

Christian Kōun
Alborz Oldham

*Selections from the
Photographic Archive of
Kosen
Ohtsubo*



November 28, 2025
–
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G44

Centre for
Contemporary
Photography

In addition to his practice with ikebana and Kosen Ohtsubo's archive, Christian sends out emails, each titled *Update*, stuffed with found images, texts and also his own photos. Each update contains around 100 images. Sometimes several are sent in a day. The practice is simultaneously extremely generous but also demanding, both for the viewer and (it seems likely) to Christian. The *Updates* have demanded that I purchase more storage space for my emails. The Updates demand the fan on my computer turn on when I open an email. The *Updates* have also been one of the most earnest attempts to redeem the internet as a place for sharing, even if only in one direction. While the audience for the *Updates* are small compared to the potential reach of social media, they're actually about the size of a run of an artist multiple, a noise tape, or lots of other ways in which artists share work. It is perhaps a rare 2020s example of "relational aesthetics" where the boutique/artisanal nature seems not twee but genuinely restorative. The following images are taken from Updates ranging from September 2019 to July 2025, organized chronologically.

—Steve Kado & Amy Ching-Yan Lam

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Spotless, nude, ladybug on a hand, as it takes off in a seemingly improbable vertical manner, leaping head-first upwards. The ladybug's shadow looks like an asterisk or an orchid.

A pencil drawing of a horse, split vertically into four sections: "Chapters 1-5," "Chapters 6-8," "Chapters 9-11," "Chapters 12-16." The drawing for the first section is the most simple: the horse's smiley face and stick leg, and the last section, of the rump and tail, is rendered in fine detail, almost photo-realistically.

A parking sign: classic white P on blue background. The blue rectangle is superimposed on a lush red. Overlap of it all, in silver graffiti marker, an expanding spiral, the quintessential doodle, growing upwards like a puff of smoke.

A Chevy Bolt with a black California vanity plate that reads "BLOOBIN."

An older white man, with a close cropped white beard wearing a Hawaiian shirt. He is wearing a cardboard replica of a beehive as a hat, complete with little cardboard bees attached to it by wires.

Several images taken from car advertising but the wheels have all been shrunk to a ridiculous extent. The fenders of the cars have also been hilariously enlarged to make up the space previously occupied by wheels. The cars do, however, somehow look sleeker and maybe more beautiful?

Five views of a white Sony DreamMachine alarm clock, the time is 2:03PM.

Two trees trained to form a gateway in a garden or yard but their tops haven't been pruned recently and branches shoot straight up on both, giving Bride of Frankenstein or static electricity hairdo. The sky is grey and the ground is snowy.

Underside of a stuffed duck toy, its white belly.

Meme of animated Stuart Little that says "ALL I EVER WANTED / WAS EVERYTHING."

Two identical dark grey phones side-by-side, but they are huge, with at least 100 square buttons on each.

A gargoyle showing a lion and owl reading a book together. The lion smiles benevolently, the owl points in the book with its wing.

Paired images of paper ketchup and mustard cups on a table, refracted through a water bottle to appear wide, boatlike even.

Bright yellow double-claw contraption on the back of a garbage truck.

Vertical banner of a beautiful, glimmering, shapely glass of deep brown stout beer, with the IKEA logo at the bottom, beside a display of hundreds of these same glasses.

In a black lacquered bamboo bucket with Chinese writing, a bloom of folded and shaped clear plastic bags: each bag is petal. It looks like a plastic bag chrysanthemum.

Crimped, fluffy, tan dog wearing a ponytail on the top of its head, mouth open, tongue hanging out, on the platform of the London tube station "Parliament." A black leash rope extends out of the bottom of the frame, like the viewer could be holding onto it.

View from above of three classical musicians performing on stage surrounded by an audience. Everything except for the very middle of the stage is motion-blurred, creating the feeling of falling down towards the trio. An illustration of a pigeon is superimposed in the lower-right corner, creating the sense that the pigeon is about to divebomb this concert.

A chart that shows that singing evolved earlier for gibbons than for humans.

View of a cave, behind an orange spike fence, with a frozen waterfall inside. There are flower

petals and other devotional Buddhist objects placed around the frozen fall.

Pixelated photo of a black squirrel sleeping on a windowsill, wearing a knit lilac toque with matching knit lilac blanket and mattress.

"The sound of a strong wind howling through structures."

Red, yellow, blue, beige, white and black dice scattered all over a floor, nearly covering it. All of the die only have one dot on each side.

A recipe for a "Napa Cabbage Angel." They are beautiful, rising from a cloud of cauliflower. A round lemon rind for their little halo.

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Steve Kado is an artist, writer and musician living in Toronto and Los Angeles.

Amy Ching-Yan Lam is an artist and writer. She is the author of *Property Journal* (Book Works, 2024), a journal documenting conversations and experiences of property; *Baby Book* (Brick Books, 2023), finalist for the Governor General's Literary Awards in Poetry; and *Looty Goes to Heaven* (Eastside Projects, 2022), a historical fiction about a small dog stolen from China by British soldiers. She is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Creative Writing in the English department of New York University. Her exhibition *83% Perfect* is on view at the Goldfarb Gallery of York University until Jan. 31, 2026, in Tkaronto.

To view Christian's email archive, visit itsawowthing.org

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Selections from the Photographic Archive of Kosen Ohtsubo, Presented by Christian Kōun Alborz Oldham, and in cooperation with Kosen Ohtsubo, Ryusei-ha, Empty Gallery, Ensō House and Kunstverein München.

Christian Kōun Alborz Oldham is an artist, writer, and educator who, under the tutelage of Ohtsubo, became a master of freestyle ikebana in 2016. Between 2017 and 2018, Oldham digitized the majority of Ohtsubo's sizable photo archive and has since lectured at a number of universities on the history and development of ikebana from its historical origins to its contemporary expressions. Oldham is the foremost scholar of Ohtsubo's work and legacy and additionally is the founder of Flower Planet, a Berlin-based school for the practice and dissemination of materials related to ikebana.

Kosen Ohtsubo is one of the most significant living practitioners of the art form of ikebana. Ohtsubo rose to prominence in the 1960s due to his use of readily available materials such as vegetables and refuse. While formally trained in electrical engineering at Tokyo Denki University, for decades he served as the Headmaster's Advisory Instructor of the Ryusei Ikebana School, headquartered in Tokyo, Japan. His work and demonstrations have been presented in India, Hong Kong, Spain, Holland, England, Korea, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the United States. Documentation of Ohtsubo's practice has been chronicled in two major publications in 1981 and 1995.

Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography is an artist-run centre committed to supporting diverse approaches to photographic and image-based practices through exhibitions, education programs and facilitating artistic production. Gallery 44 provides space and context for meaningful dialogue between artists and publics. Together, we offer an entry point to explore the artistic, cultural, historic, social and political implications of the image in our ever-expanding visual world.

Poster image

Kosen Ohtsubo, *いけばな展のゴミ - Rubbish of the Ikebana Exhibition*, photographed by Ryusei Photo Department, ca. 1984

Cover image

Kosen Ohtsubo, *Rikka of Pint*, photographed by Ryusei Photo Department, ca. 2003

