

Shigeo Otake: A Dim Cozy Room

American Art Catalogues presents *Shigeo Otake: A Dim Cozy Room*, the first major monograph dedicated to the Japanese artist and research scientist, and to the fantastical creatures—part human, part fungi—who populate his wondrous paintings. Featuring 64 of color plates, 38 color photographs from Otake's field research, as well as an essay by the artist, this book illuminates the evolution of his eerie visions across his four-decade career—visions in which, to use his words, “the ordinary and the otherworldly coexist.” Alongside the monograph, American Art Catalogues presents a special solo exhibition of works by Otake, marking his first solo show in the United States, from September 4th to October 4th.

Otake had already been painting strange, near-mythical characters when a casual encounter with a large wild mushroom not only sparked his lifelong devotion to mycology but also seeded in his mind an unsettling picture of the end of civilization. As he writes, it was the parasitic cordyceps, “forms so bizarre that they surpassed the furthest reaches of my imagination and thoroughly captivated me,” that prompted him to imagine a future in which these mushrooms melded with human bodies and minds, creating a brand new species with a hybrid consciousness. His giddy yet mournful paintings feature people whose heads are sprouting tentacular fungi or capped with mushrooms where hair would otherwise be; scenes of both parades and funerals for these weird creatures; and flowerpots from which the new generations grow tall.

Like the Italian and Spanish Medieval and Renaissance religious art he studied as a young man, Otake's paintings are rendered with a precise hand and in lively compositions and muted jewel-like palettes that infuse his works with the aura of the sacred. Inspired also by the mad whimsy of Hieronymus Bosch and the carnivalesque landscapes Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Otake's playful grotesqueries seize the viewer's attention in order to elicit a moment's contemplation—regarding our fate and the fate of natural world.

Shigeo Otake was born in 1955 in Kobe, Japan, and received both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the Kyoto City University of Arts. His work has most recently been exhibited at the Hive Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing, China, and ADZ Gallery in Lisbon, Portugal. Since the 1980s, he has focused his attention on the Japanese publishing industry, and on his continuing research of cordyceps.

Shigeo Otake: A Dim Cozy Room
September 4 - October 4, 2025



Seven of Swords, 2025
Tempera and oil on board
6 ¼ × 9 inches
(15.8 × 22.7 cm)



Seeing Thoughts, 2024
Tempera and oil on board
6 ¼ × 9 inches
(15.8 × 22.7 cm)



Spider Sister (Gibellula leiopus), 2009
Tempera and oil on board
13 × 9 ½ inches
(33.4 × 24.3 cm)



Kitchen Garden C, 2024
Tempera and oil on board
10 ¾ × 7 ½ inches
(27.3 × 19 cm)



Flower Path, 2000
Tempera and oil on canvas
35 ¾ × 28 ⅝ inches
(90.9 × 72.7 cm)



Six of Swords, 2024
Tempera and oil on board
6 ¼ × 9 inches
(15.8 × 22.7 cm)



Everyone Has Changed, 2005
Tempera and oil on canvas
13 × 18 inches
(45.5 × 33.3 cm)