

Notes on Creating and Showing

AZAMI, Takako

1964

Born in Chichibu, Saitama Prefecture, Japan. Out of three siblings I am the middle child.

1988

I graduated from the Tama Art University, majoring in Japanese painting.

I participated in the group show "Expression on Site 88" showing the work "Prologue".

After a making a mistake while coating paper I discovered a technique of rolling the brush. I completed that picture using mainly the Japanese ink I planned to use only as a first coat.

I was going to paint a human figure but while struggling with the 540 centimeter surface I ended up creating my first abstract piece.

In the period when I was painting human figures I felt dissatisfied because the figure and the background would not merge well or I would envision the finished painting and lose interest.

The abstract work freed me from these problems and I felt exhilarated.

However, I thought "I don't want to make work in which I just change the composition but nothing deeper than that", I agonized over this quite a lot.

After that I began to paint with the feeling of something emerging as if thrusting out, and using ink, natural pigments and silver leaf created a feeling of drifting water and air.

1992

My first solo exhibition was held at "Ai Gallery" in Tokyo. From this time on I held solo exhibitions once a year mainly at rental galleries.

1993-95

I began trying to create "depth" by layering torn pieces of silver leaf, powdered chalk and ink washes.

I was able to create a surface where, depending on the angle and lighting, the color and impression of the work would change. However, I was unsatisfied with the way the silver leaf was too easily recognized and the way that it stood out from the surface and felt disconnected from the work. Using the leaf made it appear too decorative, I felt guilty about this and began using less leaf.

1995

My work "Deep Blue" was chosen for inclusion in the "Ueno Royal Museum Grand Prize Exhibition" show. For this work I decided to try and use only ink on Japanese paper.

I wanted to eliminate any traces of the brush or feelings of the work being "painted" so I used a technique of washing the surface while I painted.

I submitted my work because painting and exhibiting alone I lacked input and reactions from other people and also I wanted to test the foundations of my work and way of thinking.

The result was I gained confidence. My work looked different than all the other pieces in the show.

1997

"Wander", "Beforehand", "Appearance", I didn't care how these works looked to others, overall my pictures became blackish in color.

1998

I showed three pieces including "Appearance-Spirit" at the "Kanagawa Art Annual '98 'Artists of Tomorrow' " show.

Having the opportunity to show in a spacious gallery my goal was to create work that would change the surrounding environment.

The image I had in mind when painting was of an atmosphere surrounding large trees.

It was the first time I intentionally painted and applied silver leaf on the backside of the paper.

When I was taking photos of the exhibition space one woman gazed at this work for a long time, repeatedly drawing closer to the work and then pulling away.

I had to wait quite awhile to take a photo but I was really pleased by her reaction.

Following this I had opportunities to show new work in two solo shows and two group exhibitions.

Around this time ink dots became more prominent in my work and trees emerged as a concrete motif.

In the last show of this year I did a minimalist landscape piece "Landscape" that was composed of only black ink dots.

I feel my somewhat aggressive development in this period connects to my later works.

2000

In a solo exhibition called, "The Power of Rebirth" at the Tokyo International Forum Exhibition Space I showed three works based on cherry and plum tree motifs.

I wanted to add lines as a different element and created the work "Spirit 2000.1" with the prominent straight branches of the plum tree as the motif.

I painted the branches clearly but not the shape of the trunk.

2001

"The Power of Rebirth", M.Y. Art Prospects (New York). My exhibition scheduled for December in New York went ahead as planned despite the terrorist attacks of September just happening.

Feeling uneasy, I boarded a nearly empty airplane and went to America by myself for the first time.

I showed various types of work from my transitional period such as "Veins II", a combination of the complex space of a persimmon tree and my way of showing depth, like in another work, "Landscape".

On the opening day, the guests, even waiting in line, only left the gallery after telling me their impressions of the work.

As an artist that made me extremely happy.

2002

I had a solo show in the fall at Galleria Chimera (Tokyo), and for the first time I used a pine tree motif as their branches can be observed even in the summer.

Indicating the trunk and branches of the tree with the plain paper these unpainted portions seemed to be captured by the rest of the painting.

The frequent dots of ink continue elliptically so that when the whole work is viewed from a distance the ink becomes vibrations of air and gives birth to movement and rhythm.

I was able to paint as though weaving wind and light into the picture.

In this period I was painting most work on the back side of the paper but there were times when I used a more vivid black painting on the front side as well, even more vivid than the ink on the back.

When painting on both sides of the paper it feels like I am sewing the painting.

Using the tree motif I experience new problems and discoveries every time I paint and that has led me to where I am now.

2004

I paint bamboo for the first time. The bamboo leaves embrace the light and bend. The bamboo appears as entangled straight lines and so I become more conscious of depth and light.

2005

My first solo show in Moscow at the Gertsev Gallery was the largest scale exhibition yet for me.

During the opening reception I was asked to sign the show catalog.

As the guests begun to leave I finally had a chance to get my digital camera, when I returned to the gallery the remaining ten or so people gave me a gentle round of applause and called out my name.

I didn't know what was happening and turned around thinking it was for some else.

I never thought that I would receive such encouragement while being involved in art.

(Translated by Nick McDonell)