

Starr Review

Look. Listen. Consider. Connect. It's about art as life experience.

Friday, September 19, 2014

Contemporary Artists Showcase Eastern Papers at the Morgan Conservatory

Cleveland's Morgan Art of Papermaking Conservatory is a jewel in the city's civic crown. Renowned in the nation's papermaking community, the Morgan attracts the world's most illustrious and creative paper artists to its facilities, which house state-of-the-art equipment and facilities for training in every traditional and experimental method of working with paper fibers.

In 2014, the Conservatory celebrates the opening of its unique Eastern Paper Studio, the nation's first. They already have the largest paper mulberry tree (kozo) grove in the country, and in 2010 installed the only American studio for the ancient art of Korean paper making (hanji). Now Morgan has the specialized, up-to-date equipment to support the ancient Eastern papermaking practices. Eastern papermaking differs from Western in that it derives from the nature of long fibers—kozo, gampi, abaca, hanji, and several others. The papers are thin, silky, alluring to hand and eye. Despite their sensuous qualities are unusually tough.

Eastern Paper Studio was introduced to the public in a recent, sublime show of works by the finest of paper artists. The show displayed the wide variety in the properties of the fibers, including works diaphanous and solid; works suggestive of painting, of ceramics, textiles, and biomorphic forms. Curated and hung for maximum variety and tantalizing juxtapositions, Mason Milani demonstrated his eye and the promise of an exceptional season.



Jill Powers is a sculptor who uses the strength of kozo bark fiber for casting. She is not a traditionalist. She intuitively responds to her own interpretation of the fiber's feel. She has developed casting techniques that are all her own. Her concern is not only for the ultimate shape of the artwork, but also for the way that it highlights the kozo bark itself. Her works are porous, allowing light to penetrate them while exposing the nature of the long fibers. Both the material and the finished work are displayed. With a consciousness every artist in this show demonstrates, she is mindful that there would be no art without careful

cultivation of the plant itself. Every paper work begins in the earth. Her sculpture of a hand cradling a bee that does not sting; her basket of flames that don't consume—these are powerful metaphors for a relationship of trust in powerful nature and willingness to use it without conquest.

