

家庭画報

Japan's Arts & Culture

# KATEIGAHO

## INTERNATIONAL EDITION

家庭画報特選  
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2010 AUTUMN / WINTER vol. 26

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Shirasaka, Yuri. "Artist Interview: Motohiko Odani - Phantomb Limb," Kateigaho International Edition. Autumn / Winter 2010.

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## ARTIST INTERVIEW

# MOTOHIKO ODANI

*Phantom Limb*



Photography by Keizo Kioku

Top left: *SP4: the specter—what wanders around in every mind*, 2009, fiber-reinforced polymer, presents a spectral warrior on horseback.  
 Above: *Skeleton*, 2003, fiber-reinforced polymer.  
 Left: For *9th Room*, 2001, mirrors and projection screens are placed on the four walls, ceiling, and floor of a 3.2-meter cube. For the "Phantom Limb" exhibition, a new version, titled *inferno*, will be a larger, mirrored octahedron.



Photograph by Masayuki Sakamoto. Interview and text by Yuri Shirasaka

It may seem impossible to portray flowing water in a sculpture, but to Motohiko Odani, this unlikely proposition represents an ideal challenge not only to create the image he envisions, but also to compel observers to reconsider sculpture in a world dominated by computer imagery. "As three-dimensional digital media have developed, some people think sculpture is increasingly a thing of the past," Odani says. "I still see sculpture's potential."

Born in Kyoto in 1972, Odani blends Japanese traditional concepts with unusual visual effects and even inspirations from psycho-thriller films, work that attracted considerable attention at the 2003 Venice Biennale. Odani works predominantly in sculpture but incorporates photographs and videos into some of his creations. Well-known pieces include *9th Room*, an abstract, mirrored waterfall; *SP4*, a decaying warrior on horseback; and *Phantom Limb*, a striking color photograph of a six-year-old girl whose hands appear, at first glance, to be missing (but she is actually crushing raspberries in her fists).

His latest exhibition, opening in November at the Mori Art Museum in Roppongi Hills, includes new work and selections from the past decade. The exhibition, also titled "Phantom Limb," signifies the sculptural, and sometimes spectral, representation of "things that can't be seen with the human eye, like phenomena and perceptions," Odani explains. As inspiration, he cites Italian futurist Umberto Boccioni, whose bronze "dynamism" pieces convey movement that isn't actually there.

"Since ancient times Japan has had its own fanciful stories that make us aware of things that can't be seen, in noh theater, folktales, and the like," Odani says. "For me, sculpture is about making 'shadows' to hint at something ethereal that I refer to as 'phantom.'" The horseman in *SP4*, for example, might represent a gallant hero but in Odani's world resembles a zombie.

Because of his Kyoto background, too, Odani has found inspiration in Buddhist statues that may be centuries old—though he does not view them with a traditional sensibility. "I think Buddhist statues are a bit zombie-like in the way that

they are restored and repaired over the years as they age," he says. "I think that pictures and sculptures are similar in the way that they manipulate time, capturing a moving thing at a single moment, or incorporating multiple moments of time in multiple layers within a single work."

To encourage a further sense of awe and even fear as observers come face to face with his works, Odani enjoys playing with scale, creating enormous sculptures or video projections, like *9th Room*, that are hard to accommodate from a single point of view. Such sculptures, intended to stir up people's subconscious and their tactile awareness, are Odani's way of expanding the boundaries of how we understand the relationship between physical being and unseen spirit.

*Odani Motohiko: Phantom Limb*  
 November 27, 2010 to February 27, 2011  
 Mori Art Museum  
 Roppongi Hills Mori Tower 53F,  
 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo  
[www.mori.art.museum](http://www.mori.art.museum)

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