

P.S. 1 REVIEW/ART

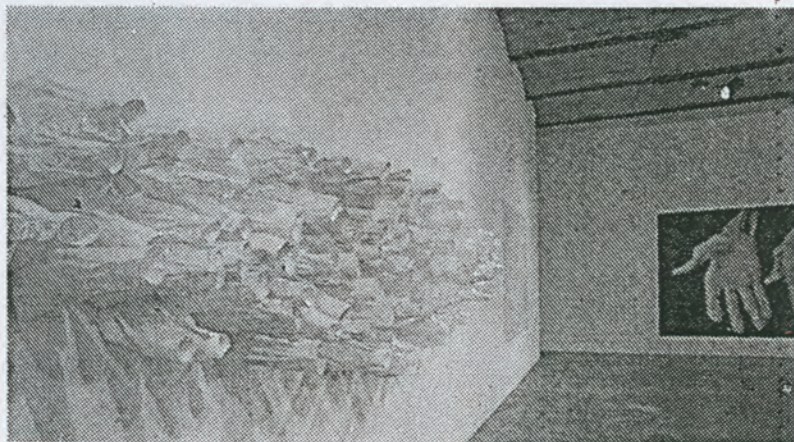
A Grandchild Remembers Her Roots

By HOLLAND COTTER

The modest overview of Lynne Yamamoto's work, installed in a narrow gallery of P.S. 1 with gracefully arched windows, has a nice historical resonance at this institution. The artist, now in her mid-30's, was a participant in its National and International Studio program several years ago, and has returned recently to work in its education program.

Ms. Yamamoto's austere but often sensuous installations center on her own Asian-American lineage, with a particular focus on her grandmother, a laundress who traveled from Japan to Hawaii as a mail-order bride in 1914 and stayed there, working on a sugar plantation and raising a family.

Several pieces in the show reflect her life. In one, dozens of starch-stiffened shirt sleeves stand aggressively out from the wall like the arms of beseeching children. In another, a row of nails is pounded into the wall at exactly her grandmother's height of 4 feet 7 inches; on the head of each a single word is written in small type — arrive, marry, cook, clean, boil, scrub, wash, iron — that identifies one of the mundane routines that both pin a life down and hold it



Rebecca Cooney for The New York Times

Lynne Yamamoto's installation of starch-stiffened shirt sleeves.

Once upon a time, a Japanese bride came to Hawaii: so starts a family tale.

together.

A third work takes the form of a barely visible grid of linen swatches affixed to the wall, interrupted here and there with blank spots where dates are stamped. Each date marks a significant event in her grandmother's life, from the birth of her children to her death on Sept. 9, 1942.

As a final homage, in a fourth piece, Ms. Yamamoto has created the form of her ancestor's figure entirely from red-tinged tropical leaves.

The handful of pieces in the show that use synthetic hair as a central image are less interesting. Hair has been overworked as a cultural and sexual metaphor in the 1990's, and it doesn't yield much information now. But when Ms. Yamamoto grapples with her own past directly, the results are moving.

And it's worth noting that in this show she has extended her core theme of personal history and continuity into the future: along with her own work she has included that of two Long Island City high school students, Danny Larino and Ismaris Molina, with whom she is working in the P.S. 1 education program.

"Lynne Yamamoto: Selected Work" remains on view at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, 22-25 Jackson Avenue (at 46th Street), Long Island City, Queens, through March 1.