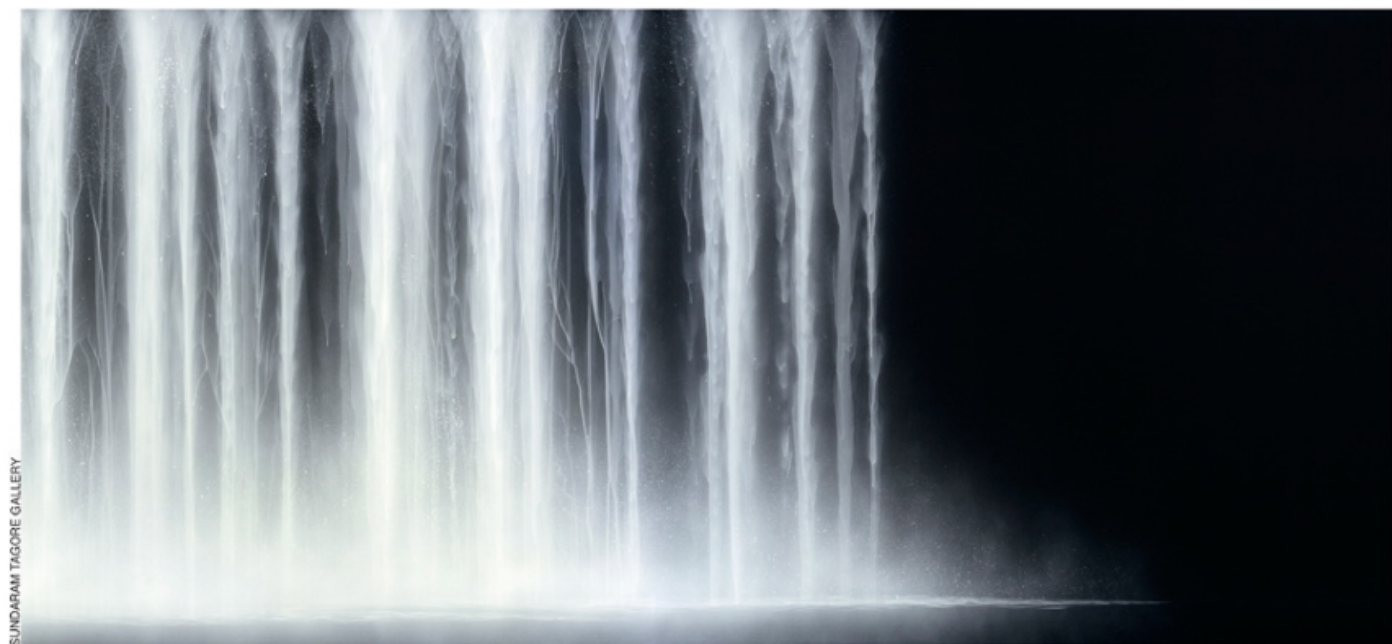


Preview

Hiroshi Senju



SUNDARAM TAGORE GALLERY

Day Falls/ Night Falls I (detail)

Sundaram Tagore
Starts Wednesday 23

Aesthetically, when the East meets West seamlessly, the results can be staggering. Such is the case for Japanese artist Hiroshi Senju, though the sheer size of his paintings cannot be discounted.

Senju's waterfall paintings have been renowned for years. In 1995, he became the first Asian artist to receive an individual award at the Venice Biennale, propelling him to become one of Japan's most celebrated contemporary artists.

His waterfalls are not only immensely beautiful creations; they follow closely the Japanese tradition of "Nihonga". The term literally means "Japanese paintings," with materials in the practice comprising of rice paper and natural pigments. Senju has modernised the practice by using fluorescent and sometimes even platinum pigments, along with

airbrushes for effect. Yet traditional elements remain – rice paper, pigments ground from oyster shell, and animal-hide glue.

Capturing the powerful beauty of nature is central to Senju's work, yet the strong sense of personal inspiration that shines through his art practice will no doubt also call forth comparisons to the abstract expressionists, despite the fact that Senju is, and has always been, a representational painter.

"When I tried to sketch the waterfalls, I found it impossible," says Senju on the phone from his home in New York. "But then I thought, why don't I just pour the paint from the top? And when I do that, there's the power of a waterfall precisely because of the pigments falling from the top of the panel. It is collaboration with natural forces, and that becomes an element of the painting."

Though Senju's paintings have made their way here on various occasions, this will be his first solo show in Hong Kong. For the folks at Sundaram Tagore, it's their biggest exhibition of the year, as Senju will be showing 16 signature waterfall works and four paintings from a new rocks and cliffs series.

"I went up mountains and cliffs to find beautiful waterfalls," explains Senju of his various quests to Argentina, Brazil, and Japan in search of inspiration. "When I couldn't find the waterfall that I was wishing for, I was disappointed. Going down I realised, my life is all about going up and down these cliffs... and I've been using [the] waterfall as my ultimate being. Looking for the waterfalls, it symbolises going up and down and finding the meaning in everyday life."
Bourree Lam

