

Susumu Takashima Solo Exhibition
September 18th to October 2nd , 2019
Hakudohtei Gallery, Kyobashi, Tokyo

Materials Are What Make Me Draw

Susumu Takashima begins by drawing a single line on paper or canvas. Next, he draws another line next to the first line, almost tracing it. This is repeated over and over until the work is finished. Though they may look simple to create, Takashima's drawings are the result of meticulous preparation and an extraordinary amount of time.

"I don't draw to express an image. Instead, I draw to assist pencils, silver point and the other materials in expressing themselves. I am interested in what happens when drawings are made for the materials."

In the world of classical music, pieces have titles such as "Music for Piano and Flute" and are written to bring out the characteristics of those instruments. If the same framework is applied to Takashima's works, they would have titles such as "Artwork for Pencil" and "Artwork for Brush, Ink and Paper" -- and they do. Takashima's works are created not to visualize his emotions or mental images but to bring out the characteristics of the materials.

While this may at first seem like the rejection of the artist's individuality, Takashima says, "I believe materials possess untapped potential, and individuality in my work emerges in selecting which aspect of the material to emphasize. For me, it's in the way the width of the lines change."

For his drawings, Takashima uses brushes, pencils, colored pencils, silver point, gold point, copper point and brass point. The way the lines they make change in width is a crucial part of Takashima's work. When he uses a colored pencil, he first sharpens it with a pencil sharpener and when he draws a line, it is thinnest at the beginning and will gradually get wider. This is repeated each time he draws a line, always sharpening the colored pencil first. Conversely, when Takashima makes a line with a brush, he begins by dipping his brush in ink and the resulting line is widest at the

beginning and gradually gets thinner. Wear on silver point is more gradual, and drawings made with these emphasize this characteristic.

Takashima uses the three additive primary colors for his colored pencil work: orange, green and blue-purple. (Translator's note: This exhibition will not feature colored pencil drawings using the three additive primary colors; instead, a work titled "Drawing for Brush, Ink and Paper" using these colors will be displayed.) Line colors are decided by rolling dice. "This allows the expression of the waves of probability that affect the dice. My will is not expressed." The rows of lines make the viewer see rainbow-like colors, and the colors of the lines are decided not by calculation but by rolled dice.

Regarding the paper he uses for support, Takashima says, "I use watercolor and printing paper. Paper manufacturers probably want to make paper that take ink well and produce beautiful colors. I use paper in a different way, bringing out the paper's personality in ways that even the manufacturer couldn't anticipate."

Takashima's drawing and the idiosyncratic way he approaches materials began from scribbles made when he was ten years old. He first learned how to draw from an art teacher, and became obsessed by it; he was especially enthralled by the way tracing lines lead to unexpected lines.

"In those days I used ball point or felt tip pens, which didn't really satisfy me because the lines they make didn't change in width. Then I noticed that lines with a brush had different widths at the beginning and the end. This difference creates space. When I discovered this, I thought I could make art with it, though this would take me two decades to achieve."

This solo exhibition centers around twenty colored pencil drawings. Look closely at Takashima's new works -- they may take a year to complete -- and savor the delicate changes of the lines and the harmony of the colors they create. Perhaps, you will feel the presence of the artist.

Japanese to English translation of article published in the September, 2019 issue of Gekkan Gallery, pages 52 to 53.