

affixed strips of paper to the rear of the canvas that extend them across regions where they are hidden. The difficulty one has parsing the works is part and parcel of why we keep looking at them. It took me a while to understand *Four Colors*, 2012, too—perhaps in part because of the canny title. It turns out that Prekop slathered black paint on a canvas, flipped the canvas over and restretched it, and used the amorphous stain that appeared on the opposite side as the basis for a composition in pastel hues, as though a call and response to the Rorschach that occasioned it.

Untitled Collage (with Black Ground), 2012, is marginally more forthcoming: Prekop attached a large piece of paper to the rear of the canvas and excavated a semicircle that rotates away from the sheet, with the cutout assuming a void. The work's staging of positive and negative space is also present elsewhere, due to consequences of layering and choices of palette. *Two Colors*, 2012, a case in point, quivers with the intense interplay of equally high-pitched yellow and white. Since the yellow paint trails off—it is intermittently thick and thin—it appears, in some places, to mix with the white. Neither color can therefore serve as stable figure against which to posit a ground. Which is to suggest that Prekop's sensitivity to the aleatory (as coincident with and as a precondition for the contingency of his audience's perceptual experience) keeps his experiments from becoming pedantic exercises—rote compositions coming together as a signature style—or a kind of anesthetized formalism. They bristle with the prospect of emergence and effacement, and take risks in the hopes of reward.

—Suzanne Hudson

Hiroshi Senju

SUNDARAM TAGORE GALLERY

The exquisite works in Hiroshi Senju's series "Cliffs," 2012—eleven mixed-media paintings, one a triptych, all on mulberry paper mounted on board—appear to illustrate Lao-tzu's idea of Tao as a sort of universal flow or elemental flux informing all things. Yet they also bear an intriguing affinity with two strands of nineteenth-century Romantic landscape painting: the work of the English painter J. M. W. Turner and that of the German painter Caspar David Friedrich. The trace of Turner is evident in Senju's depiction of light, his embrace of surging, mystical luminosity. (In some works, this light dominates; in others, it competes with an ominous, intimidating blackness, as though Senju were struggling to balance forces while acknowledging their natural differences.) Friedrich's work is called to mind by Senju's exquisite sense of detail, specifically when he renders cliff-side trees. (One thinks of Friedrich's *Chalk Cliffs on Rugen*, 1818–19.) Thomas Cole's *Scene from Byron's "Manfred,"* 1833, may be a further Romantic-era touchstone. Senju's work similarly evokes extreme, terrifying contrasts, not only between light and dark, but between organic growth and inorganic matter, the vital and the barren. Cole's painting is also noteworthy because it may have been based on a Catskill mountain landscape, as Senju's probably is, at least in part. (He works in Pleasantville, New York.)

In all these works, we're dealing with the sublime—both the mathematical as well as the dynamical sublime, in Kant's sense of those terms—"aspiring" to become numinous. As Kant writes, the sublime "forces us, subjectively, to *think* nature itself in its totality as a presentation of something supersensible, without being able *objectively* to arrive at this presentation." The sublime suggests the "subjective purposiveness of our mind in the employment of the Imagination for its supersensible destination." However empirically objective and detailed Senju's description of the naturally given may be, he is reaching beyond nature, as it were, to imaginatively feel its supersensible totality, which,



paradoxically, is peculiarly objectified in his calm, intimate handling of light and dark.

Senju's paintings are dramatic and touching at once, uplifting and unsettling, like nature itself. In some works, we look up at an overwhelming cliff. In others, we seem to be standing on its edge. In still others, we seem to be falling off a cliff, as though caught in an avalanche—an avalanche of cascading light and solid darkness, as well as of rock and earth. A few depict a kind of apocalyptic radiance, a sort of explosion of light that fails to blot out the blackness entirely. All suggest how precarious our existence is, especially when we aspire to unreachable heights. We try to rise above the void, but all we can do is face it unflinchingly, perceive it without being overawed by it, devote ourselves to it without being diminished by it, and master it by making it memorable.

—Donald Kuspit

Hiroshi Senju, *Cliff*, 2012, natural and acrylic pigment on Japanese mulberry paper, 6' 4 1/4" x 12' 9 1/8". From the series "Cliffs," 2012.

Willie Doherty

ALEXANDER AND BONIN

Every city is a palimpsest of its own history, each urban territory an accumulation of linguistic and visual signs that constitute the representation of place. Since the 1980s, Willie Doherty's practice has addressed the complex significations of Derry, a city in Northern Ireland that was at the nexus of the social unrest and violence associated with the "Troubles"—the conflict between Protestant unionist and the Catholic nationalist communities between the '60s and the '90s. This included the infamous Bloody Sunday incident of 1972—which the artist witnessed firsthand as a twelve-year-old (he was born and raised in the city, and it served as his base until 2010). Eschewing the neutral, objective reportage of normative models of documentary, and influenced by the interrogation of photographic language found within certain Conceptual-art practices, Doherty began, early on, superimposing text over image as a means of investigating the relationship between the denotation of a specific place, and what might be described as a poetic nonspecificity. The signification of the photographic image is recoded by text, and, conversely, language is inflected by the pictorial field. This exhibition, "One Place Twice and Photo/Text/85/92," comprised black-and-white works from the '80s and '90s that had not been previously exhibited in New York, as well as four color works from the 2010 series "OUT OF BODY."

Fixed Parameter, 1989, suggests a boundary or edge of the city: In the foreground, we see a pile of rubble and other detritus strewn across an otherwise vacant lot, framed by a brick building on the left, and a wall with barbed wire on the right; in the far background, beyond a field of grass and across a river, we can just make out a cluster of