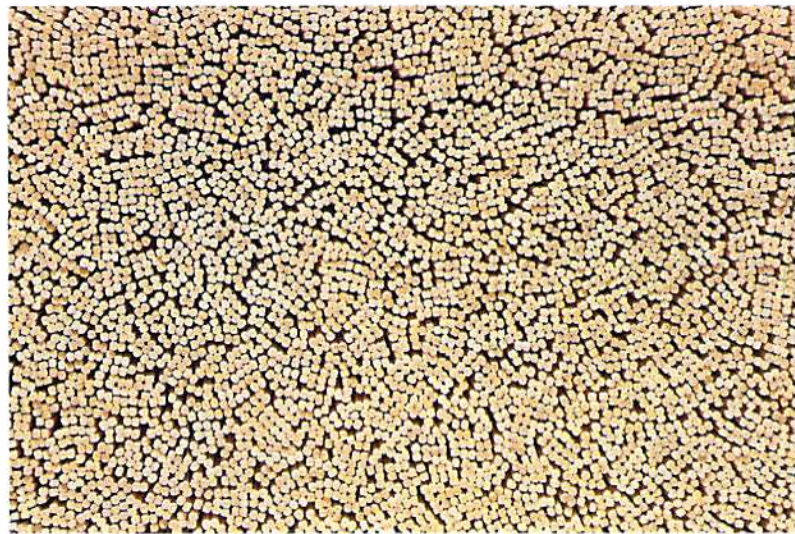




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from the series *Faces*, 2015 © Atsushi Okabe Courtesy of KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

Atsushi Okabe

The abstract composition strikes you first; it's only later that you realize you're looking at chopsticks, rubber bands, or a close-up of the edges of a series of pieces of cardboard. Atsushi Okabe works with commonplace items, but presents them as objects of beauty in his *Faces* series. He goes to extremes to seek out aesthetic pleasure in the surfaces of these objects, in one piece squeezing out 70 tubes' worth of toothpaste to find it. As an object, photographs are flat

and unexciting. But Okabe gives them a potent physicality by cramming the space inside them with his subjects. It is these contrasting elements that give his work balance.

Okabe is part of a new generation of artists who grew up with analogue as well as digital technologies and are comfortable with both. This dynamic can be seen in his latest series, *Botanical*, for which he visited a botanical garden—where the lighting and wind level never changes

—and photographed plants growing in greenhouses and leaves lying on the ground. While shooting, he moved his lens up and down and from side to side with the shutter open, creating images similar to layered lithographs. Okabe mines the movement that occurs between finding an image and capturing it to present everyday objects in a new light, in a way that is unique to photography.

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