

Kala Exhibition A Paper Trail of Perception

by Sasha Vasilyuk

F titled "Transparent Story," the new solo exhibition of young Japanese artist Midori Harima proposes a whole new treatise on the modern notion of perception. Somewhere between nihilism and existentialism, illusion and reality, this highly philosophical show is far from transparent.

Held at the Kala Art Institute in West Berkeley, Midori's exhibition contains two sculptures, a series of drawings, and a central, mixed-media installation, which gives its name to the entire show.

The installation is preceded by the artist's introductory text, which invites us into the world of her sensibility through its descriptive, haiku-like simplicity. "The rainfall is reflected on the glass and meets the scene on the other side," writes Midori, provoking us to an image of what we have not yet seen.

This is just the beginning of a thought exercise, Midori warns us. Now, the words that we are holding will meet the visual image of

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the installation itself. In a darkened room, there is a window, through which we see transparent strips of grass, then a larger image of a lake, surrounded by a further layer of trees—all black and white copies of an original image. In the midst of this artificially constructed landscape stands a sculpture of a lawn, made from Xerox copy paper.

The screen behind us projects a rainfall that is reflected in the window and fills the gallery with a soothing, monotonous sound of heavy rain. This multi-layered construction places us in its midst, as we are also, quite deliberately, reflected in the window. Thus, we become an integral part of this fragile artistic universe.

For Midori, the installation represents the way human perception works. The window, which simultaneously separates and connects the inside space with the outside, is similar to how people connect their inner selves with the outside world.

Midori believes that when perceiving an object, we impose upon it our preconceived notions. "There is so much information out there that we experience things before we actually experience them with our eyes," says the artist.

This is why the landscape (the installation, though it appears real, is actually a collage made up of different images). Midori wants to create "a scene that everyone already knows," a common landscape, not specific to any

real site. The lack of authenticity in the landscape is further underlined by its transparent structure.

While it seems clear why the installation is called transparent, what is it that makes it into a "Transparent Story"? "I am interested in how people create a story," explains Midori. "I also feel like I live according to a story somebody has created for me."

The artist believes that the young generation shares this sensibility "as if they already know their life and future before they start it." The "story" of these young people is structured by the modern society that bombards them with information, marking certain values and predetermining their lifestyles.

Midori's drawings further explore the notion of modern perception, portraying faceless figures, which are captured in different activities and poses. She sketches only their outlines to present a bare minimum, by which the shapes can be recognized as men, women, or children. In this way she manages to capture the essence of our perception, through which we only recognize the outlines of people and the surface of objects, never seeing or understanding their true nature.

At the "Transparent Story" exhibition, Midori Harima uses her mixed-media installation, sculptures, and drawings to reflect on the modern "information-intensive society." While the speed of information surpasses our ability to comprehend the world, we are left to contemplate its ephemeral nature from the dark room of our inner selves.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MURRAY

MIDORI HARIMA'S sculpture "Story Spoken By Outline" is crafted from paper and detailed to a minimum.

"Transparent Story" runs until Nov. 27 at the Kala Art Institute, 1060 Howe Ave., West Berkeley. Admission is free. For more information, call 510-640-3877 or visit www.kala.org. Play rock, paper, scissors with Sasha at arts@dailyval.org.