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Harmonica convergence upstairs at Nexus

By Roberta Fallon, Art Blog

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Japanese-born artist Keiko Miyamori falls into the category of tree hugger. Surprisingly, she's also an archivist. The Philadelphia artist hugged a tree stump, root and all, in a piece at Project Room a few years back. The project, called "Imagina," showed the big stump and huge root system and archived the junk the artist found trapped in the tree's roots (everything from a mound of bricks to coke bottles to shards of metal, glass, wood and plastic).

The entire project was Paul Bunyanesque with a twist of Charles Wilson Peale's natural history museum thrown in.

Miyamori's new piece in the Nexus Community Gallery (upstairs behind Highwire) is still about trees (no roots this time) but it continues the artist's ongoing themes of harmony in the world, here merged with some musical underpinnings – the music of the spheres in the peaceable kingdom.

The centerpiece of the museum-like installation is a large, glass prism sitting on a table and casting little rainbows here and there around the room. On the walls are gilt-framed drawings labelled "Chestnut Hill, West Philadelphia," etc. Small shelves hold altered and numbered harmonicas; and two piano keyboards stick out from two walls. The drawings, beautiful and abstract, are charcoal rubbings of tree bark in the various neighborhoods.

The harmonicas, their tops and bottoms adorned with paper-and-ink drawings that fit like new skin, are elegant whatizits sitting on black velvet perches on top of what looks like hand-made boxes. There's a kind of innocence and modesty here that makes the whole thing rise above the seemingly corny prism and rainbows.