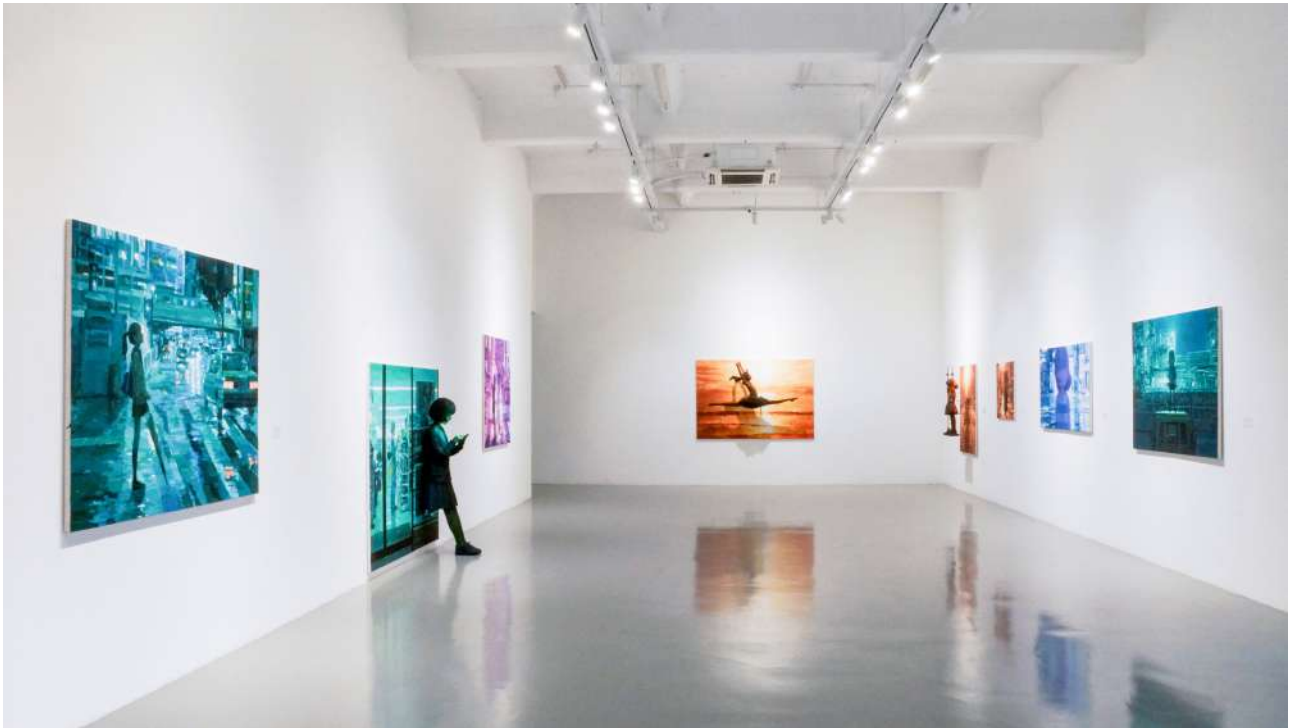


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MIZUMA CONVERSATIONS

OHATA Shintaro (JP), *Resonate*

30 June - 12 August 2018



Resonate, exhibition view, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore

Stunning sceneries fill the exhibition space of *Resonate*, a solo exhibition by Japanese artist, Ohata Shintaro – his debut solo in Singapore. On exhibit are 13 selected artworks produced from 2016 to 2018, a mixed body of works with the subject characters existing either in a two- or three-dimensional form. Resembling a single shot from a film, these casual scenes of everydayness kindle in us a certain nostalgia.

In Ohata's unified world of paintings and three-dimensional forms, he presents a sense of real-life immersion with his impeccable control of colours, shades, and light. It is often mistaken that a kind of light source is present within the paintings, when it is simply his meticulous placement of individual pieces of coloured Japanese paper that created the illusion. Mostly drawn from actual scenes in life, his recent depictions reflect a shift in the artist's routine; from intimate settings of the nighttime, Ohata has now embraced more cheery sunlit moments of the day.

The absence of a completed narrative in each piece allows for room to peek into imaginative realms, each unique to every individual's thoughts and experiences. The feeling of reminisce is predominately captured in Ohata's paintings. Through his eyes, we witness the dazzling and enfolding light of sunset, city roads on a rainy day, and the gleaming fluorescence of convenience stores at night. Amidst the rapid speed of life, Ohata urges audience to pause for a moment and take a breather.



Resonate, Opening Reception, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore

Mizuma Gallery (MG): Hello Ohata-san. You have always chosen to express yourself by reinterpreting the simple moments of everyday life – what is it about these moments that interests you?

Ohata Shintaro (OS): Sometimes, we look at a certain scenery and we identify it as beautiful, but that could possibly be caused by the influence of someone else's idea of beauty. The ability to notice the simple and beautiful moments in everyday life comes from within each person's sensibility. I hope by capturing these moments, I can help more people see the beauty of everyday life and to share them with everyone.

MG: Is there any place, season, or time of day in particular that you chose to seek for inspiration?

OS: Although a lot of my works depict nighttime, I do not have any specifics on where I look for inspiration. I am very neutral. I enjoy taking walks and when I see something that inspires me, I photograph it. But I do not intentionally seek out places that might look beautiful, it really depends on where I end up at.

I like to fill my photographs with light. In order to do so, I have to find a place with enough light to fill the entire frame. I happen to find that in Shibuya (Tokyo, Japan) and thus a lot of my images have Shibuya in the background.

MG: How do you document and transfer these selected moments into your works? Are they purely drawn from memory or from a physical photograph/sketch?

OS: I will usually take a photo of the moment or scenery that inspires me. Using this photograph as a reference, not only do I transfer this moment into my paintings, but I also try to recall certain emotions and thoughts that I had experienced and have them translated into my paintings.



Left to Right: *A rainy day-1*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 130.3 x 162 cm, *In a corner of the world*, 2016, mixed media, 162 x 177 x 54 cm, *A rainy day-2*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 130.3 x 130.3 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

MG: How do you train yourself and sharpen your senses to see the beauty in simple moments?

OS: For me, I do that by mostly listening to music. When you listen to music, there is only audio and no imagery, hence it forces you to use your imagination to convert those emotions and feelings into something visual.

I try not to have any preconceived notions or expectations of what I see in life, and to accept them for what they are. I have a motto or principle that I live by, which is to not let these attractive, beautiful and interesting moments in my daily life pass me by, and to really sit down and reflect on why did that moment or scenery seem beautiful to me. I constantly ask myself what about it was so interesting, explore that notion and transform that into my work.

MG: You tend to describe your artworks best with the Japanese word "setsunai" – a word that can not be translated into an exact English term because it includes different emotions such as grief, sorrow, pity, and reminiscence. Are these emotions coupled with any narrative?

OS: I try to translate particular moments or images that came to me into my paintings. Because of that, I do not insert a story or narrative to accompany my works. Once I attach a story or a narrative to my works, the work is no longer trying to convey a moment but instead, a long timeline, and viewers will attempt to understand the context of why this person is here and what happened to them before or after the work was created. It would no longer be a painting that conveys a moment, but instead a long amount of time which I do not wish to do so. What I want to do is to share the imagery of emotions at that moment. When you come across a painting or a work with a story, it becomes much more explanatory and less experiential.

MG: There always seems to be something you wish to express through your exhibition titles – now with *Resonate*, the title of your first solo exhibition in Singapore here at Mizuma Gallery, do share more with us on this choice of title.

OS: It takes two hands to clap – when you clap, you do not know whether it is the left or right hand that makes the sound. The sound is produced when both hands come together. To me, the left and right hands are like the artist and the viewers. It is not just about the artist painting something beautiful and presenting it to the viewers. In painting something beautiful and having viewers look at it, they are able to resonate with the artist hence the exhibition title *Resonate*. To me, paintings do not exist just to express something, but also as a medium for two people to connect with one another and to share that emotion. I paint sceneries that I find beautiful and if viewers feel something from my works, this means that me and viewers “resonate”.



MG: Let's speak more in-depth on your first solo exhibition in Singapore. You have specially created the work *Deep Breath* which depicts the country's contemporary architecture of Gardens by the Bay – could you share with us about your experience in creating this work?

OS: I feel that around the world whenever every country's government tries to make an iconic structure or monument for their country, they tend to spend a lot of money on it, and it always turns out to be a really big or tall piece of architecture or building. Gardens by the Bay, on the other hand, is really unique in the sense that it is inspired by nature and also has very modern elements. It is like a modern interpretation of both a city and nature. To me, this is a very refreshing idea. I have never seen such an architecture, hence I felt so compelled to paint the Gardens by the Bay.

Deep Breath (detail), 2018, mixed media, 162 x 130.3 cm (painting), 146 x 55 x 40 cm (sculpture), © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

MG: We notice an interesting use of monochromatic colour schemes throughout each work in this exhibition – is there a reason for this?

OS: I attempted to paint realistically but when I added the sculpture to the painting, I found it difficult to tie the sculpture back together with the painting. Using a monochromatic colour scheme allows the sculpture and the painting to look like a single piece of work and this became the style I adopted.

The colours I have chosen to use really depends on the time of the day that I want to depict. For example, if it is a late night scenery, I will tend to use the colours green or purple, whereas if it is daytime, I will use orange to represent that particular timing. The choice of colours is also an expression of the emotions that I felt within each painting.



MG: Many curious viewers are drawn to the young female subject in all your artworks, what are the intentions behind this choice?

OS: I often depict a young girl as the subject character in my work to express the world as how I think a young girl would see it. I feel that through the eyes of the young girl, the reality is filled with awe, wonder, and magic. If I were to depict a male subject instead, I fear that I might subconsciously relate it too much to my own personal experiences and steer it away from the more imaginative world I wish to portray. With an unrelatable subject, there is more room for imagination and everything becomes more magical. Through that, I am able to push my imagination further, creating pieces that really shares the magic of everyday life with the viewers.

Swing against the sunset (detail), 2018, mixed media, 130.3 x 89.4 x 40 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

MG: In an earlier interview, you mentioned that you draw much inspiration from the movie "The Wizard of Oz" – could you elaborate more on that?

OS: I watched the movie 'The Wizard of Oz' and was inspired by the set. The combination of mise-en-scène and characters, through acting, brings the entire set alive, as if it was another world or reality. I was really inspired by that and thought that perhaps through the fusion of sculpture and painting, I am able to create a space where my world can come to life. The idea of creating and going into a new reality is what I hope to establish through my works.

MG: You have mentioned that you listen to piano while working – how does that influence you in the way you work?

OS: I like to listen to the piano when I work because one note on the piano does not create music, it is the combination and overlapping of notes and sounds that creates the music. Similarly to painting, one stroke of the brush produces just one colour but with multiple strokes of the brush, it creates the entire painting. Even for the sculptures, by placing one piece of coloured Japanese paper at a time, layering more and more over until the colours reverberate with the rest of the scenery, eventually gives birth to something. That is why listening to the piano while working helps to strengthen this mindset, constantly setting a reminder to myself.

MG: How long does it usually take for you to complete each piece of artwork?

OS: Usually it takes about a month to complete a painting but it really depends on the size. For a small painting, it could take a week or two. When it is combined with a sculpture, it will take about two to two and a half months to finish the artwork. Actually, more time is taken to complete the sculpture than the painting. Sculpting the sculptures does not take that long but what is really time consuming is adhering the little pieces of paper onto the sculpture. The process is akin to putting together a puzzle or a mosaic so that takes a longer time.

MG: What is your most ambitious project you have in mind?

OS: My biggest ambition right now is to bring my works to more people around the world. Most people only get to see my work through photographs or through the net, but I want to bring that experience of seeing my work in reality to more viewers.

In the sea (detail), 2018, mixed media, 130 x 130 x 65 cm.
© OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART



RESONATE - EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH



In a corner of the world, 2016, mixed media, 162 x 177 x 54 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

In a corner of the world

The reason why I chose to first introduce this painting was because it bears the most similarities to the first painting I ever did which got me into pursuing painting. Hence, let us begin the walk-through with this.

In Japan, everywhere you look you will end up seeing a convenience store. So there was a point in time when I was a night owl, sleeping when places were open and waking up when they were already closed. During this point, however, I still needed to go out to buy food and other necessities. I was very bothered by the nocturnal lifestyle I led, and the existence of convenience stores being open at that period of time really helped anchor me. It was then when I realised that there were probably a lot of people like me – rescued by the existence of convenience stores, and thus that became the reason behind using convenience store as the main motif in my work. With this, it also reached out to other people like myself who lived off convenience stores.

The animal subject in this painting is how the girl views a generic male subject: as a sort of animal, drawing connection to the “herbivore men”, a phenomenon commonly found amongst the Japanese. The term was used to describe the quiet New Age men who exude more gentle and sensitive characteristics, and behaves in a less manly and aggressive manner – a subtle nod towards myself.

At a glance, these two characters in the painting seem to have nothing in common, but the theme I wish to convey here is loneliness. They are both experiencing loneliness and by yourself loneliness can be a negative emotion. When I first started painting a convenience store, it was to appease my own loneliness that I was feeling. But when the painting was published in a magazine, I started receiving a lot of letters from people who said that there was someone else who felt the same loneliness that I did. Through this, I felt that I had connected a lot of people with that loneliness – making it a kind of shared loneliness. Being connected with this shared loneliness meant that loneliness was no longer lonely. This has helped to heal the loneliness within me – showing how with loneliness being a shared emotion, suddenly brings people together and has the power to become something positive.

A rainy day-1

The rain and the city are themes I often like to paint. Although rain to most people might seem negative, I see it rather differently – the ground glistening under the rain, the street lights shining on the falling rain, the water droplets on the umbrella and how it disperses the city lights, are all a different side and beauty of the city that you can experience, which is why I often like to paint a city when it is raining.

In my paintings, I like to turn something negative into something positive, making it your friend, turning it into something that supports you. I like to paint when I am feeling down or upset, hoping that when someone looks at my paintings, they will feel encouraged, supported or light-hearted and positive. Through my paintings I hope to convert something that is normally negative or upsetting into something more positive.

A rainy day-2

The theme of this painting is very similar to the one we have just seen. This is when the rain is starting to light up, and you see the raindrops through the veneer of the umbrella, witnessing a different side of the city.



Left to Right: *A rainy day-1*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 130.3 x 162 cm, *A rainy day-2*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 130.3 x 130.3 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART



Flightless wings, 2017, mixed media, 130.3 x 194 x 60 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

Flightless wings

This is one of the paintings that best showcases my concept of merging sculpture with painting. Why I started this concept of putting sculpture and painting together is because I wanted to bring a sense of real-life immersion into paintings.

The title of this painting is *Flightless wings*. Usually birds represent freedom and flight because of their ability to fly freely in the sky – an ability impossible for humans and

because of that, it has forced us to have a very active imagination. From this imagination, comes art and dance which is what I was trying to represent in this work.

In the sea

The girl that appears here is the same girl from the painting *Flightless wings* – a work which represents movement or the mandarin character ‘动’ (movement), whereas this painting here represents the opposite: quietness, silence and the mandarin character ‘静’ (stillness).

I feel that it is very important to look inwards to understand more about yourself, not just learning more about the world around you and blindly taking action. Instead, learning more about what you possess and what you lack. Once that is understood, you make informed decisions before taking action. From these two seemingly contrary forces that are interdependent, I wanted to show how taking action and looking inwards are equally as important.



In the sea, 2018, mixed media, 130 x 130 x 65 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

quiet morning

I often use the colour blue when painting dawn and sunrise, not exactly during sunrise but slightly before dawn. What I really wanted to capture in this painting is that moment in time – around 6am, before the city actually starts to come to life. Although it is possible that this girl is going to school, it is at this point before the train arrives whereby she is able to make any decisions she wants. Perhaps, she can decide not to go to school and instead to go somewhere else. This moment in time where life is a blank canvas and you can make any decisions you like – that moment of possibility is what I want to capture.



In this image of predawn, I really want to encapsulate the feeling of possibilities developing, and chances being made available. This moment of decision-making, could be her moment to break free from the routine of day to day life. Thus, the way she feels and sees the world might suddenly be different because of this, and the ability to see the world in a different light starts from here.

This painting is not just something that only I am showing, but something that the viewer and the artist come together to create. It is not that I have already told you a completed narrative, but the painting exists for each individual viewer, to draw from their own life experiences and memories, and decide what might happen.

quiet morning, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 130.3 x 80.3 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

Swing against the sunset

The inspiration for this work came from the tender ages of childhood when it was common to frequent the park swings. Revisiting park swings as an adult can actually bring back a lot of childhood memories – this instance of nostalgia is what I want to capture in this work. The main point of focus is not the little girl but instead, the sunlight.

To me, the feeling of being on the swing, and the instability of swinging back and forth is a bit like life, and there are not many physical experiences that feels the same to this.

I created this work as a way to bring out our childhood memories, our internal memories – a continuation of my said intention to evoke memories from the viewer. The swing is representational of our childhood memories, and I always want to create paintings with images that stimulate the viewers to reflect on their own experiences, drawing connection to my painting and becoming part of it.



Swing against the sunset, 2018, mixed media, 130.3 x 89.4 x 40 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART



Sunset in a headwind

The subject depicted in this painting is set backlit against the sunset – a style I often paint in my works.

In this painting, the girl seems to have noticed something (beyond the frame). I want the viewers to experience this curiosity of 'what did she notice?', 'why did she turn around?', and to use their imagination to figure out what might have caught this girl's attention, and to enjoy that process of imagination.

Sunset in a headwind, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 72.7 x 72.7 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

sayonara wo nokoshite

The translated title of this painting is '*leaving behind goodbye*'. The 'goodbye' that was left behind are the bitter memories, all the what ifs, the could have beens, and regrets that the person has. I believe the thought of 'if that happened instead' has crossed everyone's mind some point or another, causing moments of regret. I want to capture that essence and that emotion in this painting.

I painted this to sort of express that moment when you might have felt a lot of regret and wished you could go back to change things, but then realising you can not, and the moment passes and things cannot be changed anymore. In that moment, it is very painful to realise and to walk on with all that regret. As time passes, and you walk further away from that incident, you turn around to look back at the memory, which suddenly becomes something less painful. It becomes something bright and perhaps something that you can look at with slightly more fonder feelings and with greater acceptance and what used to be something regretful and remorseful becomes something slightly more positive and easier to accept.



sayonara wo nokoshite, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 89.4 x 145.5 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART



Blowin' in the wind, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 112 x 145.5 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

Blowin' in the wind

The concept of this painting is very simple. It is sort of a declaration that the digital age and technology is advancing very rapidly and I feel that probably in the future there is going to be more digital artworks. The factories in the background represent the digital age and the technology; and then there is me or the declaration that I want to make by standing there. The declaration that I will remain a painter who will continue to paint traditional, non-digital media.

On a sunny day

This is one of the sunset series paintings. This one quite similarly, has the viewers looking at the painting going 'Oh, what is so interesting that the girl who was cycling would actually stop and take a look at it?' and for us to imagine what is the thing that caught her attention and then enjoy figuring that out.



On a sunny day, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 72.7 x 50 cm, © OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART



Deep breath, 2018, mixed media, painting: 162 x 130.3 cm, sculpture: 146 x 55 x 40 cm
© OHATA Shintaro, courtesy of the artist, Mizuma Gallery and YUKARI ART

Deep breath

This work is called *Deep breath* and you can see a girl standing on one of the observation decks at Gardens by the Bay. Originally, it was meant to be a girl standing, having her hair in the wind and looking at the scenery. This work conveys where she wants to go in life now, life begins anew and she is going to embark on this journey of life. In that moment, standing there with the wind in her hair and basking in the moment is the theme of this work.

If you think about life, sometimes you will feel that it is a challenge, life is a battle, we have to challenge and fight for something. What I want to convey here is that more often than not, what is really important is to receive and accept, and that is where real expression begins. So as artists, we very often talk about practice, skill and technique. While that is really important, sometimes the more you do, the more you forget how it is to feel, accept and to receive. Hence, this painting is about the moment I feel is important for people to accept and receive. It is an important aspect of life that you should do, not just finding challenges and doing it, but spending and taking the time to be open to things and accept it as they come, and to receive them with open arms.

Resonate, solo exhibition by Ohata Shintaro runs till Sunday, 12 August 2018.



About the Artist

OHATA Shintaro (b. 1975, Hiroshima, Japan) is a painter known to create artworks that depict little things in everyday life. The artist is renowned for his style of placing sculptures in front of paintings, combining both the 2D and 3D worlds. "By doing so, I believe that the viewers could feel the atmosphere of my works more lively and dynamically. I had been seeking for a way to give more realistic feel to my piece without changing my painting style, and then I got inspired by the painting in the backgrounds of film and theatre." This became one of the most significant turning points in his career. Some of Ohata's selected solo exhibitions include the recent *Resonate* at Mizuma Gallery, Singapore (2018), *Everyday Life* at YUKARI ART CONTEMPORARY, Tokyo, Japan (2011), and *Luminous* at gallery4walls, Seoul, South Korea (2010). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions in United States, Singapore, South Korea, and

Japan. Ohata was shortlisted for the category of Installation & Sculpture at the Celeste Prize (2009), and at the GEISAI #10 (2006), he received the WWD Japan award, DENTSU award, GIANT ROBOT award, and yukari-art, Inc. award. Ohata's artworks can be found on the publication cover of *Tokyo Soundtrack* (Italian edition) by novelist Hideo Furukawa (2018), and on the CD jacket of *Daylight* and *Suiyoubi no Wine* by Rika Shinohara (2001). His artwork is in the public collection of the Takahashi Collection (Japan). Ohata Shintaro lives and works in Kanagawa, Japan.

About the Gallery

Mizuma Gallery was established in 1994 in Tokyo, and since its opening in Gillman Barracks, Singapore in 2012, it aims for the promotion of Japanese artists in the region as well as the introduction of new and promising young talents from Southeast Asia to the international art scene. The gallery creates a new vector of dialogue within Asia, by exchanging art projects between East Asia and Southeast Asia.

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Tue-Sat: 11am-7pm
Sun: 11am-6pm
Closed on Mondays &
Public Holidays

www.mizuma.sg
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