Miho Dohi

October 31 (Sat) - December 12 (Sat), 2026
Tue - Sat 12:00-18:00
（Closed on Sun, Mon, and national holidays）

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- buttai -

I usually make buttai while holding it in my hands.
I try to create movement through the forms of the materials and the ways in which they connect. There are no clear rules, though, and much time is spent in an uncertain process of handling and manipulating the materials. In my hands, forms come together and separate, becoming inside and outside.
Eventually, things begin to stray from my intentions, and when my mind has been completely reset, the necessary elements finally start to come together, and the form begins to roll. At the same time, a different sense of unease emerges.

I conveniently imagine buttai as if it existed in a state of weightlessness. In reality, however, I am the one holding it and rolling it in my hands. If that is the case, perhaps the physical sensations of my own body—the pressure I apply when touching it, the adjustments I make to balance its weight—are already part of buttai itself.

For this exhibition, I made something like a device that attaches buttai to the end of a rod protruding from the wall. This creates a space behind the object. It is a recreation, in a way, of the space that exists when I hold buttai in my hands and look at it. It also came close to what I had felt to be the ideal way for the work to be complete while held in my hands.
Thanks to this, the shape of buttai wraps around completely, and I had time to appreciate its sense of mass, which made me feel excited.

Miho Dohi 2026

Dohi creates sculptures by combining a wide range of materials, including wood, copper, brass, aluminum, fabric, thread, paper, plaster, and acrylic paint. Rather than working with found objects, she develops forms from the materials themselves. Through a variety of gestures—bending, tying, sewing, hammering, twisting, and painting—she carefully shapes each work, attending closely to the smallest details. Through this accumulation of processes, the materials gain a greater sense of physical density and presence, gradually taking on forms of their own.

Many of Dohi's works are titled buttai, a Japanese word combining but (物 , "thing") and tai (体 , "body"). The term aptly reflects the nature of her sculptures. Beyond idiosyncratic abstract forms, her works possess an organic presence that suggests a sense of life. At times, they may evoke man-made objects, plants, or animals, yet they do not represent any specific thing. They resist being contained within familiar names or images. While suggesting associations with recognizable forms, each work emerges as an independent presence in its own.

Dohi's sculptures invite viewers to imagine and associate them with a variety of things, while remaining open to multiple interpretations rather than being confined to any fixed meaning.

Miho Dohi completed the research program in sculpture at Tokyo Zokei University Graduate School in 2002. Her major solo exhibitions include Nonaka-Hill (Los Angeles, 2024), Crèvecœur (Paris, 2023), HAGIWARA PROJECTS (Tokyo, 2022), Gordon Robichaux (New York, 2021), The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago (online, Chicago, 2020), Showcase Gallery: Miho Dohi, Yokohama Civic Art Gallery Azamino (Yokohama, 2020), Lulu (Mexico City, 2017), and HAGIWARA PROJECTS (Tokyo, 2016), among others.
Recent group exhibitions include Statics of an Egg, David Zwirner (New York, 2026); A Nail to Hang the Day On, Kunstverein in Hamburg (Hamburg, Germany, 2026); The Gatherers, MoMA PS1 (New York, 2025); The 8th Yokohama Triennale: Wild Grass—Our Lives, Yokohama Museum of Art (Kanagawa, 2024); IL MORSO DELLE TERMITI, Palais de Tokyo (Paris, 2023); and AGAIN-ST: Roots / Tools—The Fictional Materials and Teaching Materials of Sculpture, Musashino Art University Museum & Library (Tokyo, 2022), among others.

Flash Art May, 2016
Satoru Nagoya

Miho Dohi

Hagiwara Projects / Tokyo



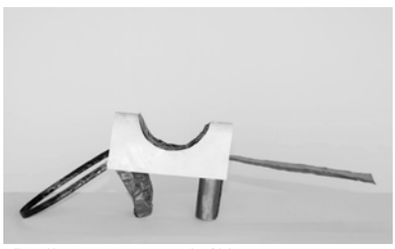
Sculpture is distinct from painting in that its subject matter, whatever shape it may assume, appears as a tangible existence in real space. Miho Dohi's recent body of work explores an autonomous formative language that assimilates painting's capacity for illusory representation of virtual existence while retaining a whimsical sculptural materiality.

Six of the works exhibited in the gallery are set on pedestals, and one is mounted on a wall. The wall piece, *buttai 30* (2016), is a clumsy relief from which an oval copper sheet dangles like a tongue. With cloth foliage in the background, it seems to float somewhere between sculpture and painting — an object *and* an illusion on a plane. The work *buttai 24* (2013) is a 3-D still life that resembles a flowerpot with petals of cloth. Metal plays an important role in *buttai 33* and *buttai 35* (both 2015). The former is a rudimentary abstraction with a golden-brass oval sheet clinging to a plaster base, while the latter looks like a lobster made of glossy copper plates patched with strips of light-blue-tinged cloth. Dohi's method may give an impression of awkwardness or naïveté, but the resultant shapes, which resist presumptuous interpretation or categorization, suggest the artist's deliberate choice and combination of materials.

An inscrutable microcosm lurks in *buttai 34* (2015): it's a globe of tangled golden mesh, half covered with cloth of the same color as in *buttai 35*, topped by wire circles like an antenna and rising above a golden metal platform. A ladder-like corrugated metal sheet connects the globe and the platform. Meanwhile, *buttai 38* (2016), a small hollow wooden trunk decorated with cloth and thread, reveals Dohi's affinity for wood. Her works have neither specific titles nor specific meanings. They are absolutely *buttai* — "objects" in Japanese. In making them, Dohi collects raw materials. Thus her singular practice refuses to be seen as random assemblage, avoiding any commonplace art-historical positioning.

by Satoru Nagoya

Something: reflections on Miho Dohi's *Buttai*



Miho Dohi, *Buttai 29*, 2016, copper, paint, fabric, 24 × 78 × 20cm

Let it be said at once: when it comes to reflecting about a Japanese artist, a certain prudence is called for, because there is such a temptation to illuminate their work from the viewpoint of what we know, or think we know, about Japanese culture, thus leading us to draw up a list of clichés, whose only effect will be to distance us quite purely and simply from the practice itself. For example, we have read that Miho Dohi's work evokes the art of origami, or ikebana, even though this seems to be nothing more than a kind of clumsy cultural *a priori* which is useless when it comes to expressing what is really in play. In this artist's particular case, however, there is an advantage in the fact that her assemblages are not formally set in the eternal commentary that describes contemporary Japan (and its art) – which is always supposed to be an expression of the constant opposition between "tradition and modernity". We could even tend to compare her productions, invariably titled *Buttai* ("object" in Japanese), followed by a number indicating the order of their production, to Western pieces byRichard Tuttle or Isa Genzken, rather than to the heritage of works from the Mono-Ha[1], whose practices might naturally lead to such a rapprochement. Yet, with their combinations of different modest, and mostly everyday, materials her sculptures appeal thanks to their capacity to evoke functional objects or miniature constructions,yet without being reduced to any one form of mimetic influence.

Born in 1974 in Nara, Japan's former capital, at a few kilometres from Kyoto, Miho Dohi graduated in art from Tokyo Zokei University. After moving to the prefecture of Kanagawa, in the eastern centre of Honshū, the main island of the archipelago (which she rarely leaves, having a fear of flying), she has taken part over the past few years in various international exhibitions, mostly in the USA and France, thanks to the Galerie Crèvecœur, which recently began representing her. In early 2020, the Parisian gallery put on her first solo show, bringing together a series of recently produced pieces. Mostly displayed on large white tables, which acted as shared plinths, while a few others were shown vertically, hanging on the walls, her *Buttai* stood out both for their formal and material diversity. Plaster, fabrics and wood, sometimes covered with paint, structure compositions revealing an intuitive execution. Attached to them are outgrowths of copper wire, thin leaves of aluminium or coloured cotton. In their reduced dimensions, the works are sized like the hands that assembled and manipulated them, in a way which is felt to be both attentive and spontaneous, slowing down when any obvious relation with the object itself finally disappears, and the object itself stands out.

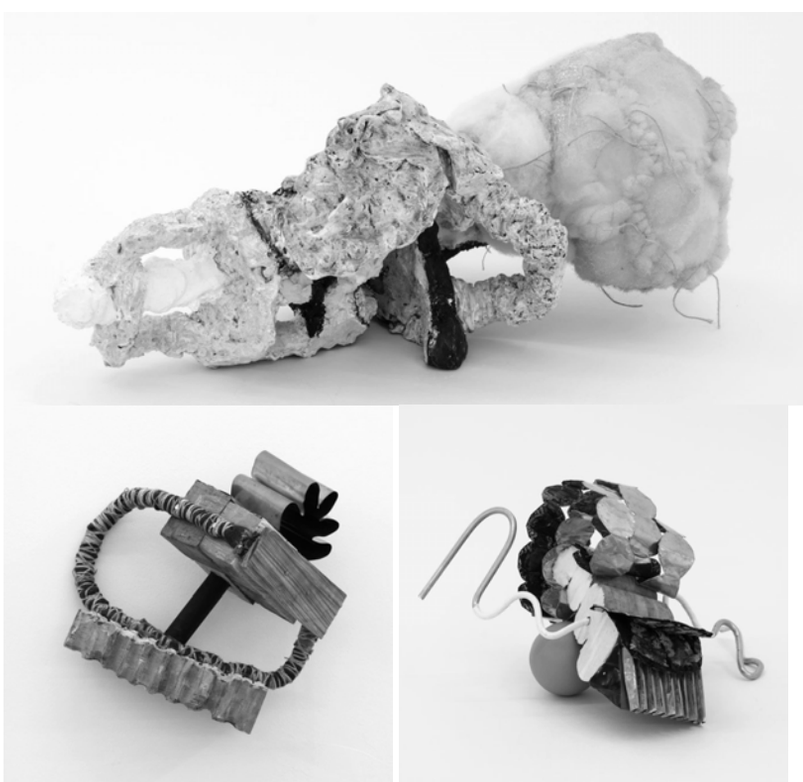
An enumeration of the gestures required for making these *Buttai* – consisting of folds, collages, and various ways of knotting materials – would thus be rather meaningless, making for a pure inventory of techniques, or just the description of a visual language, which only the artist herself possesses. The essayist and exhibition curator Chris Sharp, who presented Miho Dohi's work on the walls of the independent space Lulu, founded with the Mexican artist Martín Soto Climent, gave a few enlightening leads for apprehending this type of practice, which cannot be subsumed to great discourses, and where a form of assured singularity is at play. In his text, titled *Theory of the Minor*[2], Sharp expressed a distinction between practices that stand out through their grandiloquence – using their means with an aspiration to make a commentary on the states of the world – and those, which he defines as being minor, and which thus refuse to take the form of a manifesto, being set in a polysemic field which means that there is no need servilely to back up a posture. This distinction is not new, and clearly chimes with the writings of Susan Sontag and, in particular, her positioning "against interpretation"[3], as well as with Manny Farber, and his famous metaphor of the termite and the white elephant[4]. Recently adopted by François Piron when discussing the work of the British artist Ian Kiaer, the stylistic opposition introduced by Farber is explained as follows by this curator: "While the white elephant is based on edification, monumentality and centrality, termite art works by digging, using discreet and peripherical allusions; while the elephant affirms, the termite suggests; the former acts in an immediacy, the latter by slowing down."[5]

It goes without saying that Miho Dohi's practice, with its objects that do not seem to obey any authority, or yield to any injunctions towards meaning, are placed rather on the minor side – with the termites. Yet, the *Buttai* seem almost astonishingly capable, thanks to their skilled and tight composition, of introducing a complex sensation about the environment of the everyday objects which they can evoke, but without reducing themselves to providing the slightest reflection. Conversely, they recall the strange feelings of Bucky Wunderlick, the main character in *Great Jones Street*, a novel by Don DeLillo. "A telephone that's disconnected, deprived of its sources, becomes in time an intriguing piece of sculpture. The business normally transacted is more than numbed within the phone's limp ganglia; it is made eternally irrelevant […]. The phone has made a descent to total dumbness, and so becomes beautiful."[6] Aesthetic pleasure, in the American author's words, comes directly from the object's change of status. Having lost its usefulness, it presents itself to the gaze as in a silent presence, a relic of another age and of the uses that were associated with it. With Miho Dohi, this other time comes over as an era of possibilities, thus broadening the deterministic aims that are applied to things and fertilise unknown territories so as to enrich the imagination. What these *Buttai* then seem to convey to us is the impossibility to name, or to identify, what constitutes the essential particularity of what they are, except by referring to them as "objects", and accepting the aura of mystery that this term continues to convoke.

The American philosopher Graham Harman, who launched object-oriented ontology, explains in this respect that "the reality of things is always withdrawn or veiled rather than directly accessible, and therefore any attempt to grasp that reality by direct and literal language will inevitably misfire."[7] While this idea might seem vital when it comes to accessing Miho Dohi's work, it also applies when approaching other so-called "minor" forms, when they elude applied language, all the more so when they do not submit to its terms.In an era of simplifying positions and slogan-pieces, this ontological complexity could, despite the apparent slightness of its means and ends, stand as an effective way to preserve a critical spirit.

Franck BALLAND

1. As a reminder, literally Mono-Ha means "School of Things". This group, which was mainly active between the late 1960s and the mid 1970s, explored in different ways the particular properties of the often-unrefined materials used in their productions.
2. Chris Sharp, *Theory of the Minor*, Mousse 57, February – March 2017.
3. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, Picador, 2001.
4. See for example Manny Farber, in *Film Culture n° 27*, Winter 1962-63..
5. François Piron, *La termite et l'éléphant blanc* in *Ian Kiaer*, Archive Books,2019, p. 76.
6. Don DeLillo, *Great Jones Street*, Houghton Mifflin, 1973.
7. From Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything*, Penguin Books, 2018.



Miho Dohi, *Buttai 73*, 2019, plastic, cotton, thread, acrylic paint, 23 × 57 × 25cm, courtesy of the artist and Crèvecœur, Paris
Miho Dohi *Buttai 37*, 2016, wood, thread, brass, acrylic paint,15 × 22 × 23cm
Miho Dohi, *Buttai 72*, 2019, wood, brass, aluminium, acrylic paint, 21 × 36 × 33cm

Mousse Magazine, 2021



Miho Dohi, *buttai 46*, 2018
Courtesy: Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles

Miho Dohi's enigmatic, off-center sculptures and paintings offer alluring, occasionally challenging lessons in viewing. Rhythms and textures jostle as the artist's enigmatic vernacular of squiggles, crumples, folds, and spheres is iteratively reprised in idiosyncratic ways. Dohi's works, made of everyday materials that the artist collects, are paeans to the possibilities of reinvention. They simultaneously place and displace the viewer, displaying the power of transformation in a mutable world.

Dohi has been making the absorbing assemblages she terms buttai, "objects" in Japanese, since 2008. Composed from kanji characters meaning "thing" (but) and "body" (tai), this moniker speaks to the elasticity of the works, in which meanings readily multiply. In spring 2020 the artist, who lives in the Japanese coastal prefecture of Kanagawa, was set to mount her first US museum show at The Renaissance Society, Chicago. Amid the intensifying pandemic, the exhibition was staged online, and consisted of close-up portraits of twenty-seven buttai. The sculptures were photographed against a vivid white background, with shadows minimized. Architectural markers were effectively absent, although a handful rested on sleek, upright plinths.

Though the serial sculptures are numbered systematically, each is a riot of intuition. In buttai 46 (2018), temporalities commingle. The sculpture features a worn wooden understructure, reminiscent of driftwood, and is capped by a flat, pearly beret. Underneath this is a gluey coil of white plaster and a glossy, crumpled leaflet peddling kitchen appliances. Affixed to one end is a gold disk marked with a thin, spiraling line. Framed by neutral, earthy tones, the flyer' s clamor of products and prices speaks to the aspirational economics of capitalist accumulation. The spiral, however, evokes cyclicality. In his 1967 lecture "Of Other Spaces," Michel Foucault asserted: "We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed." Dohi' s buttai playfully muddle Foucault' s words, connecting wayward spaces and drifting times.

The philosopher’ s oft-cited text outlines the notion of heterotopia, his term for places that are both real and unreal. Transposing this concept to the realm of literature, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’ o argues that a singular object—in his analysis, the novel—can resonate globally, inasmuch as “the world it mirrors is one of unity in disunity, of oneness in diversity, of constant motion and change.” His words offer a compelling schematic for Dohi’ s buttai. Indeed, buttai 57 (2019)—comprised of two pinched orange blobs with gold veins, a turquoise, V-shaped wedge of wood, and four thin sheets of bent and waved aluminum and brass—is flush with what Thiong’ o calls “the magic of the ordinary.” The sculpture models a non-dualistic cosmology in which uncertainty is a filter for reading the environment at large.

In January 2021 Dohi staged her first New York solo exhibition at Gordon Robichaux. Three buttai were laid on plinths, and three others mounted on the wall. The arrangement of works, placed at differing heights, encouraged the eye to roam. Seen in person, the objects—by turns painted, sewed, screwed, and coiled—attest to the tactile choreography of their production. They have no recognizable front, back, top, or bottom, and their surfaces are a revelry of texture that photography can’ t quite capture. Quiet, yet fizzing with movement, they heuristically explore multiplicity as a mode of being.

The New York presentation featured four untitled acrylic paintings (all 2020) composed on irregularly sized wooden panels that showed cropped, flattened reworkings of iPhone photos of the buttai. In one of these, an olive-green column fills the upper right quadrant. A wedge of wet, concrete gray nestles in the upper left corner, while a glacial white shade, cut by a red diagonal line, fills the remainder of the pictorial plane. Each picture in the show was bordered by a thick, white painted frame.

“Writing about conceptual, feminist and political art as ‘escape attempts,’” Lucy R. Lippard concluded “that the ultimate escape attempt would be to free ourselves from the limitations of preconceived notions of art, and in doing so, help to save the planet.” 3 Like Thiong’ o, Lippard sees artworks as arbitrators between local and global scales, and provocatively links art’ s deconstruction to our planet’ s reconstruction. Commenting on Dohi’ s work, Karsten Lund, curator at The Renaissance Society, relays that “in each of her works she sets out to create something she hasn’ t seen before.” This latter claim may not, at first glance, carry the political weight of Lippard’ s, but if Dohi’ s work teaches us anything, it’ s that we must look again, and look differently. Her sculptures and paintings pose a simple but enduring question: Why do we see things as we do? By querying received frameworks for viewing, thinking about, and describing art, Dohi’ s unplaceable objects affirm the potency of transformation in art and in everyday life. Self-referential, but not closed, they illustrate a process of un-knowing in which a world can be configured anew.

Los Angels Times, 2019.5.18

Los Angeles Times

ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

Review: Miho Dohi turns scrap materials into sculptural poetry



Miho Dohi, "Untitled #58," 2019, mixed media (Nonaka-Hill Gallery)

BY CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT | ART CRITIC

Small-scale sculptures by Miho Dohi are like handmade driftwood, a kind of cultural debris that has been carefully shaped into poetic forms by unseen forces. Scrap materials get unexpected new life.

Eight table-top sculptures, two on the wall and one suspended from the ceiling are in the artist's Los Angeles debut at Nonaka-Hill Gallery. Based in Kanagawa, Japan, south of Tokyo, Dohi calls her sculptures *buttai* — objects — a usage that locates them somewhere between the cherished and the everyday. Her materials are humble, even mundane — paper, wire mesh, cotton batting, yarn, chunks of scrap wood — but they have been assembled with self-evident precision.

Juxtapositions are certainly eccentric, as when small pieces of copper screen are trimmed in tufts of raw cotton, or a small wooden lump is crowned with a droopy paper disk. Metal strips are applied as nominal handles for things that will only be picked up in the imagination, while lengths of twisted yarn are further bound with thread.

Los Angeles Times



Installation view of Miho Dohi's tabletop objects. (Nonaka-Hill Gallery)



Miho Dohi, "Untitled #41," 2019, mixed media. (Nonaka-Hill Gallery)

AT KOHN GALLERY: Jarvis Boyland's diva paintings strike a pose »

Move around Dohi's objects, and the shapes shift — one side looking nothing like the other. Her compositions are additive — one thing attached to another and then another — but always the forms end up turning back in on themselves.

It's as if growth is something internalized rather than expansive, the capacious quality a trait of the object alone rather than something dependent on its relationship to the space around it. Classical Japanese arts of refinement are deeply embedded in the work, but any established language of circumscribed control is energetically rebuffed. Inventiveness is prized over constraint.

Like Richard Tuttle's sculptures made from scraps, Dohi's diminutive objects radiate an element of pathos. Yet they burst with lively eccentricity too. Resolutely abstract, her sculptures are cutting-edge spirit catchers.

Mousse Magazine, 2021

Unplaceable Objects: Miho Dohi

Harry Burke

Miho Dohi's enigmatic, off-center sculptures and paintings offer alluring, occasionally challenging lessons in viewing. Rhythms and textures jostle as the artist's enigmatic vernacular of squiggles, crumples, folds, and spheres is iteratively reprised in idiosyncratic ways. Dohi's works, made of everyday materials that the artist collects, are paeans to the possibilities of reinvention. They simultaneously place and displace the viewer, displaying the power of transformation in a mutable world.

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1 Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 22.
2 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "A Globalectic Heterotopia: Writing a Novel from a Liminal Space," *Novel* 49, no. 1 (May 1, 2016): 9.
3 Lucy R. Lippard, *Undermining: A Wild Ride through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* (New York: New Press, 2014), 9.
4 Karsten Lund, "Audio Tour: Miho Dohi," The Renaissance Society, April 30, 2020, https://renaissancesociety.org/events/1267/audio-tour-miho-dohi/.

203 Miho Dohi, *buttai 65*, 2019. Courtesy: the artist and Crèvecœur, Paris
204 205 Miho Dohi, installation view at Crèvecœur, Paris, 2020. Courtesy: the artist and Crèvecœur, Paris. Photo: Aurélien Mole
206 Miho Dohi, *buttai 46*, 2018. Courtesy: Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles
207 Miho Dohi, *buttai 67*, 2019. © Miho Dohi. Courtesy: HAGIWARA PROJECTS, Tokyo

WHITEHOT MAGAZINE, 2021.3 月

NOAH BECKER'S WHITEHOT MAGAZINE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
JANUARY 2022
"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"

Miho Dohi at Gordon Robichaux



Miho Dohi 'Untitled' 2020, Acrylic and wood panel, 10.5 x 12.3 x 19 in. Courtesy Gordon Robichaux, NY. Photo:

Miho Dohi

Gordon Robichaux

January 17 through February 28, 2021

By JONATHAN GOODMAN, March 2021

The mid-career Japanese sculptor Miho Dohi had her first solo show in New York at Gordon Robichaux, located slightly quizzically on East 17th Street close by Union Square. Six sculptures and four paintings were presented, all of them small in dimension. Consisting of many kinds of materials, copper, cloth, wood, and brass among them, these sculptural works regularly seem to fold over in pleats, revealing different patterns and textures from every angle and level of the work. The pieces appear to belong to a larger, even international movement in sculpture, in which the art eschews formal rigors for insights more improvised and indefinite in nature, often deliberately disorganized. This informality may have social implications for some artists--a rejection of modernism in favor of the urgent disrepute of the street--but in Dohi's case it can also refer to a word in Japanese word invented by her, *buttai,* composed of two characters--*but-* meaning "thing" and *tai-* meaning "body.' The term, according to Dohi, indicates an object with the suggestion of movement; press notes indicate that, as she is working on the object, Dohi constantly uses different methods to create a work that cannot be seen or interpreted in one particular fashion. One imagines that the idea governing the artist's procedures is the notion of impermanence or ongoing change.

butai 30 (2014), made of copper, cloth, and acrylic, resists easy description. A U-shaped object, the piece consists of panels on one side, and a doubled spoon-like form on the other, with a piece of gold-colored cloth extending outward from the bottom. The object is beyond naming or being defined, and that is part of its attraction; this is true of Dohi's art in general. Its formal independence is impressive, in the sense that its resistance to meaning, even to any sort of historical abstraction, suggests that Dohi is given to making sculptures and images that are completely self-sufficient, lacking the constraints that come of influence. *buttai 76* (2020), made up of numerous materials, including copper mesh, cloth, wood, and plaster, looks like a disheveled sandwich; the top presents a rounded plane of wood covered with a tightly woven pattern of string. Like the first work described, this piece doesn't really align with something that feels actual, found in the world. Its self-reliance is not only a rejection of art traditions, it also is an assertion of nonsensical but visionary form. In a way, then, it is hard to defend or criticize it, especially in light of other, similar work coming from other places, including America.



Miho Dohi 'buttai 79' [view a], 2020, Brass, aluminum, copper, wood, cloth, and acrylic, 9.4 x 16.9 x 16.9 in. Courtesy Gordon Robichaux, NY. Photo: Greg Carideo.

The assemblage called *butai 79* (2020), created with brass, aluminum, copper, wood, cloth, and acrylic, is a conscious jumble of small objects cobbled together that come close to looking completely by chance. The disparate pieces, individually taken, are undistinguished, but the completed sculpture possesses a haphazard grace. By relying on someone else's authority and refusing to make coherent visual sense, this work reminds us that the avant-garde never is easily understood at the beginning of a new wave of form. The paintings, which can look like cutoff views of nature, are actually details of the *buttai* taken with the artist's iPhone. Once again, Dohi is *not* relying on external references to create and make her point. Instead, the show demonstrates an enclosed world, in which form is not to be taken as an allusion to something else. Rather, it exists as an independent assertion whose reality is self-generated to the point where the artist felt it necessary to make up a new word for her work. This kind of autonomy, and rejection of the past, is showing up in recent art by other artists and demands that we accept its turn away from making sense. In Dohi's case, though, the results are excellent. **WM**