



Taka Ishii

Kyoto

Gallery

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## **Roman Ondak “Breath on Both Sides”**

**Dates: Nov 14 – Dec 27, 2025**

**Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Kyoto**

**Opening reception: Friday, Nov 14, 15:30 – 17:30**

Taka Ishii Gallery Kyoto is pleased to present “Breath on Both Sides”, an exhibition of Slovakian artist Roman Ondak from November 14 to December 27, 2025. This show will be the artist’s second solo presentation in Japan following his exhibition at CCA Kitakyushu in 2004. Ondak’s group of works will also be presented at Taka Ishii Gallery and Galerie Martin Janda’s booth at Art Collaboration Kyoto, held concurrently with this exhibition.

Roman Ondak is a conceptual artist whose practice blends everyday rituals with subtle interventions that are shaped by his childhood experiences during Communism in former Czechoslovakia and observations of the ongoing social and political changes that have followed since his country began its transformation into a democracy. Drawing on anthropological curiosity, he creates installations and sculptures that explore social structures and everyday life. His participatory performances invite viewer interactions, transforming ordinary experiences into poetic reflections on time, presence, and collective behavior. Through his work, Ondak creates thought-provoking situations that reveal how meaning is constructed socially, encouraging audiences to reconsider their roles within shared environments.

The works presented in this exhibition are composed of elements extracted from the artist’s immediate surroundings, such as his studio or home in Bratislava. They have been transformed, deconstructed, or reconfigured, and then placed in the exhibition space in a manner that deviates from their original purposes. These objects, originating from distant lands, are recontextualized within a traditional Japanese *machiya*; some blend in as if they have been originally there, while others, stripped of their functionality, appear as alien presences that prompt viewers to question why they are there. In any case, when one’s personal experiences and memories enter into these material interventions—carrying the history of the artist and his living environment—the potential for creating new narratives emerges. The suggestive titles of works such as “Swapped Roles” or “Sitting Door” also encourage this act with a certain humor.

The exhibition title “Breath on Both Sides” comes from a work consisting of a single balloon positioned in the glass window separating the gallery’s exterior and interior. The air within the balloon blurs the relationship between inside and outside, seemingly resonating with the historical architecture that places a garden at the center and incorporates openings to suit Kyoto’s climate. The piece also comes into being through the act of breathing—of infusing vitality—and directs our awareness toward the presence of others who are not physically there. This gaze will also be directed towards the series of postcards titled “Messages”

displayed on the wall. Most of them are covered by layers of black acrylic paint, revealing only glimpses of information. What journeys brought them to this place? These works by Ondak draw our awareness back to the existence of people who, over long years, across generations, have woven history and collective memory.

Roman Ondak was born in Zilina, former Czechoslovakia, in 1966 and lives and works in Bratislava, Slovakia. Ondak studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava (1988-94) and at Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania (1993). His solo exhibitions include Kunsthalle Praha (2025); Tate Modern, London (2025); Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona (2023); South London Gallery, London (2016); Guangdong Times Museum, Guangzhou (2015); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2013); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2012); Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin (2012); Kunsthaus Zürich (2011); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2011); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2009); Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2007); CCA, Kitakyushu, Japan (2004); among others.

His recent group exhibitions include: "Fragment of an Infinite Discourse", Lenbachhaus, Munich (2023); "The Paradox of Stillness: Art, Object, and Performance", Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2021); "Keeping the Balance", Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2020); "Shutters and Stairs. Elements of Modern Architecture in Contemporary Art", The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (2020); "MoMA at NGV: 130 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art", National Gallery of Victoria (2018); "I AM THE MOUTH", Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb (2018); and "Experiencia infinita", Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires (2015). He has participated in numerous biennials and international events including Dhaka Art Summit (2023); Aichi Triennale (2022); 10th Gwangju Biennale (2014); dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel (2012); 54<sup>th</sup>, 53<sup>rd</sup>, and 50th Venice Biennales (2011, 2009, and 2003); 6th Berlin Biennale (2010); 7th Shanghai Biennale (2008); 27th São Paulo Biennial (2006); and Manifesta 3, Ljubljana and Manifesta 1, Rotterdam (2000 and 1996).

For further information, please contact:

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Thu – Sat 10:00 – 17:30 Closed Sun – Wed and National Holidays



Roman Ondak

“Breath on Both Sides”, 2009

Balloon inflated through a hole cut in a windowpane

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