

Hans Goodrich

Tam Ochiai

Shopping Bag

September 20 - November 2, 2025

14 and South

The guitarist had two nails, one for himself and one for the keys

When the vent was slightly visible, cold air shaved the pointed crystals into jagged edges

Fine snow and smoke mixed inside the chimney

When you arrive here, turn east at 4th Street, in front of La Mama, someone blows a kiss, disappears, car horns honk irritably, shouting “Symphony No. 79!”

The payphone is jammed with coins or, if used, returns the coins; the doors of CBGB sucked in young people like a vacuum

Free samples of Belgian fries on 2nd Avenue, an overnight trip in moving images

Chewing gum—endless

If the nails keep growing, they curve like plants

Cut all ten fingernails; when the last nail is done, the clippers are finished

The clock has three kinds of needles

The sound of church bells that ring when the time matches

Scratched blood, bright red dots, fall into warm gray, then scatter

The Empire State Building glows white like a syringe, lighting the floor; tuxedos, long coats, 3D glasses, jeweled watches, streamlined dresses, Russian mink coats, golden bracelets glinting on arms, beautiful people from old magazines, eyes with three whites visible and deep wrinkles, sideways glares, lashes pointing up and down, smooth hair, chatty or quiet—spreading in all directions, a thin film, lying on the stones

The frozen street surface reflects purple under car lights, rusty car surfaces glint; everything is covered, people layered and puffed up, at the bus stop in front of the market they anxiously watch the bus’s approach, relentless wind shakes the canopy, plastic bags scattered on the road, sunlight in the distance, able to stare at it, inhaling cold air... as the temperature rises, icicles fall, in the pitch dark wolves howl in all directions, a pure white world, temperature keeps dropping, and finally even the city’s lion statues are covered, a young woman with frozen snot and earrings shining like jewels

Gray ground, mouth, shapes of white smoke emerging from every hole begin to become clear, fingertips inside gloves can’t be counted, may never move again

Toward winter the face puffs up and rounds, eclairs, pupils dilate at the pastry shop, lines under the eyes are thick, more navy and milky than black

Prefers transparent colors, bright red fire extinguisher on the wall, waiting for some smoke from long ago

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Before the blizzard starts in the weather forecast, anti-freeze salt is spread, crackling, metallic sounds cast spells, the sound of wind instruments from afar

Black dots in black, becoming colder and colder, crystal crumbling, dragged along the wall

Countless moons seen by someone with astigmatism, water droplets remain, rodents continue to gnaw with their own dignity
Scrape marks visible from sanding over paint

With the force of breaking chocolate, magnets gradually approach, ice begins to melt, bringing nose closer, thin veins, then moving away

So, in the end, what's your zodiac sign?

Seeing the left eye as a wolf's eye and the right eye as a mouse's eye, the Bowery Street chandelier light became dazzling
Where is the place a bouquet looks most beautiful?

Gray sandpaper walls drooping, dust accumulating like living things on the floor, dull black iron pillars from above, faintly gold, soldier figurines, straight-line diagrams

The poison was powdered and blown about

Suddenly a warm wind blew from the side, deep red curtains fluttering

Covered by a freezing cold so intense the warm air instantly cooled

A place even flowers would hate

Tuned like fingernails, people walking while delighting in shelter from the rain, nostrils reacting on the grass, moon visible toward Brooklyn, things unrelated to time understood by the moon's position

Medicinal incense, knife, Tanukiko, snow-loving moon

Around here, balls roll on the floor, because the buildings are warped

Night genius, Cecil Taylor

Walking on a particularly generous street in this city, dark stairs, deep red walls overpainted many times, tropical smells, incongruous, a large man guarding the place sat like a figurine

The sound of shoes echoes without leaving footprints

Candlelight, the transparent round clock visible from behind, distorted chunks of familiar music, ceiling shining, after the prelude the sound left the floor

Here is a place surrounded by something to the north, hands moving at the speed of super glue

—Tam Ochiai

Tam Ochiai is an artist whose strength lies in the fragility of his works.

Circumstantially nomadic, Ochiai later took nomadism as the consciously chosen ground of his identity. Growing up in Tokyo in the years of its postmodern excess, Ochiai moved to New York in 1989 following his family. Both art school education and the diversity of artistic styles proliferating in the art world convinced him of the difficulty of being genuinely original at such a late stage in art practice. In order to claim a place in a tradition not his own, Ochiai developed a strategy to turn his latecomer and expatriate position to his advantage. It included modifying American Modernist painting from its residual end, deliberately deploying expendable factors, in order to undermine the priority of artistic autonomy while creating a condition in which irregularities can function as pathways to the new.

The droll mixture of Appropriationist irony and neo-Dada iconoclasm in Ochiai's early works intone a postmodern lament on the difficulty of originality. In 1993, Ochiai made mock painting surrogates by stretching plastic shopping bags over handmade frames with a thin aperture in the side, garnishing them with tiny brush strokes and single-color squares, which clownishly mimed Abstract Expressionist brush strokes and Color-Field pictorial planes.

While dwarfing the prestige of heroic paintings and fashionable brands, these painting objects also conveyed the artist's love of the original with sensitive arrangements of details, with every blot functioning as a painterly sign. The fact that such "painterly signs" appeared only near, or on, the edge of his "canvases" wistfully indicated Ochiai's sense of peripherality.

Ochiai's works between 1993 and 1996 pursue the task of displacing the formal sensibility of painting in unconventional formats or materials, recapitulating the spirit of "anti-painting" explored in the early works of Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg.

—Midori Matsui