

Cascading Time

By Nicolette Wong

It would be no exaggeration to call the works of Hiroshi Senju 'out of this world'. In his first solo show in Hong Kong at Sundaram Tagore Gallery, the celebrated Japanese artist reveals a new dimension to his inner vision. Transcendence flows through his sublime waterfalls and fills the landscapes of canyons and cliffs, in a series of new works that are unveiled especially for the local audience.

In the same vein as the waterfalls, the cliff and canyons are created with a spontaneous pouring of mineral pigments onto paper. The composition reveals itself through the creases and wrinkles of the paper, which Senju extends and explores by applying dark pigments upon a platinum-colored background. Beyond the calls of the Amazon, the glistening cliffs encompass the memories of humanity: nature as seen and transformed through history, recreated in the present through art, beckoning to unknown witnesses in an infinite future. The forests are not a new territory but another focal point of universality in Senju's works: the sense of time and space is reinvented and ingrained in the viewer's mind, before it reverberates along an undefinable track.

The artist's interiority shows through the indelible cliffs, as Senju takes his audience on a trip that breaks all confines of the representational. In the rivulets of paints runs the blurring of land and skyline, from which the artist's imagination pours like currents down the canyons—the metaphor of waterfalls is ever present. The rocks, vivid and stirring in their angular shapes, form a vast universe whose essence is condensed in fine, intricately layered pigments. The compositions

background: Hiroshi Senju at the Grand Hyatt Hotel Tokyo

are astonishing as they are controlled: the viewers are dazzled by the collapse of the distinction between nature and artistic creations. In these cliff paintings Senju again shows the mastery of his craft: the tradition of *Nihonga* style meets abstract expressionism in quiet but provocative dynamic.

Much has been written about Senju's waterfalls: their conceptual form, the sensory experience of the viewers in witnessing their beauty and the artist's process of re-creation. For his solo show in Hong Kong, Senju created a new series of black-and-white waterfalls. The glowing white streams fall and stir white mists that rise—faintly at times, then gaining momentum as the series unfold—across the tranquil pools of water at the bottom of the paintings. The movements are both visceral and surreal, speaking to every fragmented memory in the viewers of the primal and invisible forces of the world. The energy is naturalistic in its clarity, yet it never loses the power of its conceptual presence.

The most evocative element of Senju's new series is perhaps the invitation to enter the waterfalls—to take the passage between the falling waters into an imaginary, unknown universe that lies beyond what meets the eyes. The black backdrop is a realm the viewers are yet to discover, as Senju carries on his aesthetic exploration and extends his subjects. For art lovers in Hong Kong, *Out of Nature: Cliffs and Falling Water* is a wonderful glimpse into the vision and aesthetics of the internationally acclaimed artist. The flowing streams are only a start for the breakdown of existential, artistic boundaries.

Until November 10
Sundaram Tagore Gallery