



Su-Chen Hung
428 Balboa Street
San Francisco, CA 94118

t: 415.752.2574 f: 415.752.4288
www.suchenhung.com
email: contact@suchenhung.com

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Tree with Arteries

I have always loved trees.

I donate trees to the San Francisco Friends of the Urban Forest as wedding presents and in celebrations of births. I also donate trees in loving memory of friends who have died. Often I ask myself, 'what will the world be like for generations to come?' If we can plant a tree for those who have passed and those who are newly born, we might be able to maintain a green globe for younger generations.

As an installation artist, I have worked with thousands of sewing needles and literally miles of red thread to create wall and ground installations as well as sculptures.

A few years ago I saw a tree trunk lying at Franconia Sculpture Park in Minnesota while on a residency there. As I stared at the dead tree lying there, I envisioned ***Tree with Arteries***. It seemed that the tree trunk was asking me to speak for the trees; trees have arteries; they can feel the pain when we human beings are killing them.

Tree with Arteries is my second installation in which I've spoken up for trees. In 1992, I did another piece using a redwood tree that was hung from the ceiling above a petri dish on the floor that contained a

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mere seedling. This piece was a prototype for a larger installation consisting of a group of logs suspended above a similar number of petri dishes. Visitors would move through a dead, silent forest hanging inches above a struggling forest of tomorrow.

For this exhibition – ***Tree with Arteries***, I used a five-meter-long Taiwanese “dragon eye” tree, that had died on site. We removed it and sliced it into 3-cm thick pieces, drilling nine holes in each. The pieces arranged on edge 3-cm apart on the MOCA Studio floor reconstructed the original shape of the tree whilst extending its length to 10 meters.

Fifty sewing needles filled with red thread as one strand was threaded through each hole connecting all the lying pieces together. An extra 5 feet of thread was left at each end of the tree trunk with all the needles at one end.

In my native Taiwan, red is the color of joy and celebration, yet here red is used like human veins. This tree, lying in a cold, artificial environment, rather than quietly decomposing in nature, is held together by vulnerable red sewing thread, a symbol of our exploitation and a warning of deforestation.