OLD, NEW, BORROWED, AND BLUE: HIROSHI SENJU'S WATERFALL PAINTINGS AS INTERSECTIONS OF INNOVATION

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> "I come before you to remind you of your childhood. No, not of yours, but rather of all that ever was childhood. For it should be possible to awaken memories that are not yours, memories that are older than you."
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> Rainer Maria Rilke

> "The Louvre is a book where we learn to read. But we should not be content to keep the formulae of our illustrious predecessors. Let us leave them so as to study beautiful nature and search to express it according to our personal temperament. Time and reflection gradually modify vision, and at last comprehension comes."
>
> Paul Cézanne

Two works of art cannot be more separate in time and space than the Hall of Bulls in the caves of Lascaux and a waterfall painting by the contemporary Japanese artist Hiroshi Senju[1] (Figure 1). One is among the earliest paintings known to us, cloistered in dark caves in rural, southern France. The other is cosmopolitan and international, created in a bright New York studio and exhibited in a gallery in Beverly Hills. It is so new the paint has barely dried.

The two paintings, however, generate a similar resonance. Lascuax has a freshness that feels it could have been lifted from any sidewalk where children experiment with chalk. Meanwhile, Senju conjures a primality that plumbs depths as deep as Lascaux. Both enchant us with the wonder of *nature* as well as the mystery of *art*, that ancient yet ever-new human

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[1] Author's note: I will use the English name order for Hiroshi Senju since he works extensively in New York City and among the art world his name is regularly presented in that order. For other Japanese names, I will use the traditional Japanese order.

impulse to take natural materials and create a product that reflects on what it means to be a human in this world.

This similarity between Lascaux and Senju is hardly arbitrary. Senju, speaking of the airbrush technique he uses to create the waterfall's mist, references the prehistoric cave painters who "blew pigment…to render something as immaterial as the breathing of bison." [2] Such a statement is a perfect example of what is characteristic of Senju: he is very adept at negotiating intersections, creating points of transition. He borrows from the old to create the new, uses the modern to transform tradition. Indeed, thinking of Senju's various waterfall paintings in terms of the intersections they create can elucidate, in part, the peculiar attraction of his work.

Figure 1. Hiroshi Senju, *Imagination of Silence*, 2007, acrylics on hemp paper, Philadelphia, Shofuso Japanese House[3]

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[2] Michaël Amy, "The Waterfall Paintings in Contemporary Japanese Art Historical Context," in Rachel Baum and Michaël Amy, eds., *Hiroshi Senju* (Milan; New York: Skira, 2009), p. 19.

[3] Photo Credit: Peter L. Doebler, June 4, 2014. Reproduced with permission from the Shofuso Japanese House.

In what follows, the focus will be centered on Senju's own subject, the waterfall, as a metaphor to unpack the various intersections at play in his paintings. This analysis will elaborate on how Senju transitions from tradition to innovation in many ways, including the content of his paintings, the materials and techniques he uses, the artistic form his paintings take, the exhibition spaces his works reside in, his view of creativity, and his relation to art history.[4]

Content: Intersection of Nature and Human – Transition to a New Landscape

A waterfall is essentially an intersection of two basic elements: water crashing into rock. In art, a similar aspect occurs when nature crashes into the artist. This experience has shaped Senju's choice of content for his paintings: "…over time, I found that the landscape was the most interesting subject matter. I never get tired of waterfalls, because I find them beautiful."[5] Such a concern with nature and beauty aligns Senju with more traditional approaches to art in contrast to much contemporary art that deals with the sensational, scandalous, or self-centered.

Senju's traditional approach to art also includes his idea of art as a reliable means of direct communication with others. Indeed, the desire to communicate with others is one of the reasons Senju takes nature and the waterfall as his subject matter:

> I would like to paint a motif that has universal appeal to people…This is the beauty of nature, and having nature as a theme for my paintings because everybody can relate to it in someway. It completes my idea for art in a way. Through my works, the audience will think about their roots, as if the painting were a mirror to their memories. This shared memory defines art as a power to break any boundaries between people….[6]

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[4] While it is possible to consider other instances of intersections, I have chosen these six examples since together they nicely cover four essential elements of any aesthetic analysis: the artist, artwork, audience, and social-historical context.

[5] "Hiroshi Senju," *Asian Art Newspaper,* January 2009.

[6] "Hiroshi Senju," *OWN* 1 (2007), p. 53.

One could read this as a retrogressive, naïve view of art as a simple copying of nature, appealing to viewers by "looking really real," but one glance at Senju's waterfalls shows this is not the case. Something more complex is going on.

To better understand Senju's comment, it is useful to compare him with earlier landscape painters such as the Hudson River School painter Frederic Edwin Church (Figure 2). As Church scholar Gerald Carr notes: "The nineteenth-century was an age of exploration, and Church was an avid participant in it. The enclosing concept was geography…A practiced eyewitness and analyst, he took viewers of his works to places he'd been, and sights he'd seen. But Church interpreted as well as transcribed those places and sights."[7] From a colonizer's perspective, it was an age of discovering new and exotic places and the artist could report back to the people at home what was on the frontier. Painting functioned as a kind of photo-journalism. But as Carr's comment indicates, this realistic painting of nature was never purely objective, rather it was conditioned by religious and political aspirations. Barbara Novak speaks of it as the "Christianized sublime," a discourse that wove moral, religious, and naturalistic strands into a new vocation for the artist: to show the presence of God in America's unique landscape, a presence that proved America was a chosen and blessed people.[8]

Nowhere in America's untamed nature did this blending of religion, politics, and art come together better than Niagara Falls, the subject of many nineteenth-century landscape paintings, including Church's magnificent version. As Thomas Cole, Church's teacher and fellow painter, exclaimed, "And Niagara! That wonder of the world!—where the sublime and beautiful are bound together in an indissoluble chain."[9] Such an

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[7] Gerald L. Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: Romantic Landscapes and Seascapes* (New York: Adelson Galleries, 2007), pp. 71–72.

[8] See Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825–1875*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 14, 33.

[9] Quoted in New York Historical Society, Linda S. Ferber, *The Hudson River School: Nature and American Vision* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2009), p. 122. A sermon from 1859 was even more grandiloquent, comparing Niagara to the very throne room of God: "John of Patmos must have had some such material visions before him when he wrote the Book of

outburst of wonder in the face of nature echoes Senju's encomium celebrating the beauty of the waterfall. However, by comparing Senju's waterfalls with nineteenth-century paintings of Niagara Falls such as Church's, key differences appear. Church's contains land and sky that act as foreground and background markers, creating limits that contain the falls and frame them for a controlled view from the outside. The presence of land, along with the title of the painting, indicates that this is an image of a geographic place, Niagara Falls. There are also temporal markers through the use of color: it is not winter and it is daytime. Finally, there are minute buildings that not only give a sense of scale but also indicate a conscious human presence.

Figure 2. Frederic Edwin Church, *Niagara*, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 229.9 cm, 1857, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Corcoran Collection[10]

the Apocalypse. There are many things at Niagara that recall the imagery of that book; the rainbows round about the throne, the trains of angels, the clouds of incense, the gates and walls of the celestial city, the great angel clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow upon his head, and his face as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, and at the sound of his speech seven thunders uttering their voices." Quoted in Gerald L. Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: Romantic Landscapes and Seascapes* (New York: Adelson Galleries, 2007), p. 57.

[10] Photo Credit: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington.

In Senju's waterfalls all of these contextual guides are removed. There are no people, the waterfall is not connected to a particular place, and there is no indication of day or night, summer or winter. There are no framing devices either, rather the waterfall cascades from the very edge of the surface. And most importantly, as critic Rachel Baum notes, we do not see Senju's waterfall from the outside, as in typical perspective paintings like Church's, "from a separate space or through a frame or a lens. Rather, Senju immerses consciousness itself in the natural world as a complementary energy, synchronized with the forces of water and wind."[11] Instead of observation, Senju's waterfall landscapes elicit participation, not erasing nature or the viewer but drawing the two together, blurring the line that separates mind and matter.

While much of the appeal of nineteenth-century landscape painting was the representation of uncharted natural locations (Church himself explored and painted from South America to Petra to the Arctic), today these places are well known to us, perhaps too well known. What Senju does is guide us to an even more uncharted place, somewhere beyond the purely objective natural world, deeper into the human that perceives this world. Senju alludes to this when he says, "It is extremely hard to show the beauty and greatness of nature, so even if I would try millions of ways to describe the waterfalls in my paintings, I would end up erasing as many times to reach the perfection. My waterfalls definitely represent my individuality, and nobody could imitate them and nobody can teach me how to paint waterfalls, except nature and the waterfall itself."[12] Senju's choice of the waterfall as a subject for painting is to depict the beauty of the natural waterfall, but also to express the complexity the artist faces in trying to give form to individual sensual perception and internal feeling before nature. It is as if the artist is the rock continually pounded by the waterfall of nature and made smoother and smoother until, as Cézanne says, "comprehension comes." Trying to give expression to this, then, determines Senju's choice of materials and the techniques he uses.

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[11] Rachel Baum, "Variations on Themes: Hiroshi Senju's Explorations of Nature," in Rachel Baum and Michaël Amy, eds., *Hiroshi Senju* (Milan; New York: Skira, 2009), p. 9.
[12] "Hiroshi Senju," *OWN*, p. 53.

Technique: Intersection of Old and New – Transition to a New Style

In the waterfall's movement there is both continuity and change. As the water makes the transition from above to below, following the natural course of gravity, some of the water will continue towards the sea and some will evaporate as mist. Likewise, Senju's choice of materials maintains continuity with tradition but his technique transforms these in new ways.

Senju works in *Nihonga*, or traditional Japanese painting. While the tradition extends back for hundreds of years, the designation *Nihonga* only appeared in the nineteenth-century to contrast art done with traditional materials and techniques from art done with Western means.[13] In Senju's case this includes pigments obtained from natural materials such as crushed shells which are then mixed with animal glue as a binder and are applied to traditional Japanese mulberry paper. However, his use of this traditional art is mostly pragmatic; for Senju natural pigments are simply more brilliant than artificial ones and Japanese paper "just has no equivalent."[14]

Where Senju departs from the tradition is particularly in brushwork, or lack of it. While he does use a brush for the bowling-ball-smooth black ink background, the rest of the painting consists of pouring white paint down the surface from the top and then airbrushing the surface. While surprising, this is not unprecedented in traditional Japanese art where there is a technique called *tarashi-komi* that is exactly this: paint is dripped onto the still-wet surface, allowing for the unexpected or the accidental; the paint itself finishes the painting.[15] What is unique is the extent to which Senju employs this technique to the point where the image is almost entirely composed this way, rather than being a unique highlight. Furthermore, this technique allows for easy repetition yet with infinite variations, something Senju explores by repeatedly painting waterfalls, in some sense creating one continuous waterfall.

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[13] Progressively this distinction between *Nihonga* and *Yōga* (Western painting) took on polemical overtones. See Ellen P. Conant, *Nihonga: Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting, 1868–1968* (Boston: Weatherhill, 1996), p. 14.

[14] "Hiroshi Senju," *Asian Art Newspaper*.

[15] See Fritz van Briessen, *The Way of the Brush: Painting Techniques of China and Japan* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1999), pp. 122–123.

This combination of dripping and blowing mirrors the actual structure of a waterfall, using gravity and air to create an image that blurs the line between mimesis and reality. One sees a literal waterfall of paint that changes into the image of a waterfall more real than typical attempts to paint a "real" waterfall. We feel the impression before us was not so much painted but rather conjured up. As Rachel Baum says, "What Senju has done is perform a primal alchemy, transforming earth, in the form of ground natural pigments, into water and air."[16]

Again, a comparison with an American artist is instructive, in this case Jackson Pollock. Pollock famously challenged the typical Western conception of painting by putting his canvas on the floor and dripping paint. Speaking of his method he said, "I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be *in* the painting."[17] The materials, synthetic paint and canvas, contrast with Senju, but also the overall effect of the dripping technique.[18] Whereas Senju leaves much up to chance by pouring vertically, since the paint can take different paths downward and be absorbed into the wet ink, Pollock, working horizontally, always has control of were his drips are going. Of course, the most outstanding difference is that Senju's painting is representational and Pollock's is totally abstract.

Here Pollock's need for a hard surface is important: in his paintings there is a tension, almost a fight that is visible in the overall rigidity of the final work, a net that restrains any significant form from appearing. In contrast, Senju's waterfall appears effortless, almost weightless, so one is inclined to think, this is due to his *cooperation* with the force of gravity.[19] This then leads one to ask how these materials and the technique are employed to create the image of the waterfall.

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[16] Baum, "Variations on Themes," p. 9.

[17] Jackson Pollock, "Two Statements," in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 571.

[18] But it should be noted that in his continued exploration of the waterfall Senju has made use of synthetic paints with striking results.

[19] However, the distinction between the two should not be rigidly maintained. Pollock himself considered his paintings as transitional to another kind of painting: "I believe the easel picture to be a dying form, and

Composition: Intersection of Shape and Color – Transition to a New Motion

The waterfall, at its most basic form, is an intersection of lines, vertical meets horizontal, which then creates the dynamic space and energy of the waterfall. Likewise, Senju uses his unique materials and technique to form a composition of vibrant, moving space through his use of line. This is evident by looking closer at a particular work (Figure 2). Here, Senju makes use of his monochrome palette to shape four basic lines: two strong, two soft. First, the white foam and the black water form a low horizontal line across the bottom. Second is the waterfall, a white vertical streaked with black that divides the canvas right down the middle. The softer lines are two diagonals appearing at the point where the white of the waterfall mist meets the black void around it. They run up from the lower sides and meet at an imaginary point in the middle of the painting at the top.

These few lines form the basic shapes of the painting, the long, black rectangle at the bottom, the white triangle of foam and mist, the white vertical rectangle of the waterfall itself and the large black rectangle that sits above the waterline and behind the waterfall. The simple shapes, with their contrasting colors, then, create the four planes of the painting, the two planes of white floating behind and before the black. Furthermore, these planes are complemented by the brushwork, the front and back an effortlessly smooth black contrasted with the long, vertical, dripping strokes of the waterfall and the staccato splish-splashes of white that summon the diaphanous mist.

The colors, lines, shapes, and planes, then, combine to generate rhythmic motions of in and out, the outer black planes pressing in on the equally resistant white, and up and down, the triangle of mist ascending to meet in the upper middle of the waterfall which is counterbalanced with the downward movement of the vertical white strip that crashes in an incandescent flash of enlightenment at the point where sea and sky meet. This multi-direction movement absorbs the viewer and, rather than leading the eye to rest and focus on one particular place, lets it constantly shift and

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the tendency of modern feeling is towards the wall picture or mural. I believe the time is not yet ripe for a *full* transition from easel to mural. The pictures I contemplate painting would constitute a halfway state, and an attempt to point out the direction of the future, without arriving there completely." Pollock, "Two Statements," p. 571.

renew itself, neither rising too high nor descending too low, but simply floating.

Senju's waterfalls, then, create a highly interactive visual experience. However, they also go beyond only the visual to involve the whole body. The works, in large part, cannot be separated from the physical spaces they occupy and in which they are encountered. Therefore, one must next consider how Senju's paintings cross the intersection of private and public spaces.

Exhibition Spaces: Intersection of Private and Public – Transition to a New Place

A waterfall is the most dramatic reminder of what the river is doing: moving from a higher to a lower place. It highlights this by being an explicit site of transition. Likewise, the spaces where Senju's works are displayed are places of transition and intersections. On the one hand, there are his paintings on Japanese sliding doors in traditional private settings, such as the Shofuso House outside Philadelphia, and the Daitokuji-Jukoin Betsuin Temple in Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan. Here, the point of transition is the doorway, the meeting between rooms. On the other hand, there are the public works Senju has carried out such as the installations at the Tokyo Grand Hyatt Hotel or the Tokyo Haneda Airport where the works participate in large sites of transition, places meant for the goings and returnings of travel.

Across this spectrum, one can see another way that Senju works at the intersection of tradition and the modern, innovating both. Both the form and the content of his waterfall paintings are flexible enough to work in traditional spaces and sizes, such as the sliding doors, but they fit equally well the modern demand for large artworks, both in the art world of the museum and other public spaces. And his waterfalls paradoxically make traditional settings such as a temple feel strikingly modern and infuse technologically buzzing public spaces with a serene beauty that makes transit through the urban landscape feel at one with the nature it has displaced.

Senju's projects of rooms with surrounding paintings in comparison with the Rothko Chapel is another example of a traditional space modernized. However, as with Pollock, what contrasts with Senju is the absence of any representational content. Mark Rothko's advocates, such as Dominique de Menil, count this as one of his greatest virtues because images "have become intolerable to all of us today…We are cluttered with

images, and only abstract art can bring us to the threshold of the divine…As [Rothko] worked on the Chapel…his colors became darker and darker, as if he were bringing us to the threshold of transcendence, the mystery of the cosmos, the tragic mystery of our perishable condition. The silence of God, the unbearable silence of God."[20]

Perhaps Rothko evokes a sort of negative presence by means of its absence, but it all feels sort of half-baked, "bringing us to the threshold of transcendence," but leaving us there, hat in hand to wait like some Samuel Beckett character, the present broken from a past and facing a tentative future, giving the chapel the chill of a mortuary, a timeless terminus.[21] But if time seems to have been abolished in Rothko, it is taken up by Senju as a key element in his understanding of the creative act.

Creativity: Intersection of Memory and Imagination – Transition to a New Time

Ceaselessly flowing yet remaining the same, the waterfall is often used as a metaphor for the passage of time, the present intersection of a past moving into a future. The theme of time, particularly memory and imagination, is central to Senju's view of art, particularly the way the artist's memory and imagination interacts with the viewer's.

"When I think of the definition of art, I find it is a way to communicate our imagination to other people. In other words, conveying our feeling to someone who wouldn't readily understand us, this is art."[22] Working with his own memories of the waterfalls in nature that he has

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[20] Dominique de Menil, et al. *The Rothko Chapel: Writings on Art and the Threshold of the Divine* (Houston: Rothko Chapel, 2010), pp. 18–22.

[21] Such an extreme statement is not to deny Rothko's brilliance, rather it is meant to highlight Senju's accomplishment. While I believe it is a useful comparison, Rothko's own words are a needed caution: "A picture lives by companionship, expanding and quickening in the eyes of the sensitive observer. It dies by the same token. It is therefore risky to send it out into the world. How often it must be impaired by the eyes of the unfeeling and the cruelty of the impotent." Quoted in de Menil, *The Rothko Chapel*, p. 17.

[22] "Interview: Hiroshi Senju," J-Collabo.com (accessed May 05, 2012, http://j-collabo.com/interviews/hiroshi-senju/).

studied,[23] Senju uses his imagination to give form to his inner vision and feeling in the hope of truly achieving a work that can embody this and present it to the viewer. This is how he measures success: "When you successfully translate your imagination into your art, you have a masterpiece."[24]

When Senju's vision intersects with the vision of the individual viewer through the meeting place of the finished work, the viewer's imagination is activated and points them back to their own memories, completing a relational circle. As quoted already, "Through my works, the audience will think about their roots, as if the painting were a mirror to their memories. This *shared* memory defines art as a power to break any boundaries between people…."[25]

It is the fact that Senju's waterfalls are at the same time figurative and abstract that allows for the fruitful interplay of imagination and memory. Since the paintings are clearly waterfalls, there is something for the viewer to "hold onto" in contrast to Pollack or Rothko. But since they do not aim to depict any precise waterfall in current space and time, say Niagara Falls, the viewer has freedom to make the waterfall more personal. To quote Senju again, "I find art very important, but even more important is to enrich your imagination. I do not go out to the waterfall and paint on site. My waterfall paintings are very much figurative, however, at the same time they are very abstract. Personally, I feel that I may have gone beyond the abstract or the figurative. I am indeed painting a waterfall, but which waterfall am I painting?"[26] It is here that we can perhaps locate Senju's greatest innovation of the modern through his use of tradition.

Art History: Intersection of Figurative and Abstract – Transition to a New Art

The moment before the waterfall, the water is one, united in the river. Afterwards, the waterfall is the same. In between, the water disperses

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[23] While Senju's paintings are clearly not of specific, natural waterfalls, he studies first-hand waterfalls across the globe, from Hawaii to the Amazon, and makes use of photographs for his paintings. See Michaël Amy, "The *Waterfall* Paintings," pp. 15, 20.
[24] "Hiroshi Senju," *OWN*, p. 53.
[25] Ibid., p. 53, italics mine.
[26] "Hiroshi Senju," *Asian Art Newspaper*.

into many particulars, and this cycle is repeated continuously. Art history has also shuttled between the one and the many, the abstract and the figurative, the beautiful and the ugly. But just as the waterfall unites both in its motion, so Senju seems to paint a waterfall totally individual yet universal; a waterfall good enough to satisfy Plato.

How can we account for this new artistic territory Senju is showing, beyond the typical figurative/abstract divide? This analysis thus offers a few suggestions by making use of some theoretical insights from Buddhist aesthetics.[27] For instance, Zen theorist and aesthetician Hisamatsu Shin'ichi asserts that "what is to be called Zen painting or Zen calligraphy is not a painting which has been painted by a Zen monk or a piece of calligraphy containing Zen phrases, but rather a painting or a piece of calligraphy which expresses Zen meaning."[28] But he goes on to clarify that in order to express Zen meaning one must be a "Zen man" and in order to be such a person "Zen-meaning itself must be understood."[29] This is dicey territory. Is it worth asking if Senju is Zen art? How could one even determine if he had "Zen mind"? It is with Hisamatsu's listing of terms that express "the special characteristics of Zen aesthetics" that we can perhaps discuss Senju's paintings as Zen art, not to classify them in a rigid religious category, but because of the richness with which the Zen vocabulary accurately describes what the paintings convey. These include: "free from worldliness" (*datsuzoku-teki*), "serene emptiness" (*kūjaku*), "subtle tranquility" (*yūgeki*), "directness" (*tanteki*), "unrestricted freedom" (*shadatsu*), "no-mind" (*mushin*), and "purity" (*shōjō*).[30]

Senju's works are beautiful and he himself admits having beauty as a goal. Yet this beauty seems to be of a special kind, as if it precedes the distinction between beauty and ugliness. The Japanese aesthetician and folk-craft advocate Yanagi Sōetsu meditated deeply on the possibility of

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[27] I am not arguing there is necessarily an explicit Buddhist influence on Senju's art (although the fact that some of his work is installed in a Buddhist temple is not insignificant), but simply presenting Buddhist insights as a particularly effective means to give theoretical expression to what we may intuit from the art itself.

[28] Shin'ichi Hisamatsu, "On Zen Art," *The Eastern Buddhist* 3/2 (1973), p. 29.

[29] Ibid., p. 30.

[30] Ibid., p. 32–33.

such a beauty at the end of his life in his essay "The Dharma Gate of Beauty." Yanagi discovered the basis for a beauty beyond the duality of beauty/ugliness in the fourth vow of Amida in the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* where it states, "…unless there is no beauty and ugliness among them, I will not attain highest enlightenment."[31] Yanagi argues that achieving this beauty is quite simple: it depends on returning "to the original nature of 'as-it-is-ness,' or 'thusness.'"[32] This is to recognize the beauty naturally inherent in all things. It is only humans that divide between beautiful and ugly:

> Since the nature inherent in all things is prior to beauty and ugliness, if instead of striving for more beauty, everything stays within its original nature, there is no reason why anything should fall into ugliness. The nature of things is such that everything, however clumsy, is beautiful just as it is, even in its clumsiness. And yet, having inflated opinions of themselves, most people endeavor by their own means to work their influence on things.[33]

As long as an artist attempts to force their will on things "everything, both beautiful and ugly, will be tainted by the ugliness of artificiality."[34] Is it this hint of artificiality that hangs about abstract modernist works such as Pollack or Rothko? Do these painters, perhaps, by attempting to go beyond mere representation in art go to the opposite extreme of imposing their will so much on art that there is no room left for the normal, clumsy world? The avant-garde *sho* calligraphy artist Morita Shiryu posited a similar criticism towards Western modern artists, claiming their work "lacked inner force" because it was rooted in a Western view of freedom as license to do anything one wanted. However, according to Morita, "Instead of being termed 'free within' it is more appropriate to describe them as 'selfish.'"[35]

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[31] Quoted in Sōetsu Yanagi, "The Dharma Gate of Beauty," Bernard Leach, trans., *Eastern Buddhist* 13/2 (1979), p. 5.
[32] Ibid., p. 9.
[33] Ibid., p. 11.
[34] Ibid., p. 13.
[35] Quoted in Helen Westgeest, *Zen in the Fifties: Interaction in Art Between*

In contrast to this Western emphasis on the individual genius, even one like Pollock who aimed to work automatically, without intentional consciousness, Morita posits the idea of *inochi*, one's inner, vital life-force. One's capacity for maximalizing *inochi* depends on one's *kyōgai*. While *kyōgai* generally refers to one's societal place, according to Ronald Nakasone, for Morita it has a more specific "spiritual and aesthetic quality, refer[ing] to the particular conditions one finds oneself in at any given time. '*Kyōgai*' also suggests the spiritual maturity of being able to live with equanimity and ease in a transient and interdependent world."[36] Such maturity makes possible artistic expression that is constantly new and fresh since it will come from, according to Morita, "the self-originated *inochi*…which is neither temporally nor spatially definable. No matter whether its method is old or new, it will always present a new world."[37]

Neither temporally nor spatially definable, neither old nor new. Such descriptions fit well what we have observed in Senju's paintings. Can we say the depth of feeling communicated by Senju's waterfalls is an expression of his spiritual maturity, of a life-force that is deep and at peace? This is certainly Senju's understanding of art's purpose. Referring to the great Japanese artist Eitoku Kanō, whose magnificent *Landscape of the Four Seasons* is also in a Daitokuji-Jukoin Temple, Senju comments: "Art conveys a message directly to people in their *deepest being* because it is not expressed in words. What Eitoku Kanō wanted to say was the importance of peace and creation. In art, completely different things can be [sic.] exist close together and be in nature at the same time. That is the message from art and it is also a peace making process."[38] Peace: This may be the best word to summarize Senju's waterfalls which reconcile the perceived aesthetic tensions of objective nature vs. subjective artist, traditional vs. modern styles, the artist's memory and imagination vs. the audience's, public vs. private spaces, and abstract vs. figurative representation.

East and West (Zwolle Amstelveen: Waanders Publishers; Cobra museum voor moderne kunst, 1996), p. 204.

[36] Ronald Y. Nakasone, "Giving Form to the Formless: Yangai Sōetsu and the Pure Land of Beauty," in *Kitabatake Tensei Kyoju Koki Kinen Ronshu* (Kyoto: Nagata, 1998), pp. 10–11.

[37] Shiryū Morita, "To Go Beyond Pollack," *Bokubi* 145 (1965).

[38] "Interview: Hiroshi Senju." J-Collabo.com, emphasis mine.

Conclusion: In Transit

Waterfalls in Japan are significant for ascetics who will sit under the cold water and gain access to the divine world. According to Marrily Baird, "It is by submitting to such extreme behaviors…that the practitioner gains access to the spirit world and the power to mediate the activities of divine spirits in the temporal world."[39] So what does Senju see and then show us based on his repeated meditation under the waterfall? He makes us recall the past, the old and primal, as well as the new, the future and the unknown, completing the circle. The beginning and the end are one. He takes many particulars, each painting, and gives form to the universal, just as a myriad of creeks lead into streams, into the river and into the ocean. But it would be a mistake to think Senju has arrived, has exhausted the waterfall, as if there ever was such a point to reach in the first place. His recent "Day Fall/Night Fall" series develops the waterfall subject into even more profound permutations, using fluorescent paint that transforms at night under black light. What was said of Bashō can be said of Senju: "His journey is a pilgrimage; it is a journey into the interior of the self as much as a travelogue, a vision quest that concludes in insight. But there is no conclusion. The journey itself is home."[40]

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[39] Merrily Baird, *Symbols of Japan: Thematic Motifs in Art and Design* (New York: Rizzoli, 2001), p. 43.
[40] Sam Hamill, quoted in Peter Turchi, *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2004), p. 22.

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