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By Victoria Donohoe
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Geometry in Sculpture

Hiroyuki Hamada's abstract sculptures at Swarthmore's List Gallery are fundamentally geometric, his art having an abstract clarity that defines all his pieces noticeably. Most are simple compact shapes in the round.

Constructed on wooden forms overlaid with burlap and plaster, the geometry of these sculptures tends to impact a sense of control without seeming overcontrolled. Such geometry instead is able to produce an uncanny effect because it hasn't lost its innovative edge, and because the intensity of focus and feeling is strong.

There's a resonant beauty, too, about his pieces, with their meticulous surfaces, some with small darkened craters like the moon, others with sections resembling fine ivory inlay. This singular work shows what can be done by an artist who goes his own way and refuses to knock himself out in imitation of others. Hamada arrived in this country at age 18, when his father's steel-industry job moved the family from Tokyo to West Virginia.

And yet curiously, Hamada's very new work evokes emotions experienced by visitors to museums of ancient art, in which those artifacts suggest a temporary and fragile victory over mortality and the disappearance of some particular culture as a living entity. His work does help explain why some of us have a deep attraction for levels of sensual beauty devoid of practical use but, as is true of these sculptures, not devoid of meaning.

Hamada's sculptures have a simplicity and power. This outstanding show is one of the season's most rewarding displays, our reward being that Hamada makes the world new before our eyes.

Swarthmore College's List Gallery, Swarthmore. To Dec 14. Tue-Sun noon-5. Free. 610-328-7811.