

For her first American solo exhibition, held in November at Kala Art Institute, Midori Harima evidently thought at great length about them, and about the membrane where two particular perceptions meet. With *Transparent Story*, an installation incorporating sculpture, photography, video and audio, Harima sought to solidify a connection between the viewer and what happens on the other side of a framed glass. The result was haunting and persuasive, transforming the unglamorous end of the Berkeley printmaking workshop into a place of almost religious sanctity.

Transparent Story was carefully prescribed and electric with larger implications. Following the artist's directions, one entered the gallery and stood before a large frame of glass, behind which lay hedge-like rows of clear film printed with ink-jet images of reeds and willows and, at the back, a pond. Facing the viewer, several feet away, was a life-sized papier-mâché sculpture of a doe (more about her in a moment). Behind, a large screen displayed a close-up video of falling rain. This was reflected in the glass, and appeared to shower upon the scene itself. Composed in black and white and shades of gray, the whole piece held a magic stillness, like a rural photograph: simultaneously lonely, special and poignant.

Shortly, however, a larger realization began to set in, again, as devised by the artist in her introductory statement: The glass itself, holding within its frame this magical tension between viewer and scene, seemed to breathe, containing the expectations and curiosity of the viewer as well as the tension of the sculpted panorama—an equipose in which, as Harima wrote, "two spaces divided by the glass meet on the glass." For just a moment, the glass itself was the artwork, a living membrane that held all the motion and emotion of the sculpted landscape inside itself. Like one of those computer-created 3-D pictures so popular ten years ago, the perception was fragile and fascinating.

The doe was integral to this. Made of paper Xeroxed with patterns and smudges (one knew this from seeing another, up close at Kala's entrance), she seemed to be half-crouching (was she fearful? about to bolt?), her synthetic "skin" mirroring reality, but, in fact, a facsimile of it. At that point, the viewer began to be aware of other mirrors: the patterns and symmetry on the xeroxed film; the reflection of the rain—and, eventually, his or her own image—in the framed glass. It was one those rare moments in which every element of the space falls into some sort of larger understanding, and one wanted to stand before it for hours.

There was more to the show, including a series of

thirty-six drawings of silhouetted figures captured in glimpses of motion, and *Standing Girl*, another papier-mâché sculpture so charged with life one almost hesitated to approach it. Separate from *Transparent Story*, they nonetheless added to its cumulative effect. Leaving the show, stepping outside after descending Kala's stairway, one felt a heightened awareness of other windows, and of skin, eyes, ears, speakers, screens, photographs, the pages of a book or magazine—any surface upon which two consciences met and interacted. One saw and felt them everywhere.

—Colin Berry

Midori Harima: *Transparent Story* closed in November at Kala Art Institute, Berkeley.

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Midori Harima at Kala Art Institute

So much of modern life appears to us through a framed window: the views out our home or office, the pictures on our computer desktops or Web browsers or on our television screens, the photographs and movies we take and watch. In the gallery, too, much of the art we view is designed to sit inside a frame. It's a metaphor we've grown comfortable with, thinking no more about the strange inside-outside dichotomy of these framed panes than we do of the wood or steel or plastic walls on which they hang.

Midori Harima, *Transparent Story*, 2004, installation, 27' x 30', at Kala Art Institute, Berkeley.

