



Nelson Gallery

Paper-based works on exhibit at the Richard Nelson Gallery include the mobile “Pact” by David Miles, left, and “Untitled,” above, a sculpture of wolves by Midori Harima.

Paper transformed

Exhibit is stacked high with pulp possibilities

By Victoria Dalkey
BEE ART CORRESPONDENT

The term “paper pushers” makes you think of faceless rows of white-collar workers processing interminable forms, memos and reports. But an exhibition of the same name at the Richard Nelson Gallery at the University of California, Davis, gives us a look at the way nine artists use paper in unconventional ways to “push” the boundaries of a commonplace material.

Usually a surface for drawing and painting, paper, in the hands of the Nelson’s “paper pushers,” becomes a medium for works that range from dioramas and mobiles to ephemeral objects and installation pieces.

Through the processes of cutting, hanging,

piercing, molding, wrapping and laying paper on the floor, they explore themes ranging from urban paranoia to concern for the environment.

With aesthetic stances moving from crude to exquisite, the show presents a variety of innovative responses to the problem of giving new life to a modest material often used for grocery lists, doodles and computer printouts. While some of the works are conceptual in their orientation, many are visually compelling. That is, they have interesting bodies as well as minds.

From Stephanie Syjuco’s street vendor’s suitcase full of faux jewelry cut out of magazine ads to Tom Friedman’s splashy floor piece that suggests the mess left when sculpture fell off its pedestal and landed on a viewer with a splat, the show is full of surprises.

Christopher Taggart’s sculpture of a giant hand that is made up of faceted planes printed with small close-ups of the artist’s palm and fingers juts from a wall. A pair of winsome wolves by Japanese sculptor Midori Harima howl at an unseen moon. A small Guston-like figure is tucked into Jason Jagel’s three-dimensional, cut-out landscape.

The most immediately engaging works in the show are English sculptor David Miles’ fragile mobiles of silhouetted shapes that bob and re-

volve with the air currents in the room. These dark yet delicate pieces form nonlinear narratives that tell disturbing tales drawn from newspaper reports and the artist’s personal life.

Violence and menace are the threads that tie the mobiles together. “Pact” tells the story of young lovers who jumped to their deaths from a tall building. “Milkman” dangles vignettes of a mugging and a car driving over a cliff. Cops, robbers and innocent bystanders come together in “Shootout,” an almost generic scene made the more frightening by its familiarity. The combination of precise, sometimes feathery scissoring and stark, unsettling imagery makes these works compelling.

Compelling, too, by virtue of the obsessive-compulsive nature of their making are Jill Sylvia’s intricate sculptures made out of her father’s old accounting ledgers. Sylvia, a recent MFA graduate from the San Francisco Art Institute, diligently has cut out all the negative spaces in the ledger pages, leaving delicate grids of printed lines.

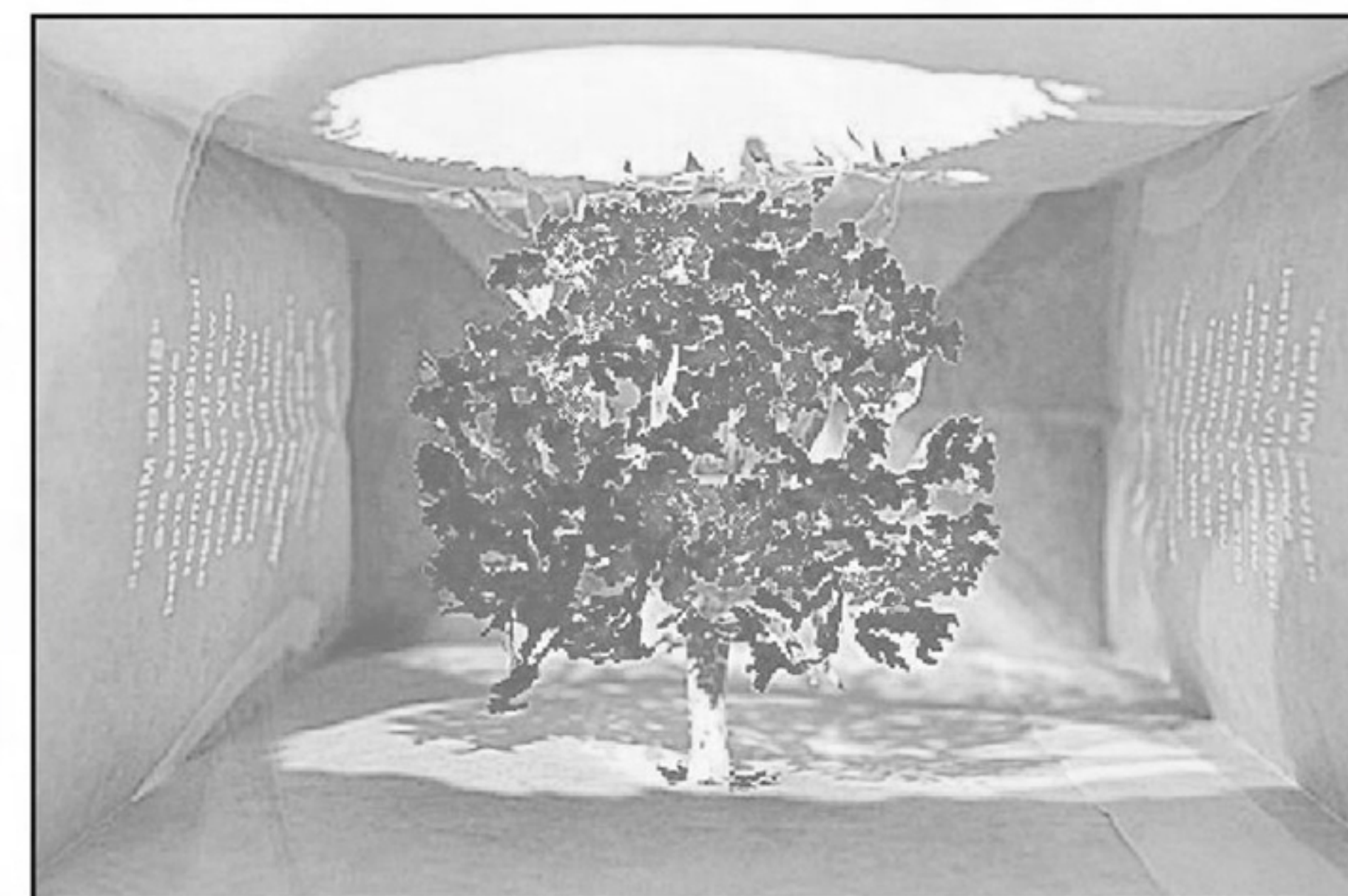
Taking away the notations that define our lives in dollars and cents, the linear sculptures wipe away our quotidian concerns, leaving a fragile geometric structure that makes you think of the

geometry of beehives or snowflakes. “Untitled (Month),” composed of 30 ledger pages mounted on the wall with silver pins, casts a lattice of shadows as haunting and poetic as one of Agnes Martin’s ghostly minimalist paintings.

A fragile poetry also imbues Nicole Fein’s exquisite sculptures made of thin, nearly transparent papers that she shreds and reweaves into breathtaking small-scale objects. Fein, who lives in San Francisco and has an MFA from Mills College, brings a sense of refinement and surprise to works that echo traditional Japanese basketry and paper sculptures.

Like Sylvia’s works, Fein’s magically reconstituted objects are labor intensive, requiring hours of repetitive labor to produce even a small piece. “Cloud” juxtaposes a gossamer nest of paper strips next to a thin sheet of seductively glowing woven paper. “Wave” is a box-like form with undulating planes that reveal the translucent, skilike shimmer and sheen of the delicate Japanese paper from which it is made.

New York-based artist Yuken Teruya also takes traditional Japanese paper crafts as a point of departure for surprisingly lovely works that are made out of paper bags. Laying the bags on their sides with their open mouths facing the viewer, he snips miniature trees from the



Paper bags become dioramas in the hands of Yuken Teruya: “Silver Mitten Paper Bag,” above, and “Notice Forest,” left.

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tops of the bags and folds them down to rest on the bottom of the bags. Light falling through the open tops on the delicate branches and intricate leaves of the trees fall in dappled shadows on the ground.

Conceptually, the works address environmental concerns by turning paper bags, which come from trees, back into trees. But this plays second fiddle to the magical visual world created by the miniature landscapes – spring green, autumnal red – inside Teruya’s imaginative, finely executed dioramas.

Also at the Nelson, in the side gallery and entryway gallery, are shows of posters designed for the UC Davis LGBT Resource Center and posters for union strikes, rock shows and boxing matches issued by the Horwinski Press in Oakland over the last 50 years. All three shows will be on view through Dec. 11.

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While you are in Davis, you may want to drop in on the

Davis Art Center’s sale and auction of over 500 items from the collection of Rosalind Hsia. Hsia was one of the best customers of the Michael Himovitz Gallery in its heyday, purchasing works by Miriam Davis, Jeff Nebeker, Tony Natsoulas, Julian Faulkner, Heidi Bekebrede, Paul di Pascua and others. She also acquired vintage, retro, multicultural and contemporary art from other galleries, as well as designer furniture and jewelry from flea markets, antique stores and thrift shops.

The sale will be open to the public through Nov. 18 at the center, located at the corner of Covell and F streets in Davis. A silent auction of contemporary works by the artists listed above continues through Wednesday. Proceeds from the sale and auction will benefit the Davis Art Center, which is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays. For more information: (530) 756-4100, www.davisartcenter.org.

Paper Pushers

WHERE: Richard Nelson Gallery, Art Building, Room 124, UC Davis.

WHEN: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays-Fridays, 2 to 5 p.m. Sundays, through Dec. 11

INFORMATION: (530) 752-8500, <http://nelsongallery.ucdavis.edu>