

'Chiharu Shiota: The Soul Trembles'

beginning Sept. 26

Presented by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) presents *Chiharu Shiota: The Soul Trembles*, the largest solo exhibition to date devoted to the internationally acclaimed Japanese artist.

An internationally acclaimed artist

Spanning more than three decades of creative work and organized in collaboration with the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, *The Soul Trembles* celebrates Shiota's poetic and deeply sensitive practice. Known for her performances and immersive installations constructed with red, black and white thread, Shiota explores themes of memory, identity, connection, displacement and the fragility of human existence. Montreal marks the North American debut of the exhibition's international tour.

"As you move through these immense works, you're taken on a dreamlike journey, travelling through the interstices of memory and time," said Stéphane Aquin, Rossy Foundation Director of the MMFA. "Above and beyond the extraordinary technical prowess of Shiota's works, it's the universality of their underlying themes that make them so profound and so memorable."

Born in Osaka in 1972, Shiota lives and works in Berlin and has been a major figure in international contemporary art since the mid-1990s. She has developed a distinctive visual language through the

intricate interlacing of thread and the use of everyday objects carrying powerful symbolic meaning.

A landmark exhibition

The Soul Trembles brings together eight monumental installations alongside sculptures, photographs, drawings, performance videos and archival documents from Shiota's theatre work. Following presentations in cities including Turin, Paris, Jakarta, Shanghai and Taipei, Montreal will be the 10th venue to host the exhibition.

The immersive installations will occupy the large galleries of the MMFA's Michal and Renata Hornstein Pavilion. Many are site-specific and shaped in response to the spaces they inhabit. Shiota's team is installing the exhibition with assistance from a local group that includes art students from Concordia University.

Monumental works

Visitors approaching the exhibition will first encounter *Where Are We Going?* (2017/2026), a dramatic installation suspended from the ceiling featuring boats filled with sheets of white thread.

The exhibition also traces the evolution of Shiota's career through paintings, documentary photographs, performances, videos and drawings.

Step into Chiharu Shiota's world

Among its most personal works is *Out of My Body* (2019), created following Shiota's second cancer diagnosis in 2017. The suspended installation incorporates fishnet-cut red leather and bronze casts of the artist's limbs.

Connecting Small Memories (2019/2026) incorporates miniature objects Shiota collected over the years or discovered at Berlin flea markets. Many of the once-abandoned objects are intertwined with red thread, creating a miniature world that speaks to the connections between people, objects and memories.

Reflections of memory and time

One of the exhibition's centrepieces is *Uncertain Journey* (2016/2026), occupying the entire central gallery. Six metal boats rest on the floor beneath a dramatic canopy of red thread stretching across the walls and ceiling.

In *Reflection of Space and Time* (2018), mirrors and two floating white dresses are veiled in black thread. As visitors approach, their reflections become part of the installation, blurring the boundaries between viewer, artwork and surrounding space.

The exhibition concludes with *In Silence* (2002/2026), an immersive environment created from black thread, a piano and

chairs. The work was inspired by Shiota's childhood memory of seeing a burned piano discarded outside a neighbour's home following a fire.

"The MMFA is honoured to present this major exhibition, which attests to the exceptional nature of Chiharu Shiota's work," said Iris Amizlev, Curator of Special Projects at the MMFA. "Employing a visual language that resonates on a universal level, her art transcends time and borders."

Throughout *The Soul Trembles*, Shiota transforms ordinary objects and simple strands of thread into extraordinary environments that encourage visitors to contemplate memory, connection, absence and mortality. Having often confronted the fragility of life in her own experience, Shiota seeks to make audiences feel the "trembling" of her soul while reminding them of their own vulnerability.

Chiharu Shiota: The Soul Trembles runs from September 26 to February 14, 2027, at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

For tickets and information, visit the MMFA website.

— Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

Chiharu

Shiota

The Soul Trembles

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