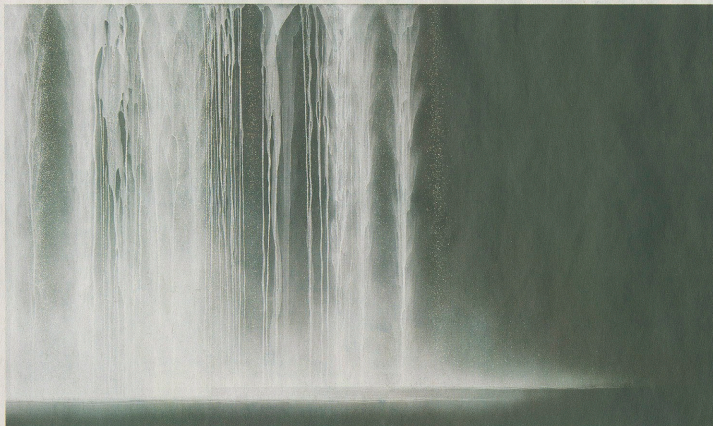


SPONSORED SUPPLEMENT: SUNDARAM TAGORE GALLERY

Ancient style, modernist

Waterfall paintings by Japanese artist Hiroshi Senju are on display at Sundaram Tagore Gallery.



Japanese painter uses traditional techniques in his masterpieces

One of Japan's most celebrated contemporary artists, Hiroshi Senju, returns to Hong Kong with his second solo exhibition at Sundaram Tagore Gallery entitled "Day Falls/Night Falls" from now until June 9.

Senju is best known for his waterfall and cliff paintings that combine abstract minimalism with ancient techniques unique to Japan. For this show, the New York-based artist uses fluorescent pigments to create waterfall images. While the paintings are black and white in daylight, under ultraviolet light they turn an arresting electric blue.

He is one of the few contemporary masters of the thousand-year-old *Nihonga* style of painting. Senju typically uses mineral pigments made from ground stone, shell and corals combined with animal-hide glue to create intense colours, although for this show he has used fluorescent pigments.

The translucent paint is then delicately poured onto mulberry paper mounted on board, which has the strength of canvas. The end result is waterfalls that not only evoke a sense of calm, but also depict the appearance of rushing water along with the sound, smell and feel.

was not what I wanted to do. The more I painted, the closer I felt to the two most important elements on the earth - gravity and water. And I thought: why don't you try to use gravity, to pour down the paint from the top?" Since then, Senju has been perfecting his waterfalls. He began using fluorescent pigments by chance in 2007. The present exhibition marks his return to the dramatic use of these paints.

"I believe my work is not only a visual art. I think paintings should stimulate all the five senses, including the sense of hearing, taste, smell and touch," Senju explained in an interview with *OWN Magazine* in 2007. "In a masterpiece, you can hear the water flowing, smell the air and even feel the temperature. You can experience the atmosphere of the painting physically and mentally. I think my paintings have a universal power, and if I can share that power with people around the world, it absolutely completes my mission as a painter."

In a foreword for the book *Hiroshi Senju*, published in 2010 by Milyo's Hanaeda Airport gallery owner Sundaram Tagore explained: "Western artists from the Impressionists onward have represented works in a series; however, their approach to painting has traditionally been retinal - a desire to reproduce what the eye can see. Senju's waterfall series, in contrast, is created from an inner vision. His waterfall paintings aren't simply an illusionistic representation of a particular fall, but a conceptual form."

Born in Tokyo in 1958, Senju completed his PhD in Fine Art from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. He was the first Japanese painter to win an award at the Venice Biennale.

This recognition catapulted Senju to international fame. He was invited to be the art director for Tokyo's Hanaeda Airport Terminal 2 in 2004 and curator of the Gucci 90th anniversary exhibition in Kyoto in 2011.

In October the same year, the Hiroshi Senju Museum Karuzawa opened in Karuzawa, Japan. Designed by architect Ryuzo Nishizawa, the museum is an open space in lush surroundings that is dedicated to showing about 100 of the artist's works spanning 1978 to 2011.

Senju at present divides his time between painting in New York and teaching at Kyoto University of Art and Design, where he is president of the art and design department.

Sundaram Tagore Gallery on Hollywood Road is open to visitors seven days a week. Tomorrow and Friday from 9am to noon, the gallery will host a special viewing for collectors who are in Hong Kong attending Art Basel. Collectors can enjoy a cup of coffee, as they take in the brand-new installation of fluorescent waterfall paintings and byobus, or multipanel folding screens. The gallery has been specially fitted with ultraviolet lights to accommodate these new works.



Senju works in the thousand-year-old *Nihonga* style of painting.

Senju was first inspired by waterfalls in the mid-1990s, when he visited Hawaii and led to his receiving an Honourable Mention Award at the Venice Biennale in 1995. "I wanted to paint something that will not be old-fashioned after 1,000 years, a timeless landscape," he told *Asian Art News* in 2006. "I wanted to relate to something of the earth that we're living on, like volcanic activities." At the same time, Senju intended his waterfall paintings to be contemporary.

At first, Senju focused on lava-flow landscapes but, when he returned home, he could not forget about the waterfalls. The next challenge was figuring out to depict them two-dimensionally.

"I started painting by brush," Senju said. "It didn't really work the way I wanted it to. It was more like the Hudson River School or the work of 19th-century European artists, which

PROMOTING DIALOGUE

Sundaram Tagore Gallery was established in 2000 by Sundaram Tagore, an Indian-born art historian and gallerist who divides his time between New York, Hong Kong and Singapore. A descendant of the influential poet and Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore, he promotes East-West dialogue through his contributions to exhibitions and his own galleries.

A candidate for a doctorate of philosophy in modern history from Oxford University, Tagore has written for art publications and advised or worked with international arts organisations, such as The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the United Nations.

Tagore is also a filmmaker, whose award-winning documentary, *The Poetics of Color: Natvar Bhaskar: An Artist's Journey* premiered at New York's MIAC Film Festival in 2010. He is working on another feature-length documentary about architect Louis Kahn's National Assembly complex in Bangladesh.

The gallery started out in SoHo, New York before moving to Chelsea in 2005. Expansion to Los Angeles and Hong Kong followed three years later. Last year, Tagore opened the second New York location on the prestigious Madison Avenue, just steps away from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The same year, he also opened a gallery in Singapore at the new Gillman Barracks' arts complex.

The gallery's mission is to examine the exchange of ideas between Western and non-Western cultures through exhibitions and hosting non-profit events. Art Sundaram Tagore is well positioned as a leader in straddling the worlds of the developing Eastern and established Western contemporary art markets.

With artists from India, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Mexico, Europe and America, the gallery is considered a pioneer in the field of cross-cultural exchange that goes beyond visual art and includes poetry, literature, performance art, film and music.

SUNDARAM TAGORE HONG KONG

HIROSHI SENJU

DAY FALLS/NIGHT FALLS • NEW FLUORESCENT PAINTINGS



sundaram tagore gallery
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ON VIEW THROUGH JUNE 9, 2013

57-59 Hollywood Road, Central, Hong Kong • +852 2581 9878 • www.sundaramtagore.com

Falling Water, 2013, acrylic and fluorescent pigments on Japanese mulberry paper, 63.8 x 51.3 inches