

Traduzioni in inglese
a cura di Barbara del Mercato



A portrait of Her

Silvia Burini

Full Professor of History of Russian Art and History of Contemporary Art and Director of CSAR (Center of the Study of Russian Art), Ca' Foscari University of Venice

in conversation with
Tatiana Arzamasova
Artist, AES+F Collective

Tatiana, I'd like to begin by considering the aesthetics of 'Global Baroque' in the contemporary world. The work of AES+F is often described as an exploration of a new digital Baroque – a visual ecstasy that is at once seductive and deeply unsettling. How is this visual language evolving today, in an increasingly fragmented world saturated with images? Do you still feel the need to overload reality in order to expose its underlying hypocrisies? For me, the Baroque is less a historical style than a way of perceiving the world, one in which too many things happen all at once. Today we are constantly surrounded by images, and artists no longer need to amplify this visual flow. What has become essential instead is understanding what happens to human beings when they are immersed in such visual excess. Today, the overabundance of images is not a form of decoration but a way of giving shape to anxiety.

Turning to what it means to be the 'A' in AES+F and to the dynamics of the collective, working together for decades requires extraordinary synergy. How does your individuality, your perspective as both an artist and a woman, fit within the collective's polyphonic identity? Is there a particular way of seeing or a specific sensibility that you feel you have brought to and woven into your most iconic works? Over so many years of working together, we have learned to trust the collective process to such an extent that it

is sometimes impossible to remember who first came up with an idea. My attention has probably always been drawn more to the inner state of the image, to its emotional tone. It is important to me that even the most seemingly perfect character should retain a profoundly human ambiguity. As for being a woman, I do not see my creative identity as defined by gender. I believe that contemporary identities, in art as elsewhere, are far more complex today and cannot be reduced to, or expressed solely through, gender, nationality or sexual orientation.

Another recurring theme in your work is the body and identity within the digital limbo. In works such as *The Liminal Space Trilogy* and *Inverso Mundus*, bodies appear flawless and polished, resembling post-human deities or high-fashion avatars. Where, for you, does the boundary lie between celebrating beauty and exposing the alienation of contemporary life? Our characters appear almost perfect, yet it is precisely this perfection that creates a sense of alienation. Contemporary culture constantly presents us with enhanced versions of ourselves. What interests me is that precise moment when beauty ceases to be natural and becomes a kind of digital mask.

Your work creates a kind of short circuit between prophecies of the past and memory. Your installations often seem suspended in time, set within a mythological future that is nonetheless deeply rooted in the great traditions of Western and Russian art. As an art historian, I find this connection fascinating. What does memory represent for you? Is it a means of escape, or a magnifying lens for deciphering the traumas of the present? I have never regarded memory as a form of escape. On the contrary, the history of art helps us see the present more clearly. Looking at the great masters of the past, we realise that many of our

current fears, utopias and temptations already existed, albeit against a different backdrop. Sometimes, however, unexpected short circuits and shifts in meaning occur. The idea for *The Feast of Trimalchio*, for instance, came to us while we were staying at the Hyatt hotel in Sharm El Sheikh. On one of the walls, a monumental decorative bas-relief, an enlarged copy of a relief from the Valley of the Kings, depicted the embalming of a pharaoh's mummy by the deities Anubis, Isis and Horus. A sacred subject had been reduced to a mere decorative feature in a holiday resort. Meanwhile, on the adjacent terraces, masseurs were treating tourists lying on sun loungers: a scene visually identical to the ritual of mummification.

Let's turn to *Inverso Mundus* and the concept of the world turned upside down. In that project, you reinterpreted this ancient historical topos. Looking at today's geopolitical and social landscape, what new reversals or paradoxes of our age strike you most and deserve to be brought onto the stage? What amazes me most today is not absurdity itself, but how quickly we become accustomed to it. The world is changing at a dizzying pace, and many things that seemed impossible yesterday are already part of everyday life. It is precisely this sense of an 'upside-down normality' that interests me more than anything else.

Another powerful theme running through your work is the relationship between the sacred and the profane. Your videos and compositions have a strongly ritualistic, almost liturgical quality, which is in constant dialogue with the profane and with technological fetishism. What significance does the sacred (or its parody) hold for you in contemporary art? I do not believe the sacred has disappeared; it has simply changed its form. Today, people relate to technology, data

and personal success in much the same way as they once related to religious symbols. What fascinates me in our work is precisely this tension, this ongoing dialogue between ancient ritual and modern fetishism.

Your work somehow anticipated the influence of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in the age of post-truth through its masterful use of digital manipulation and post-production. Now that generative AI has become accessible to everyone, how do you see the artist's role changing when the aim is to create what might be called 'critical illusions'?

I am not afraid of artificial intelligence. AI can produce images, but it lacks the inner drive that compels someone to express something meaningful. What distinguishes an artist is not the number of images they can generate, but their ability to bring an original and critical perspective to what is happening around them.

There is also the question of the audience and its complicity in this game of seduction. Your works are hypnotic: viewers are captivated long before they grasp their political or social message. Does it concern you that people might stop at the seductive surface of your images, failing to perceive their sharp irony and underlying angst? If viewers are initially seduced by the visual surface, that is perfectly natural: beauty opens the door. The real question is whether, immediately afterwards, a lingering sense of unease persists. I believe the most compelling works are those that continue to resonate in people's minds long after they have left the exhibition space.

Our conversation fits perfectly with the cross-disciplinary spirit of Lei, a magazine created to explore the contemporary world through a plurality of perspectives. What message or reflection do you think is most urgent

to convey to readers who look to art for guidance amid the chaos of modern life?

Today, the world offers too many quick, ready-made answers. The value of art lies precisely in its ability to slow us down, compelling us to look at reality in all its complexity. I would like readers not to seek ready-made points of reference in art, but rather to preserve the precious ability to keep asking questions.

Finally, Tatiana, let us look towards future projects and the new geographies of art. Your work has always travelled across borders, from the Venice Biennale to museums worldwide. In what direction is AES+F's artistic research moving at this moment in history? What new visual or thematic territories will you lead us into?

At the moment, we are particularly interested in understanding how human presence is changing within the digital environment. We are working on a new project based on a well-known ancient story, and we are fascinated by how this narrative will be transformed by contemporary realities and by the kinds of images through which it will be represented. We are not trying to predict the future. Rather, we prefer to observe the present with the utmost attention, because today's world already seems far more extraordinary and incredible than anything we could ever have imagined in our predictions.

Tatiana Arzamasova (Moscow, 1955) is an internationally acclaimed contemporary artist and a leading figure on the avant-garde visual arts scene. After graduating from the Moscow Institute of Architecture (MARCH) in 1978, she began her career as a conceptual architect, winning the UNESCO Grand Prix Theatre of the Future. In 1987, she co-founded the artistic collective AES with Lev Evzovich and Evgeny Svyatsky; in 1995, photographer Vladimir Fridkes joined the group, which became AES+F. Within the collective, Arzamasova combines her rigorous understanding of space with the creation of monumental multimedia works. AES+F has gained international recognition for its distinctive aesthetic, in which digital painting, HD video, sculpture and photography merge to explore the myths and traumas of global society.

With AES+F, Arzamasova represented Russia at the Venice Biennale in 2007 with *Last Riot* and again in 2015 with *Inverso Mundus*. In recent years, in response to their strong ideological opposition to the Russian government's policies that culminated in the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the artist and the collective have distanced themselves from the regime and relocated to Berlin. Today, Tatiana Arzamasova lives and works in the German capital. Her works are exhibited at major international institutions, including the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Faena Arts Center in Buenos Aires, and are held in significant public and private collections worldwide.

My skills

Giulia Milani

Postdoctoral research fellow at The Venice School of Management, Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Member of the Ca' Foscari Competency Centre

Sara Bonesso

Associate Professor at the Venice School of Management, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and Vice-Director of the Ca' Foscari Competency Centre

Laura Cortellazzo

Associate Professor at the Venice School of Management, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and member of the Ca' Foscari Competency Centre

Wishing for the Future, Acting in the Present: How Imagining Your Future Professional Self Helps Shape Your Career

While some predictions seem more likely than others, the future always remains uncertain, and yet human choices are deeply tied to thoughts about it. Whether envisioning an ideal future or a more probable one, each decision usually relies on a mental image of ourselves and the world as projected forward in time. Research explains that the underlying cognitive mechanism involves individuals making judgements in the present on the basis of such future projections, almost as though they were events that had already taken place. This is made possible by imagination, which enables us to combine elements drawn from past and present experience to create vivid mental scenarios representing the many possibilities that may unfold over time.

The scientific literature provides numerous examples that highlight the importance of reflecting on who we want to become. One such example can be found in career development research, where defining the future we wish to achieve is considered a crucial element. Researchers have introduced the concept of the future work self (Strauss et al. 2012),¹ referring to the mental representation of an individual's hopes and aspirations for their professional life. Studies have shown that the future work self encourages the adoption of so-called 'proactive career behaviours'. These behaviours are essential for turning aspirations into reality because they are future-oriented, aimed at bringing about change, and deliberately initiated by the individual.

Proactive career behaviours can be divided into two categories: preparatory proactive behaviours and enacted proactive behaviours. The former, such as career planning, concern the cognitive processes that help clarify short-term goals and map out the path required to achieve one's professional aspirations.

1 Strauss, K.; Griffin, M.A.; Parker, S. K. (2012). "Future Work Selves: How Salient Hoped-For Identities Motivate Proactive Career Behaviors". *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(3), 580-98.

Once the milestones along that path have been identified, there is a need to take concrete action to support the achievement of the desired professional future. The literature identifies three main types of enacted proactive behaviour: skill development, which involves committing to learning and acquiring the knowledge and abilities needed to achieve one's desired professional self; network building, understood as the effort to establish and cultivate relationships that can support career development; and feedback seeking, namely the active pursuit of advice and guidance from more experienced individuals to develop skills and increase future career opportunities.

Although there is no guarantee that one's future work self will ultimately become reality, proactive behaviours are an important factor in helping individuals achieve their desired professional identity. At the same time, by their very nature, these behaviours require a high degree of personal commitment and therefore depend on sustained motivation over time. However, the mechanisms through which this motivation is maintained are not yet fully understood. In this regard, research conducted by the Ca' Foscari Competency Centre team found that attributing a sense of meaningfulness to one's ideal future career, understood as the perception of significance and positive value associated with the future work self, may be an important key to understanding how proactive behaviours are activated. The study, carried out on a sample of young people at the beginning of their careers, showed that the sense of meaningfulness attached to the future work self signals the importance of that goal to the individual, acting as a motivational guide in the present, much like a compass directing career decisions. From this perspective, it is not enough to see our ideal professional self merely as a mental image; we must also recognise its value as part of our identity, something that helps define who we are today. This offers a possible explanation of how imagining the future can be translated into planning and action to make that future a reality.

Understanding this mechanism provides a practical tool for those who support individuals through career development or career transition, both within universities and in organisational settings. On the one hand, it is important to create environments where people can reflect on their ideal professional future, for example through guidance interviews and career counselling. On the other hand, for these reflections to translate into concrete action, it is essential not only to encourage people to imagine who they want to become, but also to help them reflect on what their ideal professional self means to them in the present. By ascribing meaning to this vision, individuals gain the psychological resources needed to turn aspirations into purposeful action. With this support, the desired professional self becomes not only more tangible but also more attainable.



Wannabe Her

Hanah Ogadimma Ahanonu

Universal Civil Service Volunteer

in conversation with

Giulia Tariello

Consultant for the European External Action Service, specialising in communication and youth engagement

Introduction

Giulia Tariello has built her career around a firm belief: young people should play a leading role in the decision-making processes that shape the future of our societies. For years, she has been committed to making diplomacy more accessible, inclusive and representative by encouraging the active participation of younger generations wherever global policies and strategies are developed. At the heart of her vision is the desire to create meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute their ideas, skills and fresh perspectives to public debate. She places particular emphasis on empowering young women, conveying a clear message: there is a place for them at the tables where decisions that affect our present and future are made. A truly effective and representative diplomacy also depends on their contributions, leadership and voice.

How did you discover the world of diplomacy, and when did you realise it could become your career?

From a very young age, even at lower secondary school, I was fascinated by foreign languages, cultural diversity and the idea of travelling. I loved exploring different cultures and traditions while discovering what they had in common. It struck me that, despite living in different parts of the world, people often share the same thoughts, interests and everyday experiences.

That made me wonder what kind of career would allow me to turn this passion into a profession. At the time, I considered two possibilities: becoming a flight attendant or working in diplomacy.

As a child, I was also deeply interested in human rights and, in a way, saw myself as something of a champion of justice. As I grew older, particularly during secondary school, I increasingly sought to steer my interests in that direction. That is why I chose to study Political Science for my bachelor's degree, followed by International Relations for my master's, bringing me ever closer to the

world of diplomacy.

At first, my involvement was at a local level. I joined an association in Milan called the Student Movement for International Organization (M.S.O.I.), which organises activities, meetings and simulations to help students determine whether this field is right for them. Through that experience, I realised I had found my place. I already knew the sector I wanted to work in; what I still needed to understand was the best way to get there.

What qualities do you think are essential for working in diplomacy today?

When I was at university, I studied international agreements, history and political theory from textbooks, yet when I opened a newspaper or browsed social media, reality was often very different. That is why I believe a deep understanding of the past, the present and the future we hope to build is essential for anyone working in this field. You need to accept reality as it is while also asking yourself how committed you are to changing it or to making a positive impact through your work.

Another fundamental quality, in my view, is empathy. It helps us better understand the realities around us and, in our own way, contribute to solving problems and creating positive change in society.

Determination is equally important. This is not an easy career path, particularly for those who enter their country's diplomatic service through highly competitive examinations. Pursuing this kind of career requires a strong belief in what you are doing, so it is essential to be well prepared professionally, mentally and personally.

Finally, I believe it is important to be sociable and proactive. In diplomacy and international relations, there are many situations where you need to speak in public and interact with people from very different backgrounds. Feeling comfortable with dialogue and human interaction is certainly an advantage.

Speaking of communication, what inspired you to share your experience on platforms such as Instagram and LinkedIn?

I always say that Instagram and social media were a side effect rather than the original goal. When I was Italy's Youth Delegate [to the United Nations], part of my role involved sharing online the activities, experiences and emotions connected with my work.

Over time, my profile became more personal, and I began sharing behind-the-scenes insights into my projects. As I received more and more messages, particularly from young women interested in this career, I realised how important it was to show that these paths are genuinely achievable, especially for those who lack clear role models.

From then on, I increasingly shared content to make this world more accessible and to bring young people closer to diplomacy and multilateralism. Explaining the work of the United Nations and the European Union in language

that resonates with younger generations became a personal mission, using social media tools and formats to tell the story of a field often perceived as distant.

The goal is to continue to inform young people and show them that these issues are not remote or abstract: they directly affect their lives and offer real opportunities for personal growth, participation, and positive change.

What achievement are you most proud of in your career to date?

The achievement I am proudest of is having built such a large community, which now includes more than 150,000 people. That is a truly significant number. It has grown through sharing both my personal experience and my perspective on diplomacy and multilateralism.

I believe this is especially important for young people, particularly in Italy, where diplomacy is still often perceived as a very rigid and formal environment. Many people think that to become a diplomat you have to behave, speak and dress in a certain way. I don't believe that at all.

How someone speaks, dresses or presents themselves does not determine whether they will be a good diplomat. Equally, people who do not fit certain stereotypes are no less suited to this career. That is why I have always tried to make this field more accessible through direct communication that speaks to younger generations.

I can already see this change taking shape, as more people working in diplomacy begin to communicate in a more authentic, less institutional way. That makes me happy because it reflects a generational shift within the profession.

The aim is not to replace the more traditional side of diplomacy, but to broaden the perspective. I believe these two worlds can coexist without excluding anyone simply because they do not conform to a predetermined standard. The greatest satisfaction, however, comes from receiving messages from young people, often still at secondary school, who tell me that my content has helped them better understand their aspirations and make more informed choices about their future. Knowing that I have contributed, even in a small way, to that process is probably the most rewarding achievement of all.

At this stage in your career, how do you balance your personal life with such a demanding profession? Is it possible to achieve a healthy work-life balance?

Absolutely, although it is difficult, especially given how dynamic diplomacy and international relations are. There are periods when everything becomes extremely intense and the pace accelerates dramatically. That is why I believe it is essential to prioritise your mental health and always make time for yourself and your hobbies.

For example, nothing prevents me from closing my laptop at a set time and dedicating the rest of the evening to my in-

terests, the activities that make me happy, or simply enjoying my free time. It is not always easy, as work, social media, travel and other commitments often overlap. Nevertheless, it is important to identify your non-negotiables – those personal values and priorities you are not willing to sacrifice. Balance comes from pursuing both your professional ambitions and your personal life.

Another point is important, especially for young women who may be reading this. It simply is not true that choosing a career like this means giving up your personal relationships or the possibility of building a stable family life. For a long time, this was one of my greatest fears. I discussed it at length with female diplomats and professionals in the field until I realised it simply is not the case.

I believe it is essential to be honest with your partner about your ambitions and life goals, building a relationship grounded in shared values and genuine mutual understanding. It was not always easy for me at first, but when your partner recognises that what you do is part of who you are, not just your job, finding balance becomes much easier. Above all, you should never feel guilty about your professional ambitions.

I also believe that younger generations can help overcome dynamics that persist today. In diplomacy, it remains more common to see men supported by partners who follow them from one posting to another than the other way round. That mindset needs to change. Today we have the opportunity to build more balanced relationships in which partners support each other without predefined roles, allowing both people to fulfil their ambitions without sacrificing their identities.

Finally, what advice would you give to young women who wish to pursue a career in this field?

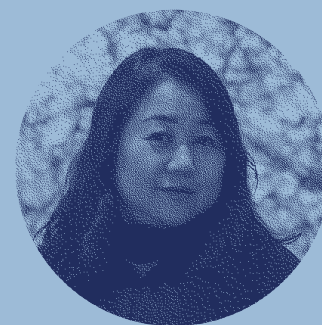
First of all, understand what truly excites and motivates you. International relations is an incredibly broad field, and after studying subjects such as Political Science, there are many possible career paths. It is therefore important to decide which direction you want to take and what the job you imagine actually involves.

Another essential step is to reflect on your priorities. For some people, staying close to their family is fundamental; for others, like me, moving abroad or relocating is not a limitation. Understanding this helps you build a career path that is genuinely aligned with who you are.

You also need to accept that your journey will not necessarily be linear and that there are no fixed deadlines for achieving your goals. Periods of uncertainty are part of the process.

Finally, remember that your worth is not defined by other people's opinions or by your gender. In a profession that is still evolving, it is essential to feel entitled to be there, to speak up, and to take on positions of responsibility with confidence and self-reliance.

Giulia Tariello is an expert in youth diplomacy and international relations. She has served as Italy's Youth Delegate to the United Nations and as the European Union's Youth Delegate to the United Nations, representing younger generations in major multilateral forums. She works with the European External Action Service (EEAS) on advocacy and youth engagement projects. She is also a content creator and public communicator, with a community of more than 154,000 followers on Instagram, where she brings international politics and global citizenship closer to younger generations.



Lei & the World

Manuela Lietti
Researcher

in conversation with
Chiharu Shiota
Artist

The Soul Trembles was conceived as a survey travelling exhibition that includes both new and early works, and traces your artistic journey over the past decades. How did you approach this new exhibition in Turin at MAO, a place with a unique architectural setting and permanent collection? I am curious to know how you have presented the body of works at the core of the solo exhibition, but also what differs in adapting to the specificity of this new venue?

This is the first time my exhibition is being shown in an Oriental museum together with many Asian artworks. I am from Asia, but have lived in Berlin for a long time, so this art feels very familiar to me. Usually, *The Soul Trembles* is shown on one floor with all the installations together. At MAO, we worked with several floors, so we created a new way to show the works. For example, I put my drawings on the stairs to connect the spaces. The mix of contemporary art and Asian art creates an interesting dialogue. I felt a strong connection between my work and the museum's collection. But how the work is shown, and in what order, is also decided by Mami Kataoka, the curator. She has a vision of how people should experience the works.

The exhibition and its title, *The Soul Trembles* - which I invite you to explain further as a starting point - are deeply related to your own history and experience of illness. Even as your personal path has shaped your work and the trajectories it has taken over the years, your approach is able to connect the micro and the macro, the personal and the universal. How have you developed this cosmic perspective?

A day after Mami Kataoka, then curator, and now director, of Mori Art Museum, invited me to present a solo show there, I learned in a check-up that my cancer had returned after 12 years. While preparing for the exhibition, I had to undergo surgery and chemotherapy. It was an extremely difficult time, and I thought deeply about death and the soul. My daughter was only nine, and I was worried that she would grow up without a mother and I wondered what she thought [about] where the soul would go after the body is gone. This led me to create the video work *About the Soul*, in which I asked other children the same age as my daughter about the soul. This experience inspired the exhibition's title. I think I am able to connect the micro and macro of personal and universal spheres because we all experience death; it is part of our life, and at the same time we are all connected to the universe. Death is not the end, but we move into a part of a bigger universe. We all are connected by death.

Death is synonymous with a transition into a larger entity - e.g., the cosmos itself.

Our bodies are made of very tiny atoms. When we die, these atoms break down and return to the world. We can no longer see our physical existence, but we become part of the wind, the earth, and the larger universe.

It seems that your work is constantly committing to a process of transcendence, implying a continuous state of metamorphosis rather than the binary juxtaposition of life and death, construction versus deconstruction. How does this perspective affect your work conceptually and visually?

My work deals with life and death because it is a universal part of our existence. I was always curious about life, what is the meaning and where are we going? I don't have answers but want to question myself and my existence. Having had cancer twice, this experience is closely connected to my art. Being close to death - not by choice, but because it has been part of my life - it shaped the way I work. I create spaces in my installations, like landscapes, that reflect this process.

You often say that the theme of your work is 'existence in the absence'. Absence, emptiness, the void, are all abstract concepts, but I would say they are also alternative ways of conceiving being alive and 'alert' which are cherished in Eastern philosophy. How has Eastern thought impacted your work? Are there any philosophical references

that are important for you from this point of view?

The body may no longer exist, but memory remains. Our memories help define who we are. Even after death, life continues, and existence carries on. I grew up believing that the soul is shared, not only mine, but as connected to all human life. It's like a circle, a cycle of rebirth. These ideas influence my work, shaped by my experiences and my childhood, even if I don't follow them as a philosophy.

Could you expand on your choice of specific ready-made objects that have been incorporated into your work and that speak of existences in absence. Are they selected for their symbolic meaning? I am thinking about shoes, suitcases, doors, and pieces of furniture in particular.

I am inspired by my life and experiences. For example, when I moved to Germany, I had only one suitcase. Many years later, I saw some old suitcases at a flea market in Berlin and felt drawn to them. I opened one and found an old newspaper from the 1940s and a packing list. I had the feeling I knew this person, even though I had never met them. The packing list looked like something I might have written myself. This moment inspired me to start collecting more suitcases and to reflect on why people travel.

These objects are related to memories too. Memories are something that we cannot touch but which still exist. When someone dies, their corporeal body vanishes, becoming absent, though memories may grow stronger. What is the importance of memories in your work?

I can't exist without memory. If I have no memory, I can't explain myself. In my installations, the objects represent memory - something invisible - you can't see the person but you can still feel them. I don't know their story, but I can feel their existence.

Thread is much more than a recurrent material in your work, it acts as a sort of mirror of your own feelings. It is proof of the invisible yet existing connections between inside and outside, and the individual and collective that become visible by means of a sort of 'vessel'. Thread has played a significant role in making a broader audience familiar with your work too. I am thinking about your most iconic installation pieces. What does this material, and the different colours of it that you employ, mean to you?

When I use thread, it feels like I am painting in the air. I studied painting and wanted to be a painter, but after some time, painting lost its meaning for me; it was only about technique. I wanted to find my own material. With the thread I can express feelings for which I cannot find words.

Red is the color of blood, and blood carries many things [in it] like family, nationality, religion, love. It is part of who we are. For me, red is the colour

that represents human relationships the most, as the thread can be tangled, loose, tense, knotted, and cut just like our connections.

The black thread is more abstract, like the night sky or the universe. The accumulation of black lines creates a deep colour.

White is pure, and in Japan, it is connected to death as the deceased are dressed in white. It's like a new beginning and an end.

In 2015 you were selected to represent Japan at the 56th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. Ten years have passed. What has changed for you in the meantime? How has your work developed since then? Do you think that being selected for the Pavilion marked a turning point in your career? Or was there an exhibition or work that you consider more significant?

Being selected for the Venice Pavilion was a huge honour and an important step in my career. However, shortly after, I became seriously ill, which changed my perspective on life. Before that, I didn't think much about death, but I realised how close it is. I was inspired to work with more lasting materials like leather, glass, wire, and bronze. For me, I think the most important exhibition has been *The Soul Trembles* at the Mori Art Museum. Travelling and showing my work to so many people in so many different countries has been very important for me as an artist.

How do you reconcile your personal background with a more global experience, especially after having spent time in Japan and Australia and now being based in Europe on a stable basis?

When I was in Japan, I didn't think much about my identity. Everyone around me looked the same - black hair, same culture. But when I moved to Australia and Germany, I met people from many different countries and cultures, and I started to notice my own. Looking in the mirror, I saw my Asian features. It felt like I had been in salty water, and only after moving to Europe did the water evaporate and the salt crystallise, and everything became clear.

Connection among people, but also of people with the universe, is one of your leitmotifs. How would you like to connect to the audience and which type of energy would you like your work to create?

For me, the audience is very important. It is a way for me to communicate in a different way from everyday life. I hope my work makes people think about their own lives, feel connected, or relate to it. I'm happy if seeing my work makes them more interested in contemporary art, but there is no one exact way this connection happens, and that is part of the experience.

Chiharu Shiota

Born in Osaka, Japan (1972), Chiharu Shiota lives and works in Berlin. Shiota's inspiration often emerges from a personal experience or emotion which she expands into universal human concerns such as life, death and relationships. In 2008, she received the Art Encouragement Prize from the Japanese Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Her solo exhibitions across the world include Grand Palais, Paris (2024); Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka (2024); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2023); Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane (2022); ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (2021); Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington (2020); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2019); Gropius Bau, Berlin (2019); Art Gallery of South Australia (2018); Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK (2018); Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2017); K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2015); Smithsonian Institution Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC (2014); the Museum of Art, Kochi (2013); and the National Museum of Art, Osaka (2008) among others. She has also participated in numerous international exhibitions such as Oku-Noto International Art Festival (2017), Sydney Biennale (2016), Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (2009) and Yokohama Triennale (2001). In 2015, Shiota was selected to represent Japan at the 56th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.