



# In Sculpture and Prints, Hiroyuki Hamada Works Toward a “Mysterious Place”

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by Dakota Arkin Cafourek

For [Hiroyuki Hamada](#), making art is the kind of organic process that comes to him more naturally than discussing it. “I always have a hard time talking about work,” he said in a recent interview, because “it bypasses a given thought process that makes logical, recognizable sense.”

“Hiroyuki Hamada: Sculptures and Prints” is on view at [Guild Hall](#) in East Hampton, NY from February 24 through March 25, 2018. Inspired by shapes, both his prints and large scale sculptures begin as sketches on a page. “I draw a lot,” Hamada explained. “By regularly making marks and communicating with marks, I develop my own visual language, narrative, and context within the process itself that propels me to explore.”

For Hamada, the end result in art is an “unrecognizable, mysterious place.” He strives to work outside of the narratives of social constructs and recognizable symbols, he said, to allow his ideas to flow freely. “I want to create the presence of something,” the artist declared.

Hamada’s sculpture, 82, measures 78 by 61 by 26 inches. Its sheer size and complex form, he said, mark the artist’s biggest challenge to date. The abstract, curvilinear sculpture in some ways resembles a ship at sea, reaching its peak with a smooth mast-like form set in a curving foundation that flows, encompassing the center form like a wave.



“82” by Hiroyuki Hamada, 2017-2018. Pigmented Resin, 78 x 61 x 26 inches.

Photo: Dakota Arkin Cafourek.

“It’s a similar process to making surfboards,” Hamada said of shaping the sculpture with foam and adjusting it with plaster. “I had to make models for dimensions as part of my process, something I don’t typically do. I discovered I had to understand what it’s doing in the space.”

After the shaping process, Hamada typically paints his sculptures, but in this case he covered the work in sheets of pigmented resin. “I had the idea for this process in my head for awhile,” he said. First forming the resin into pliable sheets, he then applied them onto the surface of the sculpture. The end result shows lines and varied tones of blackened pigment so that the sculpture resembles a structure made with blocks or tiles. Based on his beginnings as a painter, he noted that “it’s

important for me to be involved in the making process; every step is part of the path of expression.”



Detail of “82” by Hiroyuki Hamada, 2017-2018. Pigmented Resin, 78 x 61 x 26 inches. Courtesy of Hiroyuki Hamada.

The artist’s belief that “artistic approach ... transcends thought process” could be seen as connected to his motivation to assign numbers to his art pieces rather than titles. Hamada is interested in a visual language outside of human perception—think vastness of the universe or imperceptible wavelengths. “The making process is the essence of experience,” he said. “When I make things, I try to empty myself and I try to feel.”

Alongside 82, in “Sculptures and Prints” Hamada is showing six prints completed using a Piezography, a black and white digital carbon ink printing system for fine art invented and made at Cone Editions Press.



“B17-22” by Hiroyuki Hamada, 2016. Piezography Print on Archival Cotton Rag, Courtesy of Hiroyuki Hamada.

“I was drawn into the sheer exquisiteness of black and white contrast, subtle tones and simple expression the medium allows,” the artist said, noting that he was introduced to the black and white inkjet printing process several years ago through friends working in photography. “Seven channels of a large format printer are loaded with seven shades of carbon pigment black ink,” he explained. This allows the printer to “apply tightly packed pigments onto the media, creating a more organic, more accurate rendition of black and white tones” rather than mimicking shades of gray.



“B14-07” by Hiroyuki Hamada, 2015. C No. 1, Piezography Print on Archival Cotton Rag, 36 x 49 inches. Courtesy of Hiroyuki Hamada.

Hamada creates his prints from drawings that he digitizes and then adjusts on the screen. “It’s important to have a connection to what the hands do,” he said of conceiving his works first on paper. For Hamada, drawing is a part of his routine and a way of using art as a communication tool to find direction. The biggest challenge for him in the Piezography printing process is understanding how an image on his screen will translate when it returns to the page as ink on paper. “It’s hard to know what’s essential,” he said, “so, I print a lot.”

The artist’s sketch pads are not the only thing in common for his prints and sculptures. Both mediums also share a black and white palette. “I haven’t felt a strong need for colors. Through tones, shapes, dark and light, I feel sufficiently expressed,” Hamada remarked. Whether his sketches evolve into two-dimensional prints or three-dimensional forms is based on instinct. In the end, he acknowledged, “there are many possibilities.”

He compared the creative process to fishing: “You can apply everything you know, but it’s unpredictable,” he said, “You may not catch a fish.”

“The making process is hard,” he added, “I employ the methods necessary to express myself.” For Hamada—be it sculpture, printing or painting—trial and error is an essential part of his process. “I experiment a lot. Anything that happens between drawing and the end result counts to contribute to the end product.”



Hiroyuki Hamada’s studio. Photo: Dakota Arkin Cafourek.

Raised in Japan, Hamada has spent his adult life in the United States. “Exposure to different social frameworks,” he said, “makes it easier to cultivate objectivity.” He believes that when working within the context of one’s society, the artist and his or her imagination become a part of that framework. But he believes art should transcend the thinking process and get to the essential quality of being human.

Art has the potential to inspire people to think outside of the bounds of their experience, he said: “To make something is a special way of affirming life.”



Hiroyuki Hamada with “82” in his studio. Photo: Dakota Arkin Cafourek.

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**BASIC FACTS:** “Hiroyuki Hamada: Sculptures and Prints” is on view February 24 through March 25, 2018 in the Spiga Gallery at Guild Hall, 158 Main Street, East Hampton, NY 11937. [www.guildhall.org](http://www.guildhall.org)

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