

Voices from Artist to the World

No.2

Yuka Sugisawa

Yuka Sugisawa, a young artist full of spirit for challenge in exploration of pictorial space fusing penga with nihonga?

Yuka Sugisawa has introduced penga (a painting using pen) into nihonga (Japanese-style painting) to explore her own expression of art. Since pen is too weak for solid mineral pigment used for nihonga, she seems to have repeated trial and error to make the both coexist. Now, she has achieved a satisfying expression, probably because the expression has been rooted in her true nature since childhood: she never gives up drawing again and again to complete a picture.



--We saw for the first time your work using pen in 2011 when you won encouragement award at "Yume Biennale" organized by Hachioji Yume Art Museum. Did you start introducing the expression using pen into your work around that time?

Sugisawa (hereafter referred to as S): I had experimented with several works of that kind when I applied for the Biennale. It was around the initial period of my repeated trial and error when I made the awarded work, which, though, then did not yet take a definite shape.

--You partially draw with pen on the basic surface of nihonga. Is it difficult to make a picture of the style?

S: Not so easy. Pen as a material is so fragile, compared to drawing materials for nihonga. Without considerations of how to get good balance between strong and weak materials, how is chemistry between washi-paper and pen, or how you decide on all sorts of order of drawing,

pen itself could be badly broken by solid mineral pigment. Since it's impossible to draw with pen on the surface of mineral pigment, I do penga on the ground of washi-paper. While taking these into consideration, I think over where to place mineral pigment on canvas, how to arrange pictorial space for penga, and so on.

--How did you arrive at the present style fusing penga with nihonga to create a new nihonga?

S: I was always looking for direction of my painting, and I've been thinking that I would like to try something new. I would repeat various trials in my undergraduate days -- fixing cloth to a work, using color pencil and mineral pigment together, and other things. After all, the manner of using pen was like an extension of those trials, though, more definitely speaking, I started using pen when I happened to see an exhibition of penga about three years ago. The use of new material is not so special to me. If I find again a different interesting

material, I will certainly challenge it.

--You seem to spend much time drawing the parts of close line with pen.

S: Certainly, I spare more time working on the parts than any other area in a painting. I start to draw freehand without seeing anything from corners with a pen (0.2 mm in diameter) raised, as if scratching the surface. I seem to have been long obsessed by something like agoraphobia when working, and my tendency to fill every space of canvas with picture has not changed since childhood.

--Is face area drawn last?

S: For example, of one month necessary to complete a painting, I usually spare the last two days or so for drawing face. So, the area is left blank to the very end of working. But, the outline of face area alone has already been completed when I make a sketch, so all I have to do for the area is to draw details. While drawing, I, at the same time, decide on patterns or colors of the area, which takes me unusually much time.

--Characters in your recent work are provided with beautiful face. About this, you seem to have changed, because the faces drawn around the



"N" 42.0 x 29.7cm



"Sometime a little after noon" 50M

I want to paint a picture nobody has ever done or seen before.

period when you applied for Yume Biennale were the old's, I wonder?

S: The faces at that time were a result from my fickle imagination, and were unfavorably received as much as talked of "they are weird." So, I thought I wanted to try my hand at drawing a face generally recognized as beautiful, and I would make a sketch as I liked based on a lot of photographs of models till I became satisfied with the shape as a whole.

--You said that it takes you unusually much time to do a painting, but you have been steadily active in



"Chito" P20

exhibiting your painting. Also, I hear that now, you are asked to exhibit in overseas art fairs, like Art Taipei to be held in November this year.

S: Yes, but I seem to consider an act of painting a picture as a tool to let me grow as a human being, rather than as something necessary to live as a professional artist.

--Do you mean you paint as part of character building?

S: Yes. I always would like to feel myself growing in various ways, so it seems that's why I paint.

--You are a graceful artist, aren't you?

S: On the other hand, probably because of a change of my biorhythm, I sometimes feel very much that I want to show my work in overseas exhibitions or want to be recognized there as an artist. Now, the London Olympic Games are being held. Seeing sports players who are on a victory winner's stand, I come to envy them (laughter).

--Such ambition must also be important for artist to develop career in overseas in the future.

S: Doing sports is a long-time habit with me, so I somehow tend to think about things according to whether I win or lose. For example, when I compare my work with others', I judge in an instant whether I win or lose seeing works of both sides. I anyway never want to be defeated, though such a way of thinking may not be desirable for artist. But, if I lost, I would be able to see what lacks in my painting, or would have various feelings, for example, "I might have lost because my painting lacked a presence or something like an aura as well as technique."

--I think you will have even more such emotion at overseas art fairs where a great range of artworks will be exhibited.

S: If I try at all, I think I should challenge at international level. But, I don't know whether it's good or not that my career will be evaluated as early as at present stage, because I'm not yet satisfied with myself. I feel uneasy about that. But, on the other hand, I appreciate being evaluated in overseas from various viewpoints. If my work had no good evaluation, I would be able to learn something from that experience, which will improve myself. Also I would be able to see what lacks in my work through various opportunities of presentation with other artists on a level similar to mine.

--Do you have some artists you adore?

S: I'm not very interested in art of our time. I believe that masterpieces created a century or so ago by great artists are far more valuable to me. Klimt, Mucha, and Waterhouse are my favorites. I remember that I happened to see Mucha exhibition when I visited Vienna. Seeing the exhibits, kind of those not collected in Japan, I was much impressed with his highly skillful paintings. Those masters have good command of dessin. I was then convinced again that what makes a work worth seeing is, first of all, that ability. In contrast, today's overseas art never interests me, though it knows how to make itself look attractive. So, I am convinced that academic paintings are better.

--Do you dream of creating artworks of the style?

S: I hope that viewers will say, "What's this!" -- I want to paint a picture with a presence. Or, I wish that my painting, in which a character with ordinary face is depicted, will have such a presence as even making viewers feel mysterious or as making them say, "This is just Sugisawa's painting." I would like to create works nobody has ever done or seen before. That's my dream. And, I hope to be recognized internationally as an artist.

--We hope you will develop international activities, including art fairs you are soon going to participate in. ?

Profile: Yuka Sugisawa

1986 born in Kanagawa
 2009 won encouragement award at Yume Biennale, also in 2011
 2010 graduated from Tama Art University (B.F.A., nihonga painting) and
 participated in the group show "6 Nihonga Painters"(Rise Gallery, Meguro, Tokyo)
 2011 participated in "Postgraduates at Tama Art University: Nihonga and Print
 Exhibition" (Sato Museum of Art, Shinjuku, Tokyo)
 2012 completed the first half of Ph.D. Course in Nihonga Painting, Tama Art
 University, held "Yuka Sugisawa Solo Exhibition" (exhibit Live & Moris Gallery, Ginza, Tokyo), and participated in group show "A Portrait of Today's Women by 3 Young Artists: Taku Noda, Yusuke Ogasawara, and Yuka Sugisawa"(1F Gallery, Karuizawa New Art Museum, Nagano)
 Works and lives in Kanagawa

"Venetian Glass -- Art of Light and Shadow Yasuhiko Tsuchida Exhibition" attracted great attention from various mass media



Exhibition space



Hiroshi Senju (left) and Yasuhiko Tsuchida



Kazushi Sawahara (left), a director of Takaha City Nariwa Art Museum, and Yasuhiko Tsuchida

"Venetian Glass -- Art of Light and Shadow Yasuhiko Tsuchida Exhibition," now held in Karuizawa New Art Museum, Nagano, through September 3, has been attracting great attention from many visitors and mass media, including TV coverage and the art press. Tsuchida has been famous in overseas because he is the only Japanese artist who built his studio in Murano island in Venice, a home of Venetian Glass. But, now, here in Japan, his exhibition, which sums up his career to date, has appealed to numerous Japanese art fans.

During the period, nihonga artist Hiroshi Senju, who has long been an adviser for Tsuchida as a more experienced artist, visited the exhibition. Both artists renewed their friendship. Senju is an artist who appeared on TV program "On Art as Profession" (BS-TBS) with Tsuchida. Other visitors included Kazushi Sawahara, a director of Takaha City Nariwa Art Museum. During the period there have been a great crowd.

Venetian Glass -- Art of Light and Shadow Yasuhiko Tsuchida Exhibition (Hiroshi Senju Exhibition will simultaneously be held): September 6 to 12 at Art Gallery at 8th Floor of the main branch of Tokyu Department, Shibuya (closed on final day at 17:00)