

Berkeley

Midori Harima

Kala Institute

Kala Institute was founded 30 years ago by two artists, Archana Horsting and Yuzo Nakano, who had worked at William Stanley Hayter's famed Atelier 17 in Paris before starting their own print workshop in Berkeley. Kala Institute has become a unique collaborative workspace in which artists share ideas and experiment with techniques new and old. Artists from around the world come to

work in this stimulating environment. Kala, in turn, sends exhibitions abroad, recently to Italy, Ecuador, and Uzbekistan. Print-making is only a part of the work at Kala, which has fostered innovation in most areas of the visual arts. Since the early 1980s, it has organized a series of performance pieces, and Kala encourages digital and audio work in its workshop.

Sculpture has been a vital part of Kala's program almost from the start. Midori Harima's installation, *Transparent Story* (2004), was selected from a highly competitive pool of work for the 2004 Kala Board Prize. Harima was born in Yokohama in 1976 and moved to San Francisco in 2001. Since then, she has exhibited her work in several San Francisco venues, including the Museum of Craft and Folk Art, New Langton Arts, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. She feels that our overloaded mediated culture leaves little space for personal stories and tries to reconnect to a tradition of storytelling, which she experienced when as a child she listened to elders in Japan. Her work can be seen as a search for roots in

a vanishing culture. Her narrative installations are replete with suggestions, but remain ambiguous and open-ended. Coming from an urban milieu, she attempts to find a new connection with the world of nature. In her installations, she seeks places of silence in which vulnerable fawns or young girls are exposed to violent animals, such as tigers in *Beginning Story* (2002), or to a wild rainstorm in *Transparent Story*.

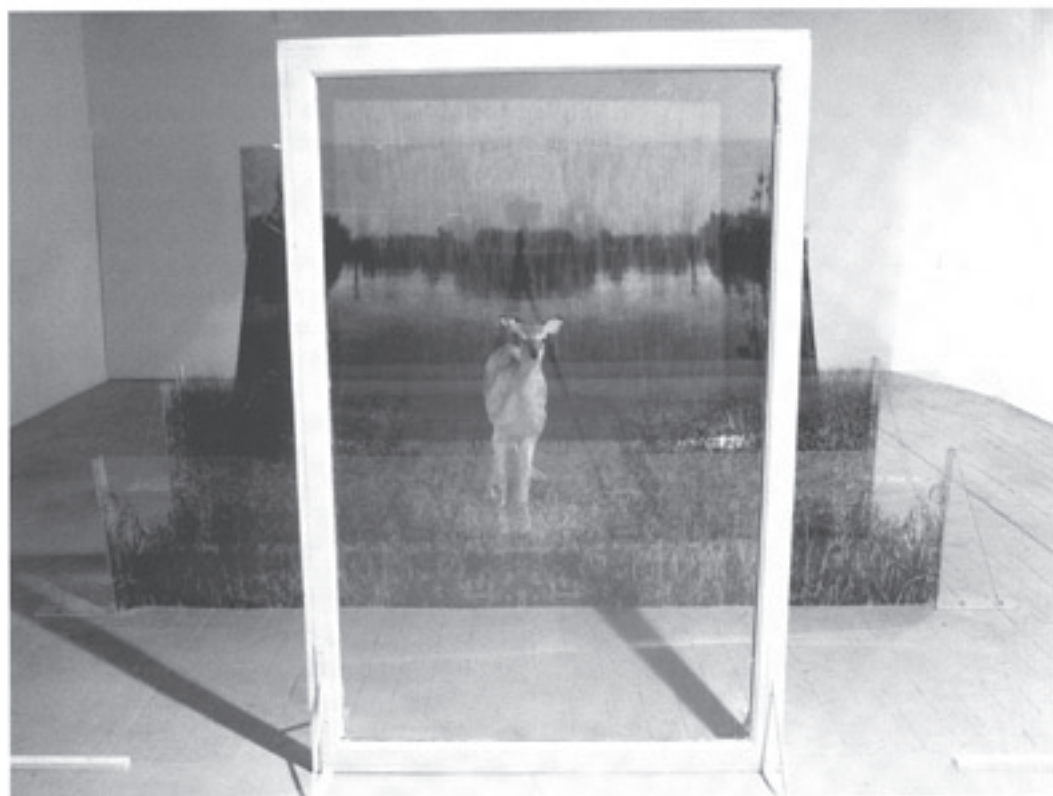
Harima's figures and animals are sculpted with paper. Paper, of course, has a long tradition in Japanese art and architecture—but not in sculpture. Paper is used for the screens that separate spaces in the traditional Japanese house. Lanterns, umbrellas, and even kimono are made of paper. Fine handmade paper is the substance of scroll paintings and woodblock prints. Harima, however, employs the most ordinary office copy paper for her sculpture. She proceeds by first making paper models, which she enlarges to figures that are almost life-size. She then painstakingly applies layer upon layer to build up the forms,

using no armature. The different tones of used copy paper engender the needed colorations.

In *Transparent Story*, the darker segments of the photocopies are used for the deer's fur, and the black parts serve for its eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Harima placed the deer between sheets of transparent film, which she injected with dark green ink to create images that resemble bush grasses. In each sheet, the left replicates the right in a horizontal mirror image. In the distance, actually behind the rows of clear transparent sheets, the viewer sees a serene, romantic shoreline along a river or lake—appropriated from an illustration in a tourist magazine. The spectator looks through a pane of glass, which, again, serves as a mirror, simultaneously reflecting a screen at the back of the room on which a fast and dense rainfall is projected. The deer appears to be standing in the grass on a rainy day.

Harima uses 21st-century technology for an installation that, like so many works in art's history, explores the gap between reality and illusion—here through the heart, mind, and dexterous hands of a young artist with remarkable talent.

—Peter Selz



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