



Mural Project

HIROSHI SENJU WILL COMPLETE WORK ON GIFT OF NEW MURALS TO “SHOFUSO” IN 2006-- PHILADELPHIA’S HISTORIC JAPANESE HOUSE AND GARDEN (UPDATE)

Installation planned for May 2007

Philadelphia, PA (July 2005)
.....Hiroshi Senju, one of Japan’s most revered and internationally acclaimed contemporary artists, will complete his work in December of 2006 on a set of 27 syohekiga murals to be donated to Shofuso (Pine Breeze Villa), the historic Japanese House and Garden located on the grounds of the Horticultural Center in Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park. Shofuso is the only house of its kind outside of Japan and is considered to be an architectural and artistic masterpiece.



Jukoin-Ito-Betsuin, Japan / 2003

Hiroshi Senju’s gift of these decorative murals – to be painted on paper sliding doors (fusuma) and a centerpiece alcove wall -- will complete the restoration of the unique shoin-zukuri house, handcrafted in 17th century style, to its original beauty. The promised gift was announced by Mr. Senju at the 50th anniversary celebration of Shofuso in June 2004. The murals are expected to be completed in December of 2006 and will be exhibited in Yamatane Museum from December 2, 2006 to January 21, 2007 in Tokyo, Japan. They will be then transported to Shofuso, framed into “fusuma” and “tokonoma”, and shown to the public in April of 2007.

Mr. Senju is renowned for his paintings of “Waterfall” that were awarded an Honorable Mention at the 1995 Venice Biennale. He was recognized as one of the artists who can lead and contribute to the new trends for the next generation of art. His unique combination of modernism expressed through an ancient method of Japanese painting first attracted the eyes of the New York art world when his paintings of volcanic lava and seawater in Hawaii (“Flat Water”) were chosen for the cover of Gallery Guide magazine in 1993. He was also one of the artists who started post- 9/11 art space in New York City, “Tribeca Temporary.” His atelier became an oasis for collaboration by local artists in “ground zero” to share their views and restore the downtown community through art.

In designing and executing the new Philadelphia murals, Mr. Senju is honoring Shofuso with the ancient Japanese tradition of a master painter giving a splendid gift to the community. He is further honoring Shofuso by donating all copyrights from sales of reproductions of the mural artworks to support the preservation of the Japanese House and Garden.

“We are extremely grateful to Mr. Senju for this most generous gift,” said Yuichi Ozawa, President of the Friends of the Japanese House and Garden (FJHG), who have maintained Shofuso since 1982. “This is an amazing contribution to us, to the people of Philadelphia, and to the art world.” (See www.shofuso.com.)

Yuichi noted that the FJHG are currently raising funds to frame his murals in fusuma and prepare Shofuso for the mural installation at an estimated cost of about \$250,000. Additional funds of \$2.5 million are being raised for an endowment for the House and the Garden and for Shofuso Culture Center to be built on the adjacent ground.

The FJHG are also grateful to Mr. Morihiro Ogawa, Special Consultant, Department of Arms and Armor, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New



Jukoin-Ito-Betsuin, Japan / 2003

York City, who arranged for the introduction of Shofuso to Hiroshi Senju and the dedication of the murals.

The original murals in Shofuso were painted by Mr. Kai Higashiyama, one of the most important Japanese painters of the 20th century. These were damaged due to vandalism and replaced with plain paper during the major restoration project in 1976.

Hiroshi Senju is currently professor and vice president of Kyoto University of Art and Design and director of the University's International Research Center for the Arts. Born in Tokyo in 1958, he holds graduate degrees from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. He maintains studios in both Tokyo and, since 1992, in New York.

Mr. Senju expresses modernism created with a thousand-year-old painting technique that is unique to Japan. He combines pigments derived from natural materials – minerals, seashells and corals – in a medium of animal-hide glue, then applies this “paint” to special hand-screened Japanese rice paper. In 2003 he completed 77 fusuma murals, called by some in the art world “the murals of the century,” at the Annex of Daitokuji-Jyukoin, one of the most prestigious Zen Buddhism temples in Japan (Please see the two photos shown.). In November of 2004 he completed the dramatic murals for Tokyo International Airport's Terminal 2 in Haneda. (Visit www.hiroshisenju.com.)

Shofuso, a gift of good will and peace from the people of Japan to the United States, opened to the public in June 1954 in a special exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, then was moved to Philadelphia in 1958. After falling into disrepair over the years, it was restored as a gift again from the people of Japan, for the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration. The City of Philadelphia officially promised to care for Shofuso ever after, and works closely with the Friends of the Japanese House and Garden to ensure its promise is being kept.

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