

box on high. From the back of the room, viewers could peer up into the open end of the structure, discovering an unattainable compressed space about 5 feet deep between the cardboard and the ceiling. The whole unlikely construction kindled childhood fantasies of hidden portals at the back of the closet. The power of this show can only make one hope that Pepe will allow her play-and-labor-obsessive imagination to dream even bigger and more architecturally.

—Ann Wilson Lloyd



Paul Schwarz: *Frontier #1*, 1998. alkyd, paper, wood, 23 3/4 by 17 1/2 inches; at Center Galleries.

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

### Jae Ko at Marsha Mateyka

Any sculptor who employs biomorphic shapes can count on their primal appeal; such forms are familiar and often beautiful, two qualities that open channels of pleasant communication with a viewer. But beyond its immediate seductiveness, natural form is assumed to be metaphorical, to be a carrier of feelings or ideas, which is where the real questions begin to be asked. Jae Ko's sculptures, of rolled paper and sumi ink, never stop asking them.

Born in Korea, educated in Japan and the U.S., Ko initiated her mature work in paper when she created an elegy for her deceased father by setting in sand at the Atlantic shore a large

roll of paper slit vertically to its center, and exposing it to the rhythms of the tides. The resulting natural chaos in the forms of the paper constituted the beginning of her inquiries into the poetics of flow, which have continued in her recent works.

Her wall-mounted and untitled works range in scale from under a foot to over a yard in their largest dimension. Each involves bending or turning rolls of ink-soaked paper into themselves, creating folds or whorls of curved forms. As metaphors, they often speak of wombs, both as sexual and generative organs, or they may refer more abstractly to power points, voids which attract concentric lines of force and flow around themselves.

Her works encompass wide variations of form. In one 1999 piece, a horseshoe configuration with pointed ends surrounds a central point that extends vertically, in its linear organization of layer after layer of thin, ink-soaked paper, to the inner edge of a surrounding paper circle. In a smaller work of the same year, two whorls are brought together symmetrically in a shape recalling fallopian tubes; they also suggest the fluid dynamics of oil poured on water. In all her pieces, Ko has left no personal mark, only the autonomous sensuousness of her powerfully enigmatic signs.

—J.W. Mahoney

## ATLANTA

### Todd Murphy at the High Museum

Todd Murphy is known less for his sculptures than for his large-scale paintings with photo-collage. As this small but elegant exhibition ably revealed, his three-dimensional work deserves closer attention. Murphy constructed all the works from discarded objects collected over time. Their rough assembly was at odds with their formal presentation, each sculpture elevated on a plinth (one piece was suspended) and rather intimately scaled at no higher than 32 inches.

An untitled work of 1999 most closely resembles Murphy's paintings in its subject matter. A well-modeled but worn plaster bust of a woman rests on a plinth. She, in turn, serves as the base for a fantastical hat that supports a lichen-covered tree limb with stuffed birds and tightly

woven nests scattered among the branches. Simple dashes of color provided by the birds' bright feathers guide the eye through the intricate construction.

In *Boy Looks East* (1995), a long brown tweed robe both suggests and conceals the body of a full-length figure within, as it descends to envelop the base. The empty sleeves are wrapped around the figure and stapled like a straitjacket. The boy's elongated face stares blankly into space, his solemn countenance lending an air of mystery to the incongruous conelike shape that protrudes from his skull. Perhaps it's a hat, or perhaps a funnel for pouring information straight into the brain.

More dramatic is *Sally Hemings* (1999), a female figure in a white cotton dress with a falcon on her arm. Black feathers sprout from her head and, like the bird, she is masked with bits of torn fabric bound around her eyes. Only the small black hand protruding from a puffy sleeve confirms the racial identity of the slave who is believed to have been the lover of Thomas Jefferson. Murphy suggests that although the slave and the bird may be untethered, each is inextricably linked to its master.

Several of these sculptures have been exhibited previously in conjunction with Murphy's paintings. Shown here with only a few drawings, they were free to be read as an independent body of work. Their one distracting flaw is their slapdash construction. One hopes that the transitory character projected by the works is not prophetic of their impact on the viewer's memory.

—Rebecca Dimling Cochran

## DETROIT

### Paul Schwarz at Center Galleries

Visual artist, musician and community activist, the late Paul Schwarz was tightly connected to the Detroit art movement known as the Cass Corridor. This group of artists, intent on challenging the barriers placed between life and art, worked and lived in Detroit's inner city during the late 1960s and early '70s, just after the profoundly influential Detroit riots. While some of the group, which included Brenda Goodman, Ellen Phelan, Gordon Newton, John Egner, Jim Chatelain, Ann Mikolowski and

Michael Luchs, went on to launch successful New York careers, Schwarz remained in Detroit until his death from cancer at the age of 52 in 1998. This retrospective of 52 works included sculptures, paintings, collages and dioramas, and represented only a fraction of Schwarz's oeuvre.

Often laying his paintings on the floor as he worked on them in his dimly lit studio, Schwarz enjoyed approaching a canvas from various angles. Many of the paintings incorporate cut paper and other materials which Schwarz manipulated with a variety of tools, including protractors and X-acto knives. Schwarz translated urban stimuli—weather, street life, traffic—into heady, graceful states of suspension.

In an untitled 1975 relief, a sturdy pair of wood beams form an X. Attached to them with silver eye hooks is a grid of colorful rope. The piece has a practical quality, as if it could be picked up like a piece of equipment or used as a scaffold or even a flotation device.

A much later series of small diorama boxes displays the artist's gift for suggesting narrative. At first glance, *Camp* (1989), which measures about 12 by 18 by 13 inches, insinuates something innocent enough: a tent, logs, a crescent moon, trees, acorns. However, the acorns are too large for scale, the cres-

Todd Murphy: *Boy Looks East*, 1995. cloth, metal, wood, 17 1/4 by 3 by 3 inches; at the High Museum.

