

**One Cut One Bow interviews:  
Kaoru Hirano**



Group Exhibition: "Wardrobe Memories", Arts Maebashi, Gunma, 10 October 2014 - 13 January 2015.  
Photo by Shinya KIGURE.

*One Cut One Bow (Magdalen Chua and Ryotaro Hoshino) interviewed Kaoru Hirano on 24 October 2015 in Berlin. Hirano has been creating sculptural forms by unravelling and re-tying threads from clothes and accessories, influenced by her childhood memory of her mother making clothes. Based in Berlin since 2009, she has recently moved to Hiroshima, Japan.*

### **Material and process**

One Cut One Bow (OCOB): How does your chosen material influence the eventual form of your work?

Kaoru Hirano (KH): If I already have a story, I look for a particular material related to it. If I am just browsing in a second-hand shop, I choose a material based on whether I can imagine the eventual form. It could be something about the colour, fabric or shape of clothes, shoes or an umbrella, etc., and the sense of what happens when they are unravelled, united and finally installed in a space. If I can imagine how it appears, I will take the material.

OCOB: For your sphere work (*sphere #3*, 2012), did you intend to make a sphere before you unravelled the chino pants?

KH: Yes. Someone gave me the chino pants.

OCOB: Daigoro (*Hirano's husband*)?

KH: Secret...

OCOB: How about the underwear?

KH: Secret.

OCOB: Top secret?

KH: Top secret. If I say the underwear is Daigoro's, we can only imagine him. If the person is unknown, everyone will have their own image of the owner.

OCOB: Your work requires a lot of time, labour and energy. Is it important that you make your work by yourself?

KH: No, it isn't. In the past, people have helped me and depending on the nature of the work, I might get help in future.

### **気配 (*kehai* - Memory/Sign/Presence)**

OCOB: We have sometimes used the word "memory" for "気配" (*kehai*) about your practice. Is there a gap between the meanings of both words?

KH: I am not very good at English, but probably, this Japanese word "気配" (*kehai*) cannot be adequately translated by "memory". Perhaps more than one word is required to explain "気配" (*kehai*).

OCOB: How do you sense "気配" (*kehai*)?

KH: Though clothes are usually worn, when unravelled, deconstructed and made into a work, the position changes such that the clothes wear the owner. Even though the owner does not exist in the work itself, we can probably imagine and sense the person who was wearing it, as their presence remains there in some way.

OCOB: We were recently talking to a friend from Lebanon. He needed some warm clothes and we suggested that he visits a second-hand shop. The idea of a second-hand shop was new to him. We explained that the shop sells clothes previously worn by other people. He didn't like the idea because the energy of the other person would remain on the clothes. In his culture, after a person dies, him or her clothes are burnt. We began throwing around words for this idea of energy or aura, and started to wonder if you wear second-hand clothes.

KH: I like second-hand clothes.

OCOB: Me too. What happens for clothes with more than one owner?

KH: A wedding dress might be worn by five brides and my wedding dress work (*untitled -brides-*, 2012) concerns the making of a ritual into form, as a wedding dress is worn only for a wedding ceremony. It is less about an individual person, than about the concept of the bride.

When I have materials from a second-hand shop, I do not know the story of material. I don't know if there is only one owner, or two or three, but it doesn't matter because I can create a new story. Perhaps no one can know the history of clothes, but we can imagine it.

OCOB: Do you have a story of the jacket that you're wearing now?

KH: The owner might have been a New Yorker who bought many clothes. But I've already used this for 5 or 6 years by now and it's mine.

OCOB: Your "気配" (*kehai*) is bigger. If I ever see someone else wearing a shirt that I have given away, I think I would have a strange sensation and feel that the shirt still mine.

KH: I think it's the same for a house. Perhaps clothes are also like spaces that people live in.



*sphere #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9*; 2012;  
chino pants, sock (right), sock (left), T-shirt, sock (right),  
sock (left), panties;  
diameter: 16cm, 5cm, 5cm, 10cm, 6cm, 6cm, 6cm.  
Photo by Nobutada OMOTE (SANDWICH GRAPHIC).



*untitled -brides-*, 2012,  
wedding dress,  
dimensions variable.  
Photo by Nobutada OMOTE (SANDWICH GRAPHIC).  
Collection : Takahashi collection

## Experimentation

OCOB: Are there any new materials that you are interested in using?

KH: I have always wanted to use new materials and have been challenging myself but my experiments have not quite materialised into an eventual work. I think there are materials I can use to express “氣配” (*kehai*), but so far, I haven't found any which feels right.

OCOB: I remember seeing something in your studio last year that you were knitting. I think you wanted to knit a sweatshirt and you said that you didn't like it.

KH: I tried knitting, but I don't like it. I think I finished the last piece I worked on. One thread is big, like a pom-pom. I don't know why, but knitting makes a work too thick. I tried different things, including a birthday cake. I covered a birthday cake with candle wax. I lit candles on the birthday cake and all the wax melted. Eventually, the birthday cake was coated with the candle wax.

OCOB: Can you tell us a bit more?

KH: I wanted to make something special to celebrate. My birthday is on the 15<sup>th</sup> September and my birthday is only this day, but every day is somebody's birthday. I covered the cake with the candle wax and planned to remove the cake, leaving the wax. However, I couldn't remove the cake easily and also had doubts about how the work would develop. I left the cake covered in the candle wax until I had to throw it away.

I also worked with obituaries. In the newspaper in Germany, you have an obituary section. There is a framed section for each person who has passed away, as well as the date of the newspaper. When you put paper on top of the newspaper and create friction, the ink would be transferred onto the paper. I then collected all those dates. There was a group exhibition where I showed my work from the obituaries. The exhibition space was a corridor with doors on each end. I selected obituaries with the birth dates or passing away dates relevant to the exhibition period and placed them at different ends of the corridor depending on whether the date occurred closer to the beginning or end of the exhibition period.

OCOB: What was the eventual work presented?

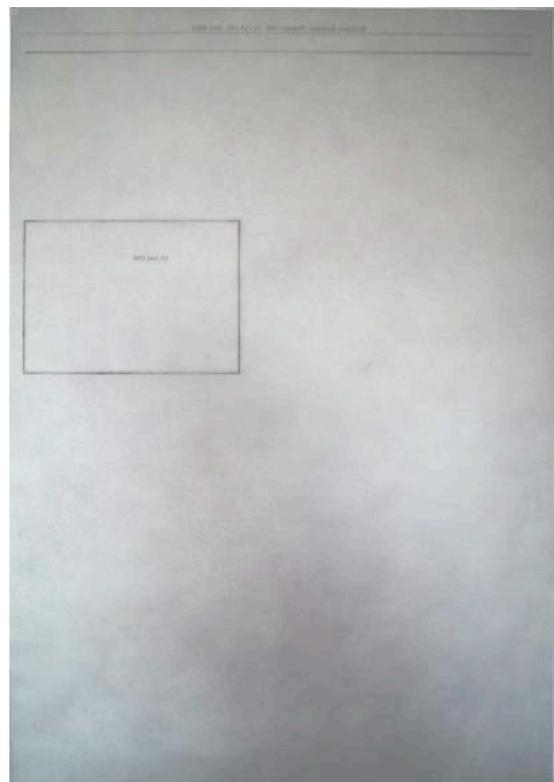
KH: The material I used was tracing paper. First of all, I cut the tracing paper in the same size as the newspaper itself, and transferred the date the newspaper was published, the frame of obituaries and the dates within the obituaries. I placed the tracing paper on the glass doors of the exhibition space so you could see it from both sides.

OCOB: It makes me think of the physical path of life and time. It's so different from your other works.

KH: The material is different but it also makes you think about memory and time.



*untitled -Traueranzeige-*; 2011; newspaper, paper.  
Photo by Megumi FUKUDA



*untitled -Traueranzeige-*; 2011; newspaper, paper



web #3, 2012, dress, h.75 x w.75 cm.  
Photo by Nobutada OMOTE (SANDWICH GRAPHIC)  
Collection : Takahashi collection

### New works

OCOB: What are you working on now?

KH: I'm not making works now as I am preparing to move out, but for the exhibition in Augsburg (Textile Erinnerungen – Remembering Textiles, Staatliches Textil und Industriemuseum Augsburg, 26 February - 8 May 2016), I would like to make a slightly bigger spider web (*web #3*).

In addition — though I don't know if it will materialise nor is there any exhibition intended for it — there is a material that I am mulling over. Someone, possibly a man from a village in Germany, found his mother's clothes in his attic and posted on Kleinanzeigen, a German equivalent of Yahoo Auctions, asking if anyone would want a cardboard box of his mother's clothes.

So, I bought the box of clothes. When it arrived and I opened it, I found that almost all the contents were black clothes, such as very long and completely black skirts. Though the shirts were white, everything else was black, including something that could have been worn on your head like a scarf, socks which were pretty thick, etc. I thought that the clothes could have belonged to a witch and want to make a work about witches.

OCOB: A witch is a very powerful image. I can't wait to see what you will do with the work.

KH: Too powerful?

OCOB: No, no. Not too powerful.

KH: My friend told me that in Germany, witches are human.

OCOB: The idea of a witch reminds me of the historical witch-hunts, where those thought to be witches would be searched for and burnt. Are there witches in Japan?

KH: 魔女の宅急便 (*Majo no Takkyūbin* or *Witch's Delivery Service* is a 1989 Japanese animated fantasy film produced by Studio Ghibli also known as "Kiki's Delivery Service"). In Japan, witches don't have a bad image.

## Returning to Japan

OCOB: Why are you returning to Japan?

KH: I like the four seasons in Japan and the light there. The sunlight in Japan is different from here. The light here is like sand; it isn't smooth. It is also a little blackish and the colours of trees are also gritty.

OCOB: How about in Japan?

KH: しとり (*shitori*)

OCOB (M): Sounds good.

OCOB (R): That's a challenge...

OCOB (M): Translate it.

OCOB (R): しとり (*shitori*).

OCOB (M): Dry, clear, piercing? What do you use the word with?

OCOB (R): I often use it to describe an atmosphere of a space, among activities or just a state that you are in, especially with friends. Of course we also use it for objects. You might have a しとり (*shitori*) time with your friend, a session which is calm and personal, though not necessarily intimate.

Your skin can be described as しとり (*shitori*), meaning smooth and moist, perhaps after a visit to a hot spring.

KH: The light is also softer and differs depending on the place in Japan.

## Translation

OCOB: Do you have any questions for us?

KH: How do you translate?

OCOB (R): We transcribe the original Japanese text, leaving two or three lines below the transcription. I would then write the hiragana and translate it word-for-word so that Mag can read it. Based on our own interpretation, we discuss each sentence in detail. We question each other a lot, on why a certain word is used or how it connects with the text.

OCOB (M): We ask each other a lot of questions and we enjoy challenging each other. That's probably why we take so long but this process is interesting for us.