

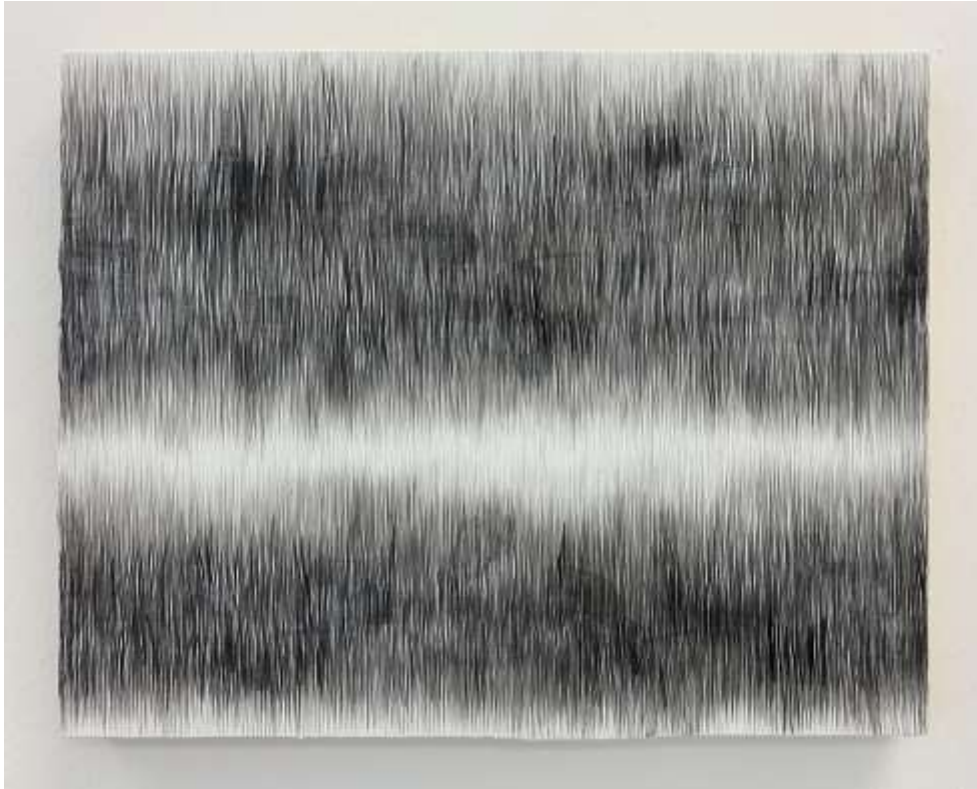
Exploring Linear Possibilities in Nishiki Sugawara-Beda's "I'll Be There"



Lines approach and recede from view in the effervescent compositions comprising Sugawara-Beda's "I'll Be There," on view now through May 1, 2021, at the Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts in Fond du Lac, WI. Tradition and expansion are present in the exhibit in equal measure, with the artist embracing traditional mounting techniques typically used to present Japanese paintings on paper on scroll format. This aspect of her exhibition, which exhibits work from her "KuroKuroShiro" series (the series title is Japanese for *black-black-white*), has allowed the artist to approach new formats and avenues of collaboration. "For this exhibition, I incorporated tradition directly into my art by having my art mounted in a traditional mounting called *Kakejiku*," remarks Sugawara-Beda. "This activity has become a collaboration with craftsmen and merchants and formed a new dimension in my art-making process."

Collaborations notwithstanding, the artist's work asserts its expansive presence through a dynamic sensibility that transcends the shades of gray it is composed of, seemingly eluding the two-dimensionality of the picture plane. Sumi ink is a medium that lends itself more readily to form broad, abstract washes, so it's exciting to see Sugawara-Beda's sharp use of individually distinguished lines and forms traversing the picture plane. While incorporating traditional elements, the artist's work is anything but, sharing art historical space with the canon of Op Art and Abstract Expressionist painters as much as the traditional Japanese Sumi ink painting tradition.

Borrowing from the lexicon of seasonal paintings, which in Japan are often mounted on scrolls often related to the nation's **traditional 72 seasons** informing the land's literary traditions, and depicting landscape scenes relevant to each portion of the year, the artist here has provided elevated, abstracted pathways for visitors to construct their own relation to each 'season' on view. Whereas her *KuroKuroShiro CI Sacred Lot – winter* work provides the viewer with an expanse of space in which to lose their train of thought, much like a wind and snow-swept field, her work *KuroKuroShiro CV Sacred Lot – summer* seems to allude to the June rainy season in Japan giving way to the warm nights of summer and the *kero-kero* cries of frogs in the balmy air. Even visitors unfamiliar with Japanese traditions can find respite in these works, which provide a hypnotic assembly of overlapping and receding lines for viewers to ruminate over.



Nishiki Sugawara-Beda. KuroKuroShiro CVI, 11"×14", Sumi on wood, 2020. On view in "I'll Be There." Image Courtesy the Artist.

Meditative and idiosyncratic in equal measure, the artist's work finds its own path to nature. The artist notes of the works mounted on Kakejiku that they allude to a higher, spiritual sense of nature and the seasons. "Even though [these works] are in a vertical format, they are still landscapes, and each generates a seasonal tone: spring, summer, autumn, and winter," observes Sugawara-Beda in her [work statement](#). Each work opens up a reverie for viewers to explore, with seasons mounted specific to the traditions of patterned fabrics as adopted for use in Japanese traditional painting presentation.

The artist hearkens back to the highly developed appreciation for the season's procession embedded within Japanese perspectives, while adapting a sensibility aligned with Western abstract painting traditions, giving way to a Third Space in which visitors can find their own framework for navigating the formal elements of her paintings. There is something ready waiting for everyone to find in "I'll Be There." Check back with the Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts for exact directions and visiting hours.