

# OWN<sub>No.1</sub>

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# No.1

千住博

## Hiroshi Senju,

one of the world's most revered and internationally acclaimed contemporary artists, is a painter with divinity. His aesthetics celebrate the power of nature. He has pioneered and redefined a new era of Japanese painting. His vision is modern created with a thousand year old Japanese traditional method of painting. He makes his own paint with pigments derived from natural materials such as seashells, minerals and corals in a medium of animal-hide glue. This bestows bold meaning to the nature of his painting. In this OWN exclusive interview, Hiroshi Senju discusses his art, defining the deep thoughts behind his masterpieces.

In the following spread, we are treated to a preview of the new Waterfalls piece Hiroshi Senju created for the Shofuso house in Philadelphia.











**As a creator, what message would you like to deliver through your works and what is the never-ending approach that you apply to your artwork?**

Art is a tool to express your imagination and what your heart wishes to communicate. When I work on my pieces, I always think about how to express my message through my painting to be heard and felt by its audience. The most important point is to communicate to the audience the message that I yell through my painting. Share the beauty of art to help us realize we are human beings, exceeding the boundaries of eras, races, borders and ideas. I would like to make people as human beings happy, powerful, and feel confident through my works. I define art as a peace making that connects people in every way. Without the thoughts, art would be considered just as a game or play. Art has been with us since our earliest ancestors. Art still exists because it is necessary for us to live. If it were just a game or play, it would be extinguished already. When you successfully translate your imagination into your art, you have a masterpiece. A masterpiece is a work that functions as art and beauty, and impacts the senses of human beings.

**You have transferred your working base to New York from Japan. How has this move influenced your creation and creativity?**

I moved to the US 13 years ago. The influence of living and working here in New York has been unbelievably huge. We can never ignore this city in terms of any kind of art. New York is an artistic space. There are so many people who have different background, races, religions, languages, and thoughts. Surrounded by the mixtures of people, your true identity shines brightly because each person inspires each other to bring out their greatness. Living and working in this environment helps me to achieve the successful input of my imagination to my art and realize the importance of communication.

**You have several works that were inspired by nature such as waterfalls, clouds, and water.**

**How do you seek and determine the theme in your paintings?**

I would like to paint the motif that has universal appeal to people. I would like people to feel close to my paintings. I painted the series with a theme of forest, observing the one in my neighborhood in Westchester, NY. But for some audience, the forest would look like the one in Europe, or the one behind their house where they grew up. This is the beauty of nature, and having nature as a theme for my paintings because everybody can relate to it in some way. 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 and we are human beings.

The opportunity to find a new theme is quite interesting. It happens spontaneously without any expectation. It could come to me coincidentally or maybe you could call it magically. It is so sudden that I might lose the chance to fully get the theme. However, I believe that I have eyes as radar to capture the new theme or discover the new style in expression. I believe there is a goddess who throws the chance to every one of us. The question is "Will you be able to catch it?"

**One of your representative works is a series of painting with a theme of Waterfalls, as it was awarded for excellence at the 1995 Venice Biennale. Could you share the working process of the piece to express your dynamic interpretation of waterfalls?**

I would drop the paints using a grass, or would blow the paint with spray, and of course, I use any kinds of brushes that I have. I would take whatever methods or tools to express my waterfalls. 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.

**Could you talk about your thoughts for your working space, the atelier?**

I need to have a very comfortable atmosphere for my atelier. I am not talking about the luxuries in the space. This is a space where I create and think as an artist. I come here every morning at 7:30 am until 8 or 9:00 pm and work constantly on my paintings. I literally grow up in this space every day. The place has to be organized at all times. I carefully set the interior as well, because it is one of the factors determining the atmosphere of the space. I think the organization of the room has a big influence on coming up with ideas or in creativity. In other words, the organized and cleaned room helps your clear perspective in your working process, and an unorganized room does the opposite.

**If you were granted a chance to design clothing, how would you like to execute your creativity into it?**

I have designed a Kimono, which is traditional Japanese clothing, with my painting series of waterfalls. The impact of the Kimono was quite impressive, having such a huge aura around it. The kimono itself almost seemed like a goddess of waterfalls. I absolutely loved it, and I would love to be involved in another project like that.

**How would you define your ideal woman?**

I find a woman who has a mannish side and knows how to show her personality and greatness very attractive. Man is so

different from woman physically, sexually, and mentally. I consider a woman or even a man who crossover very close to the representation of a complete human. An androgenous person could be the ultimate figure of the human being.

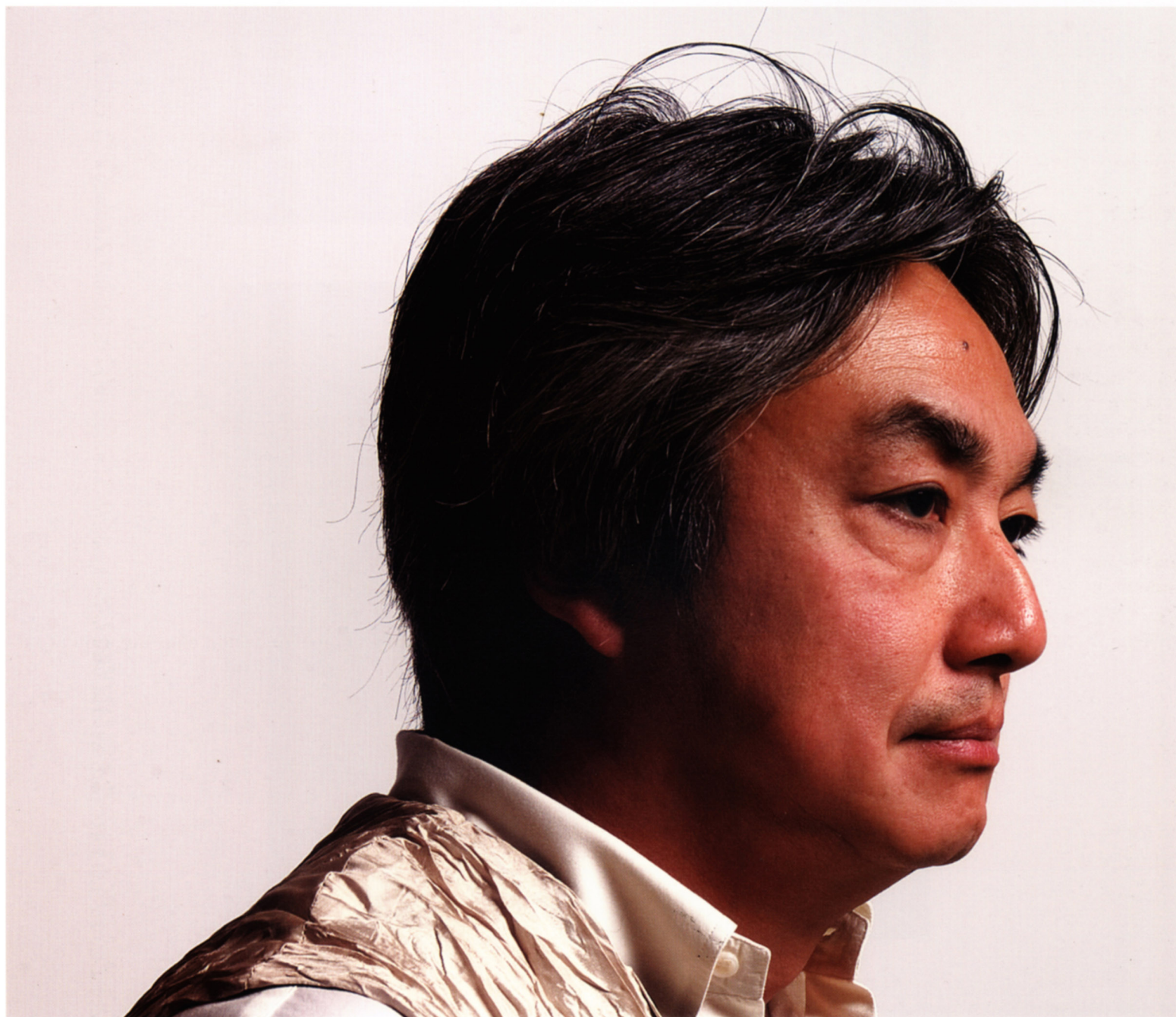
**Lastly, could you define the works by Hiroshi Senju?**

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. 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.

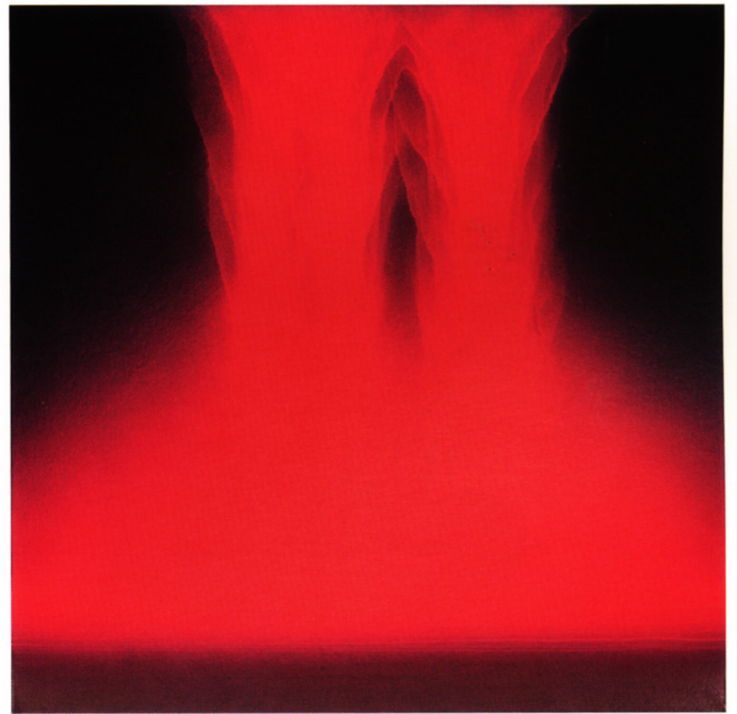
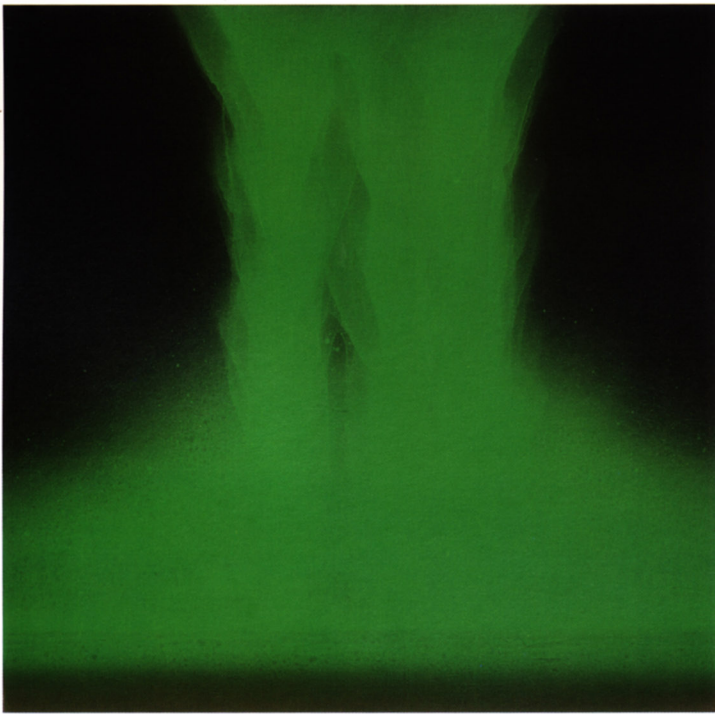
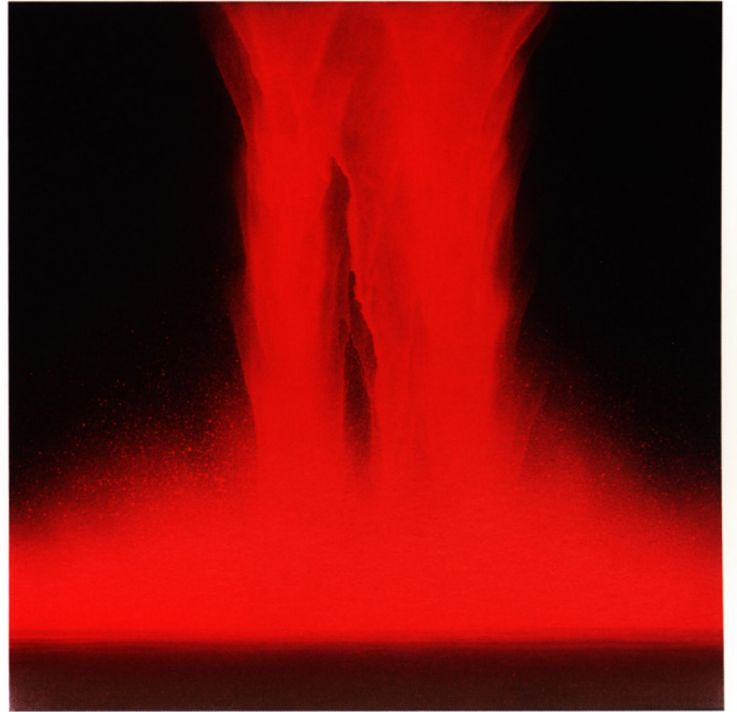
**Hiroshi Senju**

Born 1958 in Tokyo, Japan. He completed a PhD Program in Fine Arts at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music and has held numerous private exhibitions in museums internationally. In 1995, he became the first Asian artist to receive an award for excellence at the Venice Biennale for the work “The Fall”. Representative works include the “Fusuma” paintings exhibited at Daitokuji-Jukoin-Betsuin and Murals of the Haneda Airport Terminal 2 in Japan. In the winter of 2006, a new mural will be presented at Philadelphia’s historic Japanese house and garden, “Shofuso”.

<http://www.hiroshisenju.com/>







Color Falls 1-4 by HIROSHI SENJU