

Contemporary Aesthetics

Volume 15 (2017)

1-1-2017

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Imaginative Intersections: Engaging Aesthetic Experience at the Shofuso Japanese House

Peter L. Doebler

Abstract^[1]

This essay explores how the imagination creates dynamic aesthetic experiences by negotiating the intersection of opposites. The goal is to enrich our thinking about the relation of nature and art within a more comprehensive environmental aesthetics. I focus on a single example, the intersections created by the particular experience of space and time in the paintings of Hiroshi Senju, at the Shofuso Japanese House in Philadelphia. First, I provide a brief introduction to Senju and the work at Shofuso. Next, building on perspectives from within environmental aesthetics and Senju's own writings, I sketch out a framework for thinking about the imagination. Finally, I examine how this creates meaningful intersections in the experience of space and time at Shofuso, drawing on the work of the philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō.

Key Words

environmental aesthetics, imagination, installation art, Japanese aesthetics, Hiroshi Senju, Watsuji Tetsurō

1. Introduction

The waterfall paintings of the contemporary Japanese artist Hiroshi Senju are enigmatic because they create sound, but the sound is silence. They generate movement, but the movement is stillness. (Fig. 1) Like champagne, they simultaneously refresh and intoxicate, stimulate and subdue with a feeling of weightlessness. What is this paradoxical effect the paintings evoke? What sort of activity does it prompt in us, the viewers?



Figure 1: Hiroshi Senju, *Imagination of Dynamics*, 2007, acrylics on hemp paper.

Philadelphia, Shofuso Japanese House. Photo by Peter Doebler, 06/04/14. Reproduced with permission from the Shofuso Japanese House.

One suggestive approach to answering such questions is hinted at by Ronald Hepburn in his essay, "Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination." Hepburn's concern is articulating how what he terms the "metaphysical imagination" integrates and gives a certain quality to the "overall experience of a sense of nature."^[2] He intriguingly notes that the co-presence of opposites in the experience of nature, such as life and stillness, or tranquility and vitality, "constitutes a fundamental, and too little recognized, key concept for aesthetic theory."^[3] In this essay, I will attempt to recognize this concept a little more, for I believe it can provide a useful way not only to reflect on a complex experience of nature but to enrich our thinking about the relation of nature and art within a more comprehensive environmental aesthetics.

One way we could label the concept Hepburn gestures towards is with the word 'intersection,' using it to denote a place where opposites come together, cross, and for a moment, commune. I want to suggest that such intersections are central to any experience of rich aesthetic engagement and that the imagination is key to creating and sustaining them. This would include the intersection of descriptive features of a single phenomenon, such as "life and stillness" cited by Hepburn and visible in Senju's paintings, but could also include other relationships, such as the intersection of past and future in time, outer and inner in space, the artist and audience, or nature and art. We can effectively see the orchestration of these different kinds of intersections in a particular work by Senju, his installation at the Shofuso Japanese House in Philadelphia's West Fairmont Park. (Fig. 2)



Figure 2: Yoshimura Junzo, Shofuso Japanese House, 1954. Philadelphia, West Fairmont Park. Photo by Peter Doebler, 06/04/14.

In what follows, I will focus on the intersections created by the particular experience of space and time at Shofuso and consider the role imagination plays in grasping these intersections. In order to do this, I will first provide a brief introduction to Senju and the work at Shofuso. Then, building on the work of select perspectives from within environmental aesthetics and Senju's own writings, I will sketch out a framework for thinking about the imagination. Then I will look at how this creates meaningful intersections in the experience of space and time at Shofuso.

2. Meeting Senju and Shofuso

A touchstone for Senju's artistic vision is his *Flatwater* series from 1991, which depicts the new coastline in Hawai'i formed by the eruption of the Kilauea Volcano's lava flow into the ocean. Senju notes that the experience opened new artistic horizons for him. "In an instant, I understood that if I could paint this scene I could possibly express time, the universe, earth, as well as white space and *ma* [an interval]. In fact, ever since then I have constantly pursued my artwork in order to capture that setting."^[4] This comment provides an opening for understanding Senju's subsequent work, which most often focuses on elemental phenomena in nature that are bracketed out from extraneous contextual features that would connect the work to a particular, known place and time. Such phenomena include the ocean, the desert, waterfalls, cliffs, and the sky.

The breakout point in Senju's career was receiving the Honorable Mention prize at the 46th Venice Biennale in 1995. The prize was for his massive work, *The Fall*, one of the earliest iterations of what has become a consistent subject of his work up to the present, indeed the subject Senju is perhaps best known for.^[5] Composing his waterfalls by pouring paint down the surface from the top and then airbrushing, Senju has created waterfalls of various sizes and in various mediums, from hand-ground mineral pigments to fluorescent paint that glows an ethereal blue under black light. One notable feature of Senju's series of waterfalls is that they often go beyond the boundaries of art galleries or museums. Senju has carried out commissions for numerous installations in both public and private settings, including the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Tokyo (2001), the Tokyo Haneda Airport (2004), the Daitokuji Temple in Kyoto (2005), and the Shofuso Japanese House in Philadelphia (2007). Here I will focus on Shofuso.^[6]

The Shofuso Japanese House was commissioned for an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and displayed there from 1954 to 1955. Designed by the architect Yoshimura Junzō (1908–1997) in Japan before being disassembled and shipped to America, it is a premier example of seventeenth-century, *shoin*-style house architecture, a type of building typically built for scholars, warriors, or abbots.^[7] In 1956 it was relocated to its current location in Philadelphia's West Fairmont Park. Tragically, the original paintings done by Higashiyama Kaii (1908–99) were destroyed by vandals in 1974, and the sliding doors simply covered in white paper until Senju was commissioned to make new paintings in 2004. Installed in 2007, there are twenty screens on traditional Japanese sliding doors (fusuma) laid

out in two rooms.[8] Senju named the larger room, "Imagination of Dynamics" (Fig. 1), and the smaller room, "Imagination of Silence" (Fig. 3).[9]



Figure 3: Hiroshi Senju, *Imagination of Silence*, 2007, acrylics on hemp paper. Philadelphia, Shofuso Japanese House. Photo by Peter Doebler, 06/04/14. Reproduced with permission from the Shofuso Japanese House.

3. Exploring the imagination

The titles Senju gave to the two rooms at Shofuso indicate the importance he attaches to the role of the imagination in the creation and experience of art. "When I think of the definition of art, I find it is a way to communicate our imagination to other people. In other words, conveying our feeling to someone who wouldn't readily understand us, this is art."^[10] Working with his own memories of the waterfalls in nature that he has studied,^[11] Senju uses his imagination to give form to his inner vision and feeling in the hope of truly achieving a work that can embody this and present it to the viewer. This is how he measures success: "When you successfully translate your imagination into your art, you have a masterpiece."^[12] When Senju's vision intersects with the vision of the individual viewer through the meeting place of the finished work, the viewer's imagination is then activated and points the viewer back to his or her own memories, completing a relational circle. "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...."^[13]

Senju's comments on the operation of the imagination are poetic but they echo Richard Kearney's more philosophical analysis of the imagination. In his *The Wake of Imagination*, Kearney notes how the imagination has three creative capacities. First is "testimonial," drawing on memory in order to represent the past. The next capacity is "empathetic," enabling the self to relate to others by envisioning other ways of being. Finally, there is "critical-utopian," provoking possibilities for ways of reordering the world in the future.^[14] But rather than being distinct capacities, these connect to and even build on one another. Both Senju and Kearney identify a process that involves individual self-reflection that, in turn, connects with others, both human and non-human, who are beyond one's self. This opens towards a prospect for a better world.

But can we further specify how the imagination performs this networking of the self with its environment? In a discussion of the role of the imagination in the appreciation of nature, Emily Brady identifies four modes of imagination that she calls exploratory, projective, ampliative, and revelatory.^[15] This framework can help deepen our understanding of how aesthetic encounters are engaged rather than passive. Rather than matching with the different "capacities" of Kearney's typology in a one-to-one way, these modes specify ways of imagining that support such capacities but may operate across them. These modes of imagination move from relative simplicity to greater

complexity.

Exploratory imagination is closely linked to direct perception and uses imaginative associations to make an aesthetic judgment about an object. For example, I feel the smooth gloss of a new leaf that has just emerged in springtime and I think of an image of a baby's smooth skin. Projective imagination goes a step further in actively placing a new image onto the perceived object "such that what is actually there is somehow added to, replaced with, or overlaid by, a projected image."^[16] We play with ways of seeing the object differently in order to further enrich our experiences, for example seeing the tiny veins in the leaf and imagining my hand as the leaf, feeling the flow of nutrients from water and soil and the expansion of life beneath the sun. Next, ampliative imagination goes beyond the mere play of imagining one thing as another to imagining the broader context in which the object participates spatially and temporally, often creating a narrative. Here scientific knowledge may play an important role. In the case of the new leaf, I may imagine its relationship to the flower that immediately preceded it or how the leaf will look in the fall, larger, rougher, and more aged, or even of the future decay of the leaf into the ground, which will sustain other trees and new leaves. Such imaginings may then lead into revelatory imagination. "In this mode, invention stretches the power of imagination to its limits, and this often gives way to a kind of truth or knowledge about the world—a kind of revelation in a non-religious sense."^[17] But what is unique about this kind of truth, Brady notes, is that it is distinctly aesthetic because it emerges through close perceptual and imaginative engagement.

Brady is specifically talking about imagination and the experience of the natural environment. But her framework has broader applications for the experience of the built environment, including art such as Senju's. This would require that we blur the distinction between the aesthetic experience of nature and art. On one hand, there certainly are differences between the experience of nature and art. One of the strengths of recent work in environmental aesthetics is that it has helped develop a vocabulary for articulating unique aspects of the experience of nature.^[18] Two differences that have been noted are the experience of space and time. Regarding space, nature, in contrast to much art, is frameless. Rather than being limited by either a literal frame or the more abstract frame of special contexts, like museums, the natural environment is boundless, "surrounding and enveloping us, with indefinite elements and indeterminate boundaries."^[19] This moves us from being a passive observer to an active constituent of a larger whole and highlights our total, bodily engagement, opening aesthetics from a visual and auditory focus to embracing synesthesia, especially the neglected senses of touch, smell, and taste.^[20] Likewise, the experience of nature is also different from art in its temporal mode. If artworks are "on the whole, stable, enduring objects of perception, nature is unplanned and often spontaneous, making our encounters with it unpredictable, and full of surprises."^[21] So, instead of having a controlling, objective view of the thing itself that can be circumscribed by the spectator at selected times, nature manifests itself as different all the time and, in this way, provides potentially infinite aesthetic experiences.

On the other hand, while these spatial and temporal differences are very clear when compared to paradigmatic fine art, like the *Mona Lisa* hanging in the Louvre Museum, there are many experiences that fall in between, most notably architecture. In the experience of the built environment, there is a give-and-take between environment and art. It is impossible to separate a building from its site in the natural environment, and it is equally impossible to separate these from the perceiving person. Instead, they work together, each contributing a part. Accounting for this kind of relationship leads Arnold Berleant to propose a mediating position, an aesthetics of engagement. The experience of architecture requires both kinesthetic and synesthetic engagement, and such engagement with a building is only one specific feature of our broader interaction with the environment as a whole, an engagement that is always drawing on all of our senses.^[22] An aesthetics of engagement, then, challenges thinking of the individual subject as a detached observer that is more reason than body. "The environment is not the object of a subjective act of contemplation: Environment is continuous with us, our very condition of living."^[23] But while Berleant roots this aesthetic in the experience of the environment, he also acknowledges that nature is not distinct from human culture: "Our very conception of nature has emerged historically and differs widely from one cultural tradition to another."^[24] So, it is never possible nor desirable to bracket the natural environment from the human life world.

In light of this, one thing to add to Brady's analysis is that the modes of imaginative engagement she identifies, while based on immediate perception, are to some extent shaped by cultural context, and, therefore, the imaginative experience of nature may not always be sharply cut off from art. What this suggests is a continuum between nature and art. The perceiver must often make slight adjustments based on the particular context, from the extremes of raw nature, such as Yosemite, to an abstract Joan Mitchell painting, with a variety of experiences in between, such as gardens, earthworks, or installations such as Senju's. While the following discussion focuses on Senju's paintings at Shofuso, I do not want to argue that this is exceptional among other artworks in its ability to create a rich, multi-sensory experience, with active, imaginative engagement with nature.

Rather, I offer it as exemplary as a way to tease out the many layers latent in any aesthetic experience, while holding that every artwork carries this potential to varying degrees, both in its content and its context. Senju's painting is positioned between representational and abstract, but even the most abstract or conceptual artworks depend on engaging the senses and imagination, often in more complex ways than art that refers directly to nature in any obvious way; indeed, unpacking this is part of the satisfaction such artworks supply. Likewise, while in places I contrast Shofuso to a typical museum setting, the site most people associate with the experience of visual art, this also sits on a continuum. Much artwork in our museums was originally viewed, and used, in very different contexts, and it is part of the curator's job to give some sense of this original context, to open new horizons temporally and culturally for the visitor. At the same time, museums create their own sort of immersive environments, depending on layout, lighting, and so on, that, at their best, foster new imaginative experiences that gain their power from being in dialogue with other experiences, such as nature or daily life, rather than being in competition with them. My analysis here, then, is to suggest how visual art may function more broadly as an engaging prompt to human flourishing in its aesthetic and imaginative life. With this in mind, we are now in a position to look more closely at the imaginative intersections at play in Senju's paintings at the Shofuso Japanese House.

4. Imagination and space: Intersection of inside and outside in a middle space

At first the choice of subject matter, mono-chrome, semi-abstract waterfalls, and the names of the rooms may seem to bracket the paintings from nature. However, Senju's choice is intentional. Reflecting on the process of choosing the paintings for the unique context of Shofuso, Senju says:

Acknowledging the beauty of the landscape from all sides of Shofuso, I decided to use my senses. By closing my eyes and "feeling" the atmosphere, I heard the waterfall coming out of the pond. I was perhaps not able to create a work referring to the four seasons that was strong enough, but I could paint the waterfall. Maybe I could not capture all the colors, but I could try to capture the sound of it within the painting.^[25]

Here we see how Senju, rather than imposing his own ideas on the house, instead decided to consult nature, but through his imagination. And his point that "the landscape surrounding it would be much more beautiful" makes sense when one understands the unique context. Since the material support of each painting, with the exception of the large one in the alcove, is a sliding door rather than a fixed canvas on a wall, this creates an active, mobile image. Not only can it connect the paintings between the rooms, creating innumerable paintings, as it were, depending on how much the doors are slid open and where one is sitting, but the doors also open to the outside directly. This creates a permeable space between the inside and outside, a kind of "middle space" that Senju suggests is a distinctive feature of Japanese architecture.^[26] Therefore changes in the weather and light, depending on the time of day and the season, will affect how the waterfalls appear, thus creating new paintings at any moment. This contrasts with a painting in a closed room that would always be seen in the same, artificial light. A variation on this is that the paintings change depending on if you view them from in the room or outside from the veranda, as they are framed by the dark, wooden post and lintel. (Fig. 4)





Figure 4: Hiroshi Senju, *Imagination of Dynamics* and *Imagination of Silence*, 2007, acrylics on hemp paper. Philadelphia, Shofuso Japanese House. Photo by Peter Doebler, 06/04/14. Reproduced with permission from the Shofuso Japanese House.

Additionally, when the outside-facing *shoji* doors are opened (incidentally, these are not painted), this effectively turns nature into a work of art, "framing" it with the aperture of the doors, a natural artwork that faces the human artwork inside.

Senju's cooperation with nature in the planning of the paintings is also seen in his choice of materials. He drew the colors from nature, green, clay, and red, in order to create what, on a cursory glance, appears to be black but on closer inspection is a deep color that changes hue depending on the light, weather, or what it is perceived with in the larger visual field.^[27] On one hand, the paintings complement the building itself, blending with the wood and ivory walls, feeling as if they are an organic part of the structure; the streams of the waterfall are also echoed in the lattice above the *fusuma*. On the other hand, because the outside two walls of each room open onto the garden, the paintings blend with the pond and the fauna in the changing seasons: spring and summer green, the reds of fall, and the austere brown and white of winter. In these ways, Senju's paintings at Shofuso show a sensitivity to the particularity of space and place, integrating the natural and human environments. Furthermore, Senju attributes this way of conceiving space as a continuous series of interacting planes "that expands further and further out" to the Japanese landscape itself, which is rich in mountains, fog, and mist.^[28]

For Senju, this unique continuum of space that links inside and outside is expressed in an exemplary way in Kanō Eitoku's (1543–1590) *Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons* (四季, *kachōzu*, 1566) at the Daitokuji-Jukoin Temple in Kyoto. He notes how the rocks and trees in the painting resemble the rocks and trees in the outside garden. Outside links to inside and flying birds and blossoming trees are brought into the living space, and the result is a different space, a "virtual reality."^[29] In the same way, Senju discusses how his paintings at Shofuso use colors that link with the house and garden, and content—the waterfall—that links with the pond, and together these create a different space, "a mind of harmony."^[30]

5. Imagination and time: intersection of past and future in the present moment

If Senju's paintings at Shofuso create a spatial intersection between inside and outside, they also evoke a temporal intersection between past and future. This was already suggested above in the fact that the outside doors can easily open to the external space, integrating the paintings with the natural world and placing them and the visitor in the cycle of the days and seasons. This charges the present experience with a focus on the uniqueness of the particular moment. In this way, Senju's paintings echo Yuriko Saito's comments about the tea ceremony:

Though highly stylized and guided by almost excruciatingly detailed instructions, the overall purpose of the *wabi* tea is to celebrate and appreciate the aesthetic experience brought about by the chance meeting of many elements beyond human control. The occasion thus created by meticulous preparation *and* chance is for one time only, referred to as *asichigo ichie* (one chance, one meeting). In a sense, this aesthetic activity represents our entire world and life where the ruling principles are transience, insufficiency, imperfection, and accidents.^[31] Senju's waterfalls seem to embody this, with careful preparation of materials but innumerable chance elements related to the pouring technique, producing paintings each totally unique and that continue to change in their relation to nature and the human visitors. It is certainly no accident that the Shofuso House offers tea ceremony classes and demonstrations in such a setting.

A key element of this focus on the particular temporal moment is how it creates an active participation by engaging all of the bodily senses. The differences in external light depending on the day or season can alter how the paintings appear but, at the same time, the relatively monochrome

paintings can alter how one appreciates the color of the surroundings. Next, hearing is activated. Since the whole image is just falling water, there is nothing else in the image to distract one's attention and, as a result, the auditory sense seems to become more acute: the paintings sound loud. But this imaginative, virtual sound is then made real by the sound of a waterfall bubbling out in the Shofuso garden pond, and, in this way, nature supports the paintings. This easy commerce between outside nature and the paintings within the building also engages the visitor's sense of touch. Again, this is in large part related to the architectural design, since the covered veranda helps keep the house cool in summer or warm in winter. Indeed, it is very refreshing to look at the paintings as the day outside gets hotter; one can almost feel the temperature of the waterfalls in the paintings change. Likewise, different atmospheric elements, such as mist, fog, clouds, or snow, will change the overall feeling of the paintings.

Since the building allows for this permeable space between inside and outside, the paintings change with the weather and light, and the visitor's body registers these differences, which, in turn, can generate different moods. Even taste and smell, which typically play less of a role in the experience of paintings, are also activated. Since the house uses traditional, natural building materials such as aromatic *hinoki* (Japanese cypress) and the rice straw *tatami* flooring, the house has a natural smell compared to, say, a sanitized museum. But the easy access to the adjacent garden also provides a variety of natural smells that make the paintings less of an object to be gazed at than a constituent part that complements the overall environment. And, finally, taste is activated through the simple act of drinking water, which somehow becomes more delicious in such a setting. Alternatively, the Japanese tea ceremony is often held in the large room, and, if you were to participate in this, the thick, pungent flavor of the *matcha* green tea would further activate taste. Sitting on the *tatami* mat, smelling the tea that wafts together with the smell of the house and garden, feeling the warmth of the tea bowl in your hands and then the ambient temperature of the room, looking up from the rich green tea to the paintings, you might note the subtle shade of green blended there and then look across to the garden and the green in blossom. In such a setting, you would feel not so much a visitor as a friend.

So one's experience of the paintings and the environment mutually enrich one another. On one hand, the unique spatial environment supports the rich bodily experience at Shofuso that will change with each different temporal experience. On the other hand, the paintings also contribute to this synesthetic immersion. Musing on what makes Claude Monet's (1840–1926) paintings so great, Senju concludes, "You paint giving visible form to the things you cannot see—the sound of the wind, the temperature, scents—what impresses your five senses when you hold the brush. This is Claude Monet's painting. What Claude Monet's painting shows and what we are taught by it is, 'Art is that which makes you see what you cannot see.'"^[32] So, art has an important role not in distinction from nature and everyday life but in support of both, helping humans to remember their condition as embodied beings in a vibrant environment teeming with unique experiences available in each particular place and each particular moment. Yet, this integrative experience of the body within space and time is not merely material. Rather, as we have seen, Senju emphasizes that a primary goal of his art is to activate the viewer's memory and imagination. Seeing the brilliant paintings, hearing the waterfall in the garden, feeling the breeze that blows through, as if additionally cooled by the waterfalls, smelling the faint scent of cypress and rice straw, all of this creates a thoroughly spatio-temporal event grounded in the particularity of the present, an event that also activates the visitor's memory and opens a horizon for a constructive future.

6. Cultivating relations across space and time

The spatial and temporal intersections evoked by Senju's paintings at Shofuso reflect the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō's (1889–1960) notion that space and time are meaningful as expressions of human attempts to communicate and relate. In his *Rinrigaku* (倫理, *Ethics*, 1945), recognized as one of the defining works on the subject in twentieth-century Japanese philosophy, Watsuji critiques ethical theories that overemphasize the individual. Watsuji argues that the Japanese word for human (人, *ningen*) provides a different perspective. Combining two Chinese characters, 人 (*hito*, person) and 間 (*aida*, between), the word highlights the dual nature of humans as individuals and as members of multiple social relationships. "Individuals are basically different from society and yet dissolve themselves into society. *Ningen* denotes the unity of these contradictories."^[33] For Watsuji, this suggests a dialectical structure to human existence, where the self separates itself from the group but returns itself to the whole while not negating its individuality.^[34] This dialectical movement constitutes the human experience of space and time. Humans move and meet through space, shaping it in a way that makes it conducive to creating and sustaining relationships. This gives places and things a "subjective spatiality" as carriers of human intentions.^[35] Likewise, time orients human attempts to relate to others. In Watsuji's example, the present moment of walking to meet a friend looks towards a future relation, a meeting, but is also rooted in a past relationship that is the original impetus for the movement. Thus each present moment as humans cross through space marks a point of intersection that "consists of the unity of the possible betweenness, as well as the already established

one."^[36] So, spatiality and temporality, while distinct, are of a piece^[37]

Watsuji's ethical ideal, then, is a continual traversing movement where the individual separates from the whole and then returns to the whole, "culminating in a nondualistic connection between the self and others that actually negates any trace of opposition,"^[38] and the arts are a significant means for concretely expressing this. For example, speaking about the accomplishment of Japanese gardens, Watsuji comments:

The unity achieved in this is not one of geometrical proportion but, rather, a harmonization of forces which appeals to our sensibilities—what I would call an *accord of "spirit"*. Just as between two human beings there can be a point in their relationship at which the 'spirit' of the one gets into accord with that of the other, so we can see a similar kind of relatedness between a garden's rocks and its moss or even between one rock and another.^[39]

And Senju's paintings, as I have attempted to show, extend this relationship between art and nature, too, creating spatio-temporal intersections that cross differences, linking humans and nature, and also humans to humans, by actively engaging the imagination. As Senju says, "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..."^[40] Via the imagination Senju aims to cross both time, prompting one in the present to draw on memory and look to a common future, and space, crossing the space between other minds and cultivating meaningful relationships.

Recalling and applying Brady's modes of imagination, exploratory and projective imagination are active in a variety of ways at Shofuso, such as connecting the painted waterfalls to the waterfall in the garden, linking the colors in the painting with the garden's colors, or perhaps envisioning the waterfalls as akin to the flow of blood in one's circulatory system, among other options. Ampliative imagination expands the connection between the inside paintings and outside nature, as one may imagine how the paintings would appear in other seasons or times of day. For example, when I visited Shofuso in the heat of June, one of the workers commented on how mysterious the paintings are on a foggy day, which prompted me to consider how this may look and feel. And this may incite one to think of other waterfalls encountered in one's past experiences, arousing memories of how these felt and the unique moment they contribute to one's life. Finally, these experiences may lead to revelatory imagination, perhaps seen in the sameness/difference of the uniform drips across the paintings in both rooms, connecting with the continual transience yet sameness of nature, encouraging a greater awareness of these same features in one's self, and consolidating a sense of the unity between nature and humans or, as Senju says, "a mind of harmony." In this way, the spatio-temporal intersection between nature and art at Shofuso, crossing those experiences of the co-presence of opposites Ronald Hepburn speaks of, can provide an empathetic experience that may inspire one to envision other possibilities of living with nature and one's built environment.

Now more than ever, humans must have the imagination to see the environment, both natural and built, as a spatio-temporal commonplace, a meeting place where difference may be shared without being erased. As Barbara Sandrisser notes, cultivating such commonplaces "requires that we first value existing places for their deep-rooted aesthetic and spiritual impact on our lives, and then seek to create new kinds of commonplaces that convey our respect for future generations, since they will be the caretakers."^[41] Such a task weaves epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic ways of thinking and being that depend on fostering lively imaginations that, to recall Kearney, can represent the past, empathize with others, and envision new possibilities. Senju's shimmering waterfalls at Shofuso enact a way of doing this, attracting us, instructing us, and encouraging us to go and do likewise.

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Published on June 13, 2017.

Endnotes

^[1] I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for *Contemporary Aesthetics* who provided encouraging and helpful comments that improved the essay at key points.

^[2] Ronald Hepburn, "Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination," *Environmental Values*, 5, 3 (1996), 191–204; ref. on 192. Hepburn goes on to specify that, "Metaphysical imagination connects with, looks to, the 'spelled

out' systematic metaphysical theorising which is its support and ultimate justification. But also it is no less an element of the concrete present landscape-experience: it is fused with the sensory components, not a meditation aroused by these." (192)

[3] *Ibid.*, 199.

[4] Hiroshi Senju, "Flatwater," in [Hiroshi Senju Museum Karuizawa](#), vol. 1 (Karuizawa, Japan: Hiroshi Senju Museum Karuizawa, 2013), pp. 65–70; ref. on p. 65, bracket original. The English translation is included in the work.

[5] Examples of this and other works by Senju mentioned can be viewed at the artist's website at <http://www.hiroshisenju.com/exhibitions>.

[6] More information on the Shofuso Japanese House can be found at the organization's website <http://www.japanesehouse.org>. I wish to thank Shofuso for their kind permission to reproduce photos of Senju's paintings.

[7] See Yuichi Ozawa, *Story of Shofuso: A Cultural Bridge between Japan and the United States* (Philadelphia: Friends of the Japanese House and Garden, 2010), p. 7.

[8] These include a fixed painting in the alcove of the larger room, and sliding doors on a storage closet.

[9] See *ibid.*, p. 47.

[10] Hiroshi Senju, "Interview: Hiroshi Senju," J-Collabo.com, accessed June 03, 2015, <http://j-collabo.org/interviews/hiroshi-senju/>.

[11] While Senju's paintings are clearly not of specific, natural waterfalls, he studies first-hand waterfalls across the globe, from Hawai'i to the Amazon, and makes use of photographs for his paintings. See Rachel Baum, "Variations on Themes: Hiroshi Senju's Explorations of Nature," in *Hiroshi Senju*, Rachel Baum and Michaël Amy (Milan: Skira, 2009), pp. 15–27; ref. on pp. 15 and 20.

[12] Hiroshi Senju, "Hiroshi Senju," *OWN*, No.1, February, 2007, 52–57; ref. on 53.

[13] *Ibid.*, 53.

[14] See Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagination: Modern to Post-modern*, new edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 241–257.

[15] See Emily Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," in *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, ed. Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant (Peterborough, OT: Broadview Press, 2004), pp. 156–169; ref. on pp. 160–63.

[16] *Ibid.*, p.162.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 163. This bears a resemblance to Hepburn's notion of metaphysical imagination.

[18] The need for such a vocabulary was made most clear in Ronald Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in *British Analytical Philosophy*, ed. Bernard Williams and Alan Montefiore (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 285–310.

[19] Yuriko Saito, "Environmental Directions for Aesthetics and the Arts," in *Environment and the Arts: Perspectives on Environmental Aesthetics*, ed. Arnold Berleant (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 171–186; ref. on p. 173.

[20] See *ibid.*, pp. 174–75.

[21] Emily Brady, *Aesthetics and the Natural Environment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 66.

[22] See Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), pp. 151–55.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 167. See also Arto Haapala's comment that, "The ways humans have seen and experienced nature have changed over time. In this sense, nature is of our making." Arto Haapala, "Art and Nature: The Interplay of Works of Art and Natural Phenomena," in *Environment and the Arts: Perspectives on Environmental Aesthetics*, ed. Arnold Berleant (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 47–60; ref. on p. 57.

[25] Quoted in Ozawa, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

[26] Hiroshi Senju, [Bijutsu no kakushin](#), [The Heart of Art] (Tokyo: Bunshun Shinsho, 2008), pp. 116–17. All references to this work are my translation.

[27] For more on the choice of materials, see Ozawa, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[28] Senju, *Bijutsu no kakushin*, p. 117.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[31] Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 188, italics original.

[32] Hiroshi Senju, *Watashi ga geijutsu nitsuite katarunarū* [If I speak about art] (Tokyo: Poplar-sha, 2011), p. 35. All references to this work are my translation.

[33] Watsuji Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, trans. Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 15.

[34] See *ibid.*, p. 121.

[35] See *ibid.*, pp. 157 and 164–65.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[37] This space/time relation is also expressed in Watsuji's reflections on climate, notably expressed in his *Fūdo*, translated in English as *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, trans. Geoffrey Bownas (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), which, for Watsuji, is both geographical and cultural. As Robert Carter explains, "Climate is correspondent with spaciality, whereas history is correspondent with temporality. Climate and human social history are mutually determining. ... To the extent that we are environmentally conditioned, we are not shapers of our environment. To the extent that we are shapers of our environment, we are not environmentally conditioned." Robert Carter, "Interpretive Essay: Strands of Influence," in *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, trans. Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 325–354; ref. on p. 336.

[38] Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

[39] Watsuji Tetsurō, *Fūdo* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1967), p. 190, italics original. Quoted in William F. LaFleur, "Buddhist Emptiness in the Ethics and Aesthetics of Watsuji Tetsurō," *Religious Studies* 14/2 (June 1978), pp. 237–250; ref. on p. 246.

[40] Senju, "Hiroshi Senju," p. 53, italics added.

[41] Barbara Sandrisser, "Cultivating Commonplaces: Sophisticated Vernacularism in Japan," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56, 2 (1998), 201–210; ref. on 208–09.