

SACHIKO AKIYAMA: THINGS UNSEEN

Danforth Museum of Art
123 Union Avenue
Framingham, Massachusetts

Through February 6

TUCKED INTO THE REAR GALLERY OF THE DANFORTH MUSEUM, BOSTON-AREA SCULPTOR SACHIKO AKIYAMA'S SOLO SHOW, "THINGS UNSEEN," IS SUBTLY PREVIEWED BY A SIMPLE, BASSWOOD BUST PLANTED IN THE FARTHEST CORNER OF THE MAIN HALLWAY. BLINK, AND YOU MIGHT MISS IT AS YOU WANDER IN SEARCH OF THE EXHIBIT. A SELF-PORTRAIT, "REVERIE" INVITES THE SHARP-EYED VISITOR TO PAUSE AND CONTEMPLATE WITH THE ARTIST/SUBJECT, WHO GAZES WITH A RELAXED COUNTENANCE TOWARD AN INDISTINCT POINT.

It's this in-between space, the focal point of the inward gaze, that pervades Akiyama's work. Drawing from a controlled lexicon of dreams, memories and Japanese fairytales, Akiyama's robust polychrome woodcarvings present familiar imagery with a deliberate evasiveness, leaving the viewer to construct his own meaning. In each sculpture, Akiyama casts herself or close family members as subjects, paired with simple iconography that hints at the wisdom and mystery of the natural world.

Co-curated by John Baker and Nina Nielsen, "Things Unseen" presents a fair mix of freestanding sculpture and low-relief carvings of varying scale, the most striking of which lean toward life-sized. Confronting the viewer upon entering the gallery, the full-scale "Dream of Birds" features a woman crouched in a protective stance, broad arms crossed squarely across her chest and knees. She stares askance into the void — eyes and face emotionless. The unsettling tension of the piece suggests a veiled restraint. The figure's sturdy, bare feet are planted firmly on a round base, which on the carpeted gallery floor evokes a lid holding something in.



I Remember What I Did Not See, 2010, polychromed wood.



Four Corners Of The Floating World, 2010, polychromed wood.

Another full-scale sculpture, "I Remember What I Did Not See," depicts a more serene feminine form, prostrate upon the floor. A sparrow nestles in her cupped left hand; her right hand is crossed over her heart. The oval base forms a protective space around this vulnerable, yet solid, figure.

In "Shared Departures," a middle-aged couple (modeled after the artist's own parents) stands side-by-side with the stoic expressions of ancient guardian sculpture. The man holds a wooden oar like a staff; the woman, a pair of sparrows poised to take flight from her open palms. The title can be interpreted in multiple ways; more broadly, as a representation of the journey of marriage over time; more specifically, as a reference to the couple's immigration to the United States from Japan.

Avian spirits appear often in Akiyama's work; the sparrow, one of her favorites, is known for its tenacious adaptability to various trials of climate. In "Shared Departures," it's not a stretch to draw parallels between these characteristics and the traits that allow the bond of marriage to hold fast over miles and years.

Providing a platform for more intricate environments, Akiyama's low-relief carvings cast her characters within nature's tableaux. The large relief carving, "Four Corners of the Floating World," depicts a wooded space infused with dreamlike scale shifts. The title references the Japanese word "ukiyo," a term that signifies a world of impermanent, fleeting beauty — a realm set apart from the mundane. Set farthest forward as if to straddle our world is a "Mini-me" of the artist. Dressed like a contemporary student in jeans, t-shirt and boots, she faces out toward the viewer with a quizzical facial expression, her unseen left hand swallowed protectively by the palm of a giantess. Shown in profile, this larger self communes silently with a Great Blue Heron in the foreground, while five members of its flock recede with unspoken secrets into a steely blue sky.



Shared Departures, 2008, polychromed wood.

Bearing the careful and timeless signature of the sculptor, the beautiful simplicity of the wood hints of nostalgia for a time when humans relied upon simpler tools, instinct and a healthy respect for the unknown.

Meredith Cutler

VINTAGE Winter Sports

Grand Circle Gallery and New England Ski Museum present an exhibit of vintage ski and Winter Olympic posters as well as artifacts and memorabilia from the early days of skiing in New England and Europe.

January 28 – March 18, 2011
at Grand Circle Gallery.

Hours:
11 am–2 pm Wednesday & Friday
11 am–7 pm Thursday
11 am–3 pm Saturday

Free admission

Exhibit and event updates: www.gct.com/grandcirclegallery
Also visit www.skimuseum.org

347 CONGRESS STREET • BOSTON, MA 02210 • 617-346-6459

Art • Architecture • Bioethics • Cognitive Science • Computational Biology • Computer Science • Consciousness • Data Science • Design • Digital Culture • IT Technology • Innovation • Energy • Environmental Science • Career Studies • Community • Creative • History of Science • Intelligent Systems • Medicine • Music • Neuroscience • Robotics • Science Studies • Technology • Urbanism • & Lots of Sale Books!

the mit press bookstore

Offering an eclectic collection of curious, stimulating, and inspiring works from arts to sciences. Come see what you're missing!

**292 Main Street
Kendall Square, Cambridge**
(617) 253-5249, books@mit.edu
Open 9-7 Mon-Fri, 10-6 Sat, 12-6 Sun

art * architecture * design * science

PETER MADDEN

SOMETHING IN EVERYTHING

STRING, STAPLES, STICKERS AND SCRAPS; AN INTERACTIVE, SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATION OF PRINTS, BOOKS AND COLLECTIONS INSPIRED BY AND FASHIONED FROM THE DETRITUS OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

THE CHRISTOPHER BRODIGAN GALLERY
JANUARY 6 - FEBRUARY 26, 2011

GROTON SCHOOL MONDAY-FRIDAY 9-4
282 FARMERS ROW GROTON, MA 01450
WWW.GROTON.ORG 978-448-7637