

Mary Ijichi: Transcendent Text

Mary Ijichi's wall hangings invite viewers to read between the lines. Working with string and vertical sheets of Mylar, she creates scroll-like tapestries filled with horizontal lines of color suggesting lines of text.

"I'm interested in the ways we communicate, the unread texts, the places where the truth lies," she says. "When I began making these pieces I was thinking generally of truth in terms of politics and the media. Then I realized that for women from Japan, there is a great consciousness about image. There is a great concern for what is outward, what is seen by society, what's communicated non-verbally. In a way, acceptable behavior is a reflection of other people's truth."

Ijichi was born in Oakland, CA and earned degrees in science and art from the University of

California. Her approach is thoughtful and methodical; her art reflects the spirit of scientific investigation. In the series of hangings she calls "Composition of Place," she ponders linguistic issues: "Why is it our well-honed communication skills are often used to hide the truth?" she poses in an artist's statement. "When our world seems too complex, such is the time when honesty feels refreshingly peaceful.

"[The series] was born from the desire to spend more time thinking about our use of language and how we communicate. When I began the series, I used horizontal lines to represent illegible script. As in a page of text, the lettering is the positive space and the white background the negative. View the same text ten feet away, and the visual information is reversed. The white bands become the

positive space while the lettering recedes into a speckled backdrop. I used this switch from negative to positive space to represent the confusion that often befalls when words are used to conceal. We often reveal more of our truth through what we omit."

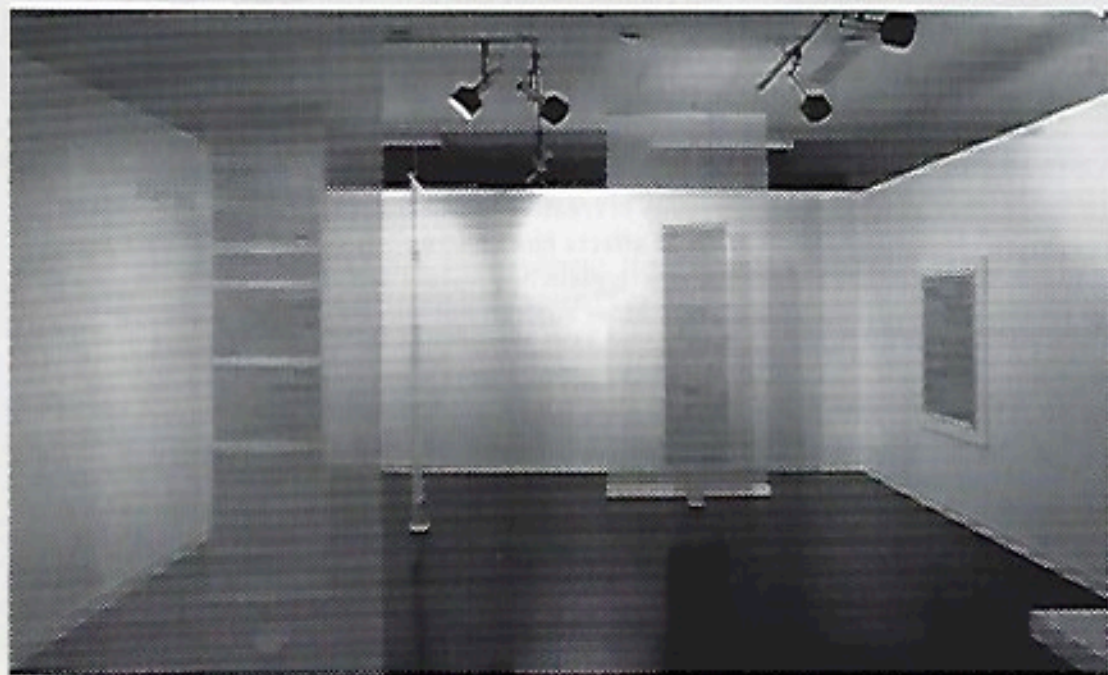
When the work is installed (as it was at Palo Alto Art Center, CA, in 2001), the "scrolls" hang in the middle of a room, sandwiched between hanging strips of gauzy fabric, or scrim. "People had to look through something to 'read' the scrolls," Ijichi explains. "I'm reminded of the control of Japanese society under the Tokugawa reign and the layering of meaning in such a complex culture. Perhaps that is one reason why Nikkel retain certain mannerisms that hint at the dualities of our human condition—what we say and what we mean may be two

different things." Just as Nikkel travel back and forth between cultures and idioms, Ijichi's wall hangings sway and shift between perspectives and perceptions.

"Ultimately what I'm trying to achieve is a sense of peace between positive and negative," she says. ☉

- CS

Composition of Place #38
Acrylic & String on Mylar
84" x 20" 1999/2000



"Traces" - Palo Alto Art Center 2001