

By dousing my canvases and drawings with a plethora of high octane colors, kaleidoscopic line work and irregular compositions, I confront the collective taboo around death.

Flowers, insects and my own body undergo a forensic exploration, inspired by the book, *Japanese Death Poems*, written by zen monks and haiku poets, compiled by Yoel Hoffman and published by Tuttle. In 1823, the poet Kiku, aged 52 and on his deathbed, composed the haiku that spurred my current work:

*That which blossoms
falls, the way of all flesh
in this world of flowers*

The paintings in oil on canvas range in size from 8 x 10 inches to 93 x 65 inches. The disjointed compositional play tears back the gossamer keeping our worlds, realities and memories apart. Organic forms become city-like as light appears over horizons and through windows. In many of the paintings, shadows create a chiaroscuro effect, summoning our collective grief for millions of souls lost to the pandemic, and the lingering malaise in those of us left behind.

Other works in this series feature floral cacophonies of colors in a manic celebration of life. Yet are all over layered with a white calligraphic line, further disrupting the stability of the underpainting, like a ghost or perhaps the skeletal remains of the flowers as a lingering memory.

The smaller drawings of repeating patterns in colored pencil are discombobulated by kinetic slashes of acrylic paint and ink. They range in size from 8 x 12 inches to 48 x 53 inches. The frenetic line work addresses the ever looming chaos and proximity of death hovering over our organized yet precarious lives. The larger 4 x12 foot drawings, in color pencil, graphite, oil

stick and ink, reference the compositions of traditional Japanese landscapes, where the viewer, is the vanishing point rather than a fixed spot in the drawing. In this way, one may 'move through' the composition and witness a vista that is my body disintegrating, becoming the humus from which new life will sprout. These works have evolved over seven years. Seven years is the time it takes for the human body to renew its self. These drawings, now in their seventh year, are finally coming into the light.

I am creating a world of medicinal flowers; opium poppy, morning glory, chrysanthemum and lotus. The necessity of symbiosis in this environment spurs me to design insects of Godzilla-esque proportions. There is the red *Pulmonem Papilio*, inspired by my own brush with Covid, and the *Emerald Moth* with its healing properties.

I grew up in Tokyo, fully immersed in Japanese culture, an Anglo Saxon 'gaijin' child. Observation was my survival tactic as I traced the treacherous path straddling two cultures.

Manga Culture of the seventies and the post-atomic creations of Godzilla and Mothra saturated my subconscious. In my imagination, ancient ghost stories and Taoist visions of the after life with its multiple stages of limbo, purgatory and paradise, combined with the kawaii (hyper cute) culture of such classics as Sally Chan and Himitsu no Akko chan. To this day polarity and cultural viscosity bleeds into my work, fermenting into a kind of artistic mulch.

I am at an age where my personal experience of death puts me in a place where I can make observations that would never have been possible in my youth. The death of beloved pets, of my entire family to diseases, of lovers to suicide and other misadventures, has made death a familiar visitor. In this ongoing work, I am depicting my understanding, that despite the excruciating pain of loss, residing at the core of that agony is a profound beauty. This is the

philosophy at the heart of my body of work I call: *This World of Flowers*.