



Motohiko Odani, Aero Former, 2013 fiberglass reinforced plastic. Courtesy of Albertz Benda

An Interview With 'Depth Of The Body' Artist, Motohiko Odani

Motohiko Odani's newest exhibition, titled *Depth of the Body*, recently opened at [Albertz Benda](#) in New York City's [Chelsea](#) neighborhood, marking the American solo debut for this much-celebrated Japanese artist. Odani has exhibited his work internationally, and is known for his wide use of a variety of media, including sculpture, photography, and video. The artist shares with us some insights on his first gallery show outside of [Asia](#), along with the [New York](#) art scene.

What is the theme of your works?

'I'm interested in how people recover from loss. I've been fascinated by [the concept of the] 'phantom limb', a neurological phenomenon that people experience after losing a body part to amputation or surgery – they feel pain or tickling despite no longer having that limb or organ. The impression is so real that the patient feels like the missing part is still attached to the body.'

Phantom limb has been one of Odani's major themes for years, but after the Fukushima disaster in 2011, it resonates even more as a creative inspiration. One of the works that embodies the concept of phantom limb is, 'A Cosmic Traveler of Blindness,' which is a three-panel video piece showing

different images of a hand moving in dark water. One hand moves like an inchworm, while another randomly touches rocks shaped like ears and hands. The third hand wears a motion sensor, which blinks as the hand punches the bottom of the water. All of these hands move purposefully, seeking reaffirmation of their existence, which can be confirmed only through making contact with something other than itself, embodied in the notion of, 'I feel therefore I am.'

What's the concept of your *Depth of the Body* show?

'As you go through the gallery space, you will see a variety of body parts. They are scattered around, but the entire exhibition represents a whole body; a fragmented body is not...as unusual as it sounds where I come from.'

Why is that so?

'For instance, there are a number of historical cases in Japan where Buddhist statues and temples, largely wooden, were destroyed by fires and natural catastrophes, later to be restored. Being prone to such disasters, restoration was a common practice, but what makes it intriguing is that people used the remains that survived the disaster, integrating old objects with new while using the same material. The deliverables are quite grotesque – far from aesthetic perfection – but I suppose such transformation was a crucial process in their collective recovery. Along the way, we've not only developed tolerance for strange and unusual body images, but also fascination toward imperfection, of which I find undercurrents in Japanese and Asian culture.'

Do you find your Asian background influencing your works?

'Sculptures in Western art are devoted to replicating the human body as accurately as possible, from head to toe. But I think the notion of sculpture in the East is quite different; it's not so concerned about realism. I'm very mindful about this when I create my works.'

Did you see any interesting exhibitions in Chelsea?

'I stepped into a couple of shows in Chelsea and I'm stunned by the scale of works shown in those galleries. Although my works are much smaller than those, I hope the viewers can feel my energy highly concentrated into each piece.'

Odani's *Depth of the Body* works may not be physically imposing, but they are still striking, and will leave the onlooker with a deeper consciousness of their own body. Odani's show is on view at Albertz Benda until June 18th, 2016.