls in her estimation, signify this predicament.

Up close, the complex network of yarn in *Infinity* resembled an abstract drawing by the likes of Sol LeWitt. (Shiota's desire to draw in the air inspired her technique.) While Marcel Duchamp's iconic 1942 installation *Sixteen Miles of String* offers an obvious historical precedent for the matrices that Shiota assembles, their experiential and feminine murmurings more closely resonate with the work of Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse, Annette Messager and even Yayoi Kusama. Like her forebears, Shiota has honed a potent visual vocabulary, directing attention to those webs that ensnare us and with which we entrap others in the messy emotional rituals of life.

—Paul B. Franklin