

**Beyond Sumi-e: A practice-led investigation into the influences  
of an ancient art form on contemporary artists, with reference  
to the artworks of Hiroshi Senju and Yoshio Ikezaki**

Denise Ingrid Adams

Student Number 216076239

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University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg

## DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Fine Art, College of Humanities, School of Arts: Centre for Visual Art, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Denise Ingrid Adams, declare that

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Denise Ingrid Adams

Signature

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2019

Supervisor: Dr Katherine Arbuckle

Signature: K Arbuckle

Date: 13 November 2019

Co-supervisor: Dr Louise Hall

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This research paper is dedicated to Louis Van Loon, who set me on the path of Sumi-e.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, my sincere appreciation for the opportunity afforded to investigate a distinctive art form, largely unfamiliar outside of Asia. My grateful thanks go to my supervisor Dr. Kathy Arbuckle for her ongoing input and support provided, as well as to Dr. Louise Hall, my co-supervisor. Both Arbuckle and Hall inspired me to experiment and propel my art practice beyond traditional Sumi-e.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of traditional ink painting from Japan, Sumi-e, on the artworks of two contemporary artists, Yoshio Ikezaki and Hiroshi Senju. It also examines the impact of these influences on my own artmaking. This research included the identification and description of the key elements, characteristics and philosophy forming the basis of Sumi-e, as a framework of reference. The philosophy and aesthetics associated with traditional Sumi-e reflect Zen Buddhism as well as traditional Japanese culture. There is very limited literature available in English on Sumi-e. It has strict principles, one of which is ‘learn the rules and break the rules’. This principle has been a point of departure for my own art practice, and I explore the influence of this principle on the art practices of Senju and Ikezaki.

This study used practice-related research methodology with a case study approach. These combined methods offered subjective flexibility through using personal experience of learning, teaching and practicing Sumi-e. In addition to a literature review, data was collected through questionnaires conducted with the two artists, and the analysis of their artworks. My own practice is captured visually in my workbooks where I have recorded and photographed my practice, together with swatches of materials. These ten workbooks form the link between my research and my art practice, and viewing these enhances the interpretation of both bodies of work.

The case studies of the artists revealed that while Senju was not explicitly influenced by Sumi-e, elements of this aesthetic resonated in his work. The influence of Sumi-e on Ikezaki was more pronounced because his initial traditional Japanese artistic training included Sumi-e. Both artists expanded beyond these boundaries. New insights challenged my assumptions about Japanese culture and art practices. Breaking the rules of traditional Sumi-e and a nexus of other influences catalysed my artmaking, manifesting in the materiality of the works. Theories of materiality expand on the role of materials and material thinking in artmaking.

Investigations of sites and contexts of display result in a shift beyond conventional modernist display of two-dimensional artworks hung vertically on gallery walls. Results

included an installation of my artworks in a forest, and the evolvments of three-dimensional forms. The forest atmosphere enhanced and intensified the materiality through the movement of air, light and shadow. The final gallery exhibition titled “Beyond” recreated the ambience of the forest installation, using limited lighting, shadows, a breeze, the sounds of the forest, and film footage projected over the artworks.

Key words:

Sumi-e, natural materials, Japanese art, practice-related research, material thinking, materiality, holistic art practice

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## GLOSSARY

Note: All of the words listed are Japanese. Several words have multiple meanings, depending on the context. I have used the specific translations applicable to this research.

<i>Chado</i>	Tea ceremony
<i>Chan</i>	Meditation, Chinese.
<i>Ch'i or Chi or Qi</i>	Spirit or energy, inherent in all things, such as nature, Chinese
<i>Choryu</i>	Brush
<i>Fusama</i>	Folding screens
<i>Ganpishi</i>	Transparent archival paper made from the ganpishi plant
<i>Gofun</i>	Powdered oyster shell
<i>Haiku</i>	Poem of seventeen syllables
<i>Hi</i>	Fire
<i>Ichigo Ichie</i>	Treasure every meeting for it will never recur
<i>Ikebana</i>	The art of flower arranging
<i>Ki</i>	Spirit or energy, inherent in all things, such as nature, Japanese and Korean
<i>Kami</i>	God, paper

<i>Kozo</i>	Paper made from mulberry
<i>Ku</i>	Matter, energy, impermanence
<i>Kumorebi</i>	Sunlight dancing through leaves in the breeze
<i>Kuki</i>	Air
<i>Ma</i>	Space or interval
<i>Mentsu</i>	To save face, to honour the person's dignity
<i>Mizu</i>	Water
<i>Mono no aware</i>	Transience or ephemeral nature of experience
<i>Myo</i>	Many possible meanings, one of which is an awareness of the immense power of the universe.
<i>Nagashizuki</i>	Sloshing method of making paper, using water and fibre
<i>Nemawashi</i>	The preliminary protocol necessary to prepare for a meeting
<i>Nikawa</i>	Glue made from animal skins such as rabbit
<i>Qigong</i>	Chinese martial art
<i>Shgyou mujyo</i>	Everything on earth evolves, changes and perishes, but the spirit remains to be reborn
<i>Shibue</i>	Accidental beauty
<i>Shoji</i>	Scrolls

<i>Shuhari</i>	Breaking the rules
<i>Suzuri</i>	Inkstick
<i>Taichi</i>	Earth
<i>Tokonoma</i>	Easels
<i>Washi</i>	Common name for Japanese paper, it could be made from gampi, mitsumata, or mulberry bark.
<i>Yugen</i>	Inexplicable feelings for nature
<i>Zazen</i>	Meditation
<i>Zoka</i>	Respect for natural phenomena

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

Please note that in Asia it is traditional to put your surname before your given name. In this research I will be using surnames, that is the first name mentioned, with the exception of Yoshio Ikezaki and Hiroshi Senju who follow the English system. When I refer to my own artworks I will leave out my name. When I quote from the questionnaires answered by Ikezaki and Senju, I have referenced these.

Translated from Japanese, ‘Sumi’ means ‘water’ or ‘sea’, and ‘e’ means ink, that is, ‘ink water painting’. In Japan ink painting is also known as monochrome ink painting, ink wash painting, *suibokuga*, *sumiye*, and *zenga*. Traditional ink painting is widely practised and appreciated in East and South East Asia. The origins are unclear, possibly dating back up to 4000 years (Cotterrel, 2006: 30). In China, ink painting is known as *shui-mo*, *shui-mo-hua*, *guohua*. However, my searching has found that Sumi-e and ink painting, as a genre, is hardly known outside of Asia, and is “considered ... among contemporary art’s blind spots” (Kee, 2010: 1).

## 1.1 Motivation for the study

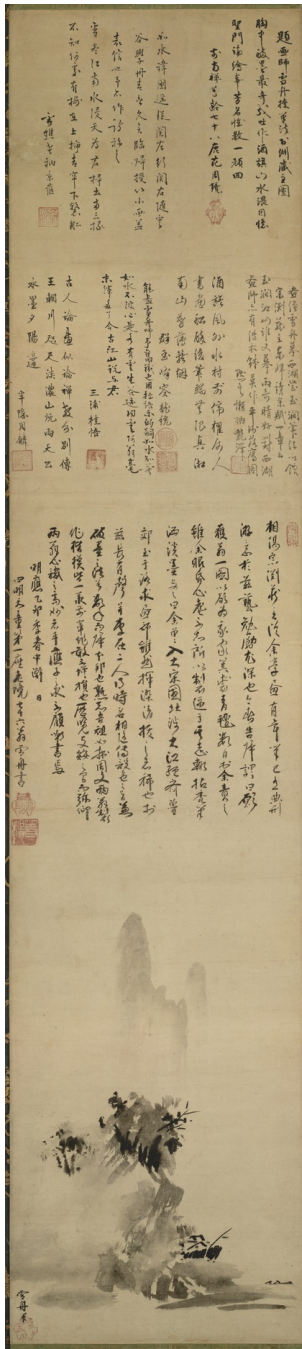
Exploration of this traditional art form, and the lack of information in English, or knowledge of this art form in South Africa, together with the fact that the two Sumi-e artists I chose to focus on (Ikezaki and Senju) had diverse training, suggests there are lessons to be gained in understanding the influence of tradition and context. The practice of traditional Sumi-e may be considered an holistic art form, incorporating a meditative process, the use of all-natural materials, employment of majestic nature as subject matter reflecting Zen Buddhist philosophy, and the practice and appreciation of the arts such as calligraphy and tea ceremony. The idea of a painting extending content beyond the scene depicted, the skill involved in creating mastery with so few indelible brushstrokes on paper which may last up to a thousand years, and the materials used in unusual processes, combined to convince me that this was an art form worth exploring. Traditional Sumi-e paintings are mostly

imbued with a spirituality and this as well as the idea of Zen monks employing certain paintings didactically, such as the *Monk Catching a Catfish With a Gourd* (Figure 10) are elements that may be revealed in subtle ways.

A traditional Sumi-e painting by Sesshū, *Splashed Ink Landscape* (Figure 1), classed as a National Treasure (Lippit, 2012: 73), is said to have inspired generations of monk-painters (Ibid) and enabled Sesshū “to position himself as the patriarch of a painting genealogy” (Ibid: 53). One may say that the technical virtuosity, economy of brush mark and washes, splashed ink (called *hatsuboku*, or *haboku*<sup>1</sup>), capturing of the essence and vitality of the landscape, incorporation of *chi/spirit/ma* in the void of unpainted white space, all together fulfil the expectations of a masterful Sumi-e artwork. Sesshū’s painting incorporated six poems in calligraphy by six monks thereby including a “transmission of experience” of Sesshū, who gave the painting to his pupil Josui Sōen (Barnet and Burto, 1982: 74). This idea of calligraphy in the form of a poem, narrations, biographies, or the added seals of the owners of the painting, stems from the Chinese, who taught the Japanese this art form called *shigajiku*. One of the poems on this artwork inscribed by Kelio Shurin is translated as follows: “This is ink from the heavens, with an evening glow” (Lippit, 2012: 50).

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<sup>1</sup> Haboku also denotes broken ink (Barnet & Burto, 1982: 72)



**Figure 1. Sesshū Tōyō, 1495. *Splashed Ink Landscape*. Ink on paper scroll, 1486mm x 327mm. Tokyo National Museum. On the righthand side is an enlargement of the painting.**  
 Source: Tokyo National Museum (2018)

Sesshū’s painting represents a turning point towards the established genre of Sumi-e, a “remarkable precedent ... for centuries afterwards” (Lippit, 2012: 54). My personal appreciation of this particular artwork was one of the motivating factors for me to learn about Sumi-e. This led to my discovery of opportunities for my own artwork in the unusual processes and materials present within this genre.

## 1.2 Background to my art practice

My BA (hons) degree study is titled *The Teaching of Sumi-e at the Buddhist Retreat Centre in Relation to Japanese Tradition and Contemporary Teaching Practices Internationally* (Adams, 2016).

This study was the starting point for my practice-related research (PRR) master's degree, because it raised questions about the influence of Sumi-e on my own art practice. A further number of motivating factors led to my immersion in Sumi-e: frequent travel to Asia where I first observed ink painting in museums, a lifelong appreciation of nature and natural materials, my tertiary art education, and learning Sumi-e in 2012 from Van Loon at The Buddhist Retreat Centre (BRC) in Ixopo (KwaZulu-Natal). My notes taken over the years of my conversations held with Louis Van Loon on the telephone, through email, during our practice sessions and teaching together, have assisted in this research. My personal practice and teaching of this art form, linked with my increasing awareness of how Zen Buddhism is connected with traditional Sumi-e, led me to search for knowledge of Sumi-e artists, ink painters and Zen Buddhist philosophies and concepts relating to art. Contact with teachers outside of South Africa ensued as well as searches for artworks, materials, publications, and the visiting of museums and art galleries in Japan.

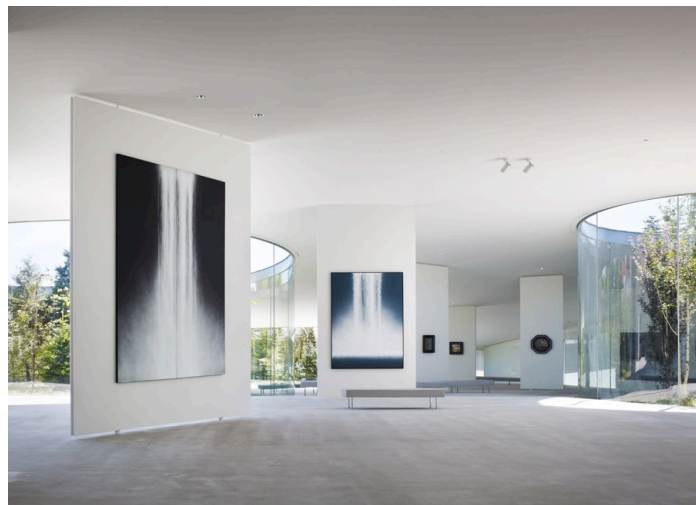
The discovery of Sumi-e came at an appropriate time in my life, when I was scaling down my career in the fashion and textile industry. I was searching for an art form beyond oil painting and a means of expressing feelings pent up over decades related to nature and organic forms. In many ways my practice of Sumi-e may be considered an antithesis to my highly pressured working life, where chemical fabrics and trimmings were channelled into mass-market production with few considerations of aesthetics, and where natural fibres were mostly unsalable. In contrast to industry and my previous oil painting practice, the mindful employment of all-natural materials in distinct processes made Sumi-e an appealing art practice.

This research study has provided me with an opportunity to record and reflect on these intersections through PRR. This reflective process has allowed me to gain insight to extend my research. My experience is that the processes and materials, together with the influences



of the philosophical underpinnings of traditional Sumi-e, organically enable experimentation and outcomes beyond what is recognisable as Sumi-e. Venturing beyond traditional Sumi-e has impacted on my artworks, resulting in material thinking. The current artworks of two currently practising Sumi-e artists, Ikezaki and Senju, are used to illustrate my focus.

The permanent art exhibition of Senju, Hiroshi Senju Museum (viewed in October 2017 and October 2018), and the display of Ikezaki's artworks in Shōkoku-ji Temple Kyoto Japan (viewed on-line at Sando LLC, 2008), prompted thoughts about specific contexts and display. Figure 2 is a photograph of the Hiroshi Senju Museum where light, concrete and glass support the artworks, together with meandering walls and a sloping floor, following the contours of the hillside and a seasonal "colour leaf garden" (Senju, 2012) within and around the museum, thereby including living nature within the museum, enhancing the content of the artworks.



**Figure 2. Hiroshi Senju Museum, Karuizawa, Japan. Ryue Nishizawa (Architect). Concrete, trees and glass.**

Source: Hiroshi Senju Museum (2018)

Figure 3 shows 2 artworks by Ikezaki juxtaposed on the floor and on a screen, in a shadowed atmosphere, within a temple complex.



**Figure 3. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2008. *The Earth Breathes #1, The Earth Breathes #2*. Paper and Sumi-e ink. Shokoku-ji Temple Exhibition, 2008, Kyoto, Japan.**  
Source: Postcard, personal collection

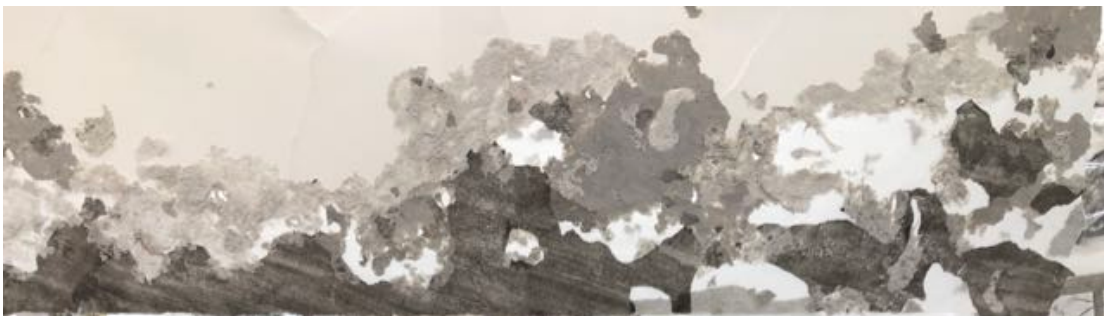
These sites prompted my search for a means of showing my artworks effectively, incorporating nature, light, shadow and movement of air. At the start of my first semester for a Master's degree, my artworks were displayed in a conventional way on a wall, with elements of Sumi-e strongly apparent. Figure 4 demonstrates the typical characteristics of Sumi-e in terms of the use of ink, organic forms inspired by nature, the spirit/*chi/ma* in the void or unpainted white space, and spontaneous splashed ink mark making in that space.



**Figure 4. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 16*. Sumi-e and charcoal on white PVA canvas, 900mm x 650mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

The process of Sumi-e involves all-natural materials and unusual processes such as the slow grinding of the ink in a slate bath with an ink stone and water which is a form of meditation, loading a bamboo and animal hair brush which is moved vertically while standing, using the body rather than one hand. One brush is capable of creating wide areas of wash as well as fine lines, and the unsized, absorbent, handmade Japanese paper necessitates speedy execution to avoid blobs, and therefore intense concentration is essential. The imperfections of the paper, which easily creases, rumples and may form holes, concentrates the ink in some areas resulting in textural effects and *shibui*, “accidental beauty.” When one has learnt the rules of traditional Sumi-e one is encouraged to “break the rules” (Sze, 1956:17). This approach was endorsed by Louis van Loon and other international teachers (Adams, 2016).

This licence to break the rules and push the boundaries of Sumi-e is something I have embraced. My artworks have developed an increased focus on materiality through the handling of the materials, and through my feelings for texture and organic forms. These I transform into complex surface textures by crushing and wrinkling the paper with water and ink, and by juxtaposing my varied treatments and textures of papers together with my own recycled paper making experiments. Figure 5 is one of my artworks showing where I have mixed the various papers creating an abstracted landscape. My discovery that Senju crushed his paper for his cliff faces led me to push this process further.



**Figure 5. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 24*. Sumi-e and collage of handmade recycled paper, butcher paper, Fabriano, mulberry paper, 1890mm x 525mm.**

Source: Personal collection

In 2007 Hiroshi Senju created a genre of cliff painting which arose out of noticing “that the wrinkles of discarded pieces of paper ... mimicked the surface of a rock face” (Sundaram

Tagore Gallery, 2017: 2). This in turn led to experiments “with folding, crushing and crinkling” (Ibid: 2), the outcomes of which are shown in the cliff face in Figure 6. This process in fact echoes my experiments in industry with crushed and broomstick pleating processes.



**Figure 6. Hiroshi Senju 2012. *Cliff 51*. Ink, powdered shell on paper, *gofun*, mounted on board, 1938mm x 390mm. Hiroshi Senju Museum.**  
Source: Hiroshi Senju Museum (2019)

The artwork below by Ikezaki could also be said to show a focus on surface textures by using subtle toning of ink by wetting the paper first and allowing the ink to spread, creating an ambiguous image of organic forms, recalling turbulent waves or perhaps windswept vegetation. Bleeding the ink and crushing the paper in various ways, in order to create organic forms, could be said to be strong elements in my own art-practice, which resonate with the processes mentioned of the two artists.



Figure 7. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2010. *Timeless Auras 617*. Ink on paper. 8890mm x 18030mm. Private collection  
Source: Kylin Gallery

Both artists received diverse training. Ikezaki learnt Sumi-e at the age of ten but was trained in fine arts at a tertiary level in the United States of America. Ikezaki is a Sumi-e painter and claims to be so, but has ventured beyond traditional Sumi-e in certain paintings where he has added collage and colour, as well as three-dimensional forms. These artworks are presented in Chapter 4. Senju was trained in *Nihonga*, traditional Japanese painting, to be discussed in Chapter 5. Senju may outwardly show threads of traditional Sumi-e in his *Cliff* series (Figure 6), with nature as his choice of subject matter, a few of the processes, and the use of natural materials.

Collage, applique and three-dimensional forms are further developments of my artmaking, which I have recorded through note taking and photographs. My own visual material has played a big part in this research, linking my practice with my writing. In addition, I have accessed photographs of traditional Sumi-e. My visual experiences of artworks viewed at exhibitions have also played a part in my development beyond Sumi-e.

My current artworks are now based on a nexus of Sumi-e, my previous Eurocentric art training, contemporary art trends, a cross pollination of ideas between my colleagues and lecturers, my long-term passion for textures, nature and organic forms, the influences of Ikezaki and Senju, as well as my personal history.

### **1.3 Research questions**

This study investigated how the practice of traditional Sumi-e may exert an influence on contemporary artists. The main research question to be explored was: ‘How has my art practice been enabled by breaking the boundaries of traditional Sumi-e?’ This question was inspired by my observations of likely Sumi-e influences in the contemporary artworks of Yoshio Ikezaki and Hiroshi Senju.

This was addressed by considering the following sub-questions in this dissertation:

1. What elements, characteristics and philosophy form the basis of traditional Japanese Sumi-e?
2. What traditional Sumi-e elements can be detected in the artmaking of Ikezaki and Senju?
3. How has learning the rules and principles of Sumi-e and thereafter “breaking the rules” catalysed my artmaking?
4. How does the nexus between the influences of Ikezaki, Senju, Sumi-e and my formal art training manifest in my own art practice?

### **1.4 Objectives**

The objectives of this study were:

1. To identify the elements, characteristics and the philosophy behind the traditional practice of Sumi-e.
2. To determine what elements of Sumi-e may be evident in the artworks of Ikezaki and Senju.
3. To discover how learning the rules and principles of Sumi-e and thereafter “breaking the rules” has catalysed my artmaking.
4. To determine the impact of the influences of Ikezaki, Senju, Sumi-e and my formal art training on my own art practice.

### **1.5 Overview of the chapters**

Chapter 1. Introduction of the study, the motivation for this investigation, the background to my art practice; my research questions and finally the objectives of this study.

Chapter 2. Literature review: This covers a brief history of traditional Sumi-e, the impact of isolation and the influences of Buddhism resulting in a distinctive culture, and why Sumi-e may be considered a holistic form of artmaking. A theoretical framework of reference for traditional Sumi-e is presented in order to identify possible roots of the artform within the artworks of Yoshio Ikezaki and Hiroshi Senju, as well as a theoretical framework of materiality.

Chapter 3. Methodology. This chapter presents the research design, the case study approach, data collection methods, a brief introduction into my own art practice, the limitations placed on this study, and how the evaluation of the findings will take place.

Chapter 4. Yoshio Ikezaki. This covers an analysis of a selection of artworks assessed against the framework of reference in Chapter 2. Included in this chapter is evidence as to what extent Ikezaki has ventured beyond traditional Sumi-e resulting in contemporary artworks.

Chapter 5. Hiroshi Senju. This covers an analysis of a selection of artworks assessed against the framework of reference in Chapter 2. Included in this chapter is evidence regarding how Senju has ventured beyond traditional ink painting<sup>2</sup> by his use of sprayguns and airbrushes creating contemporary artworks.

Chapter 5. My own artworks and art practice, showing how I have “broken the rules” by venturing beyond the boundaries of traditional Sumi-e, together with the influences of Senju, Ikezaki, contemporary artists, my formal art training and my personal history and how these influences have resulted in my material thinking.

Chapter 6. Conclusion. The influence of practice and context within traditional Sumi-e are evaluated against the findings listed in the framework of reference and a summary of what opportunities lie in the unusual processes and materials of Sumi-e enabling departures, and catalysing creativity.

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<sup>2</sup> Senju does not claim to be a Sumi-e painter and my reasons for inclusion of his artmaking in this research will be explained in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to contextualise my research by referring to literature, artists and images which are relevant to understanding the different aspects of the topic and research questions. My own art practice is a key aspect, and, as I have explained, this grew out of my interest in Sumi-e. I begin by presenting a history revealing how Sumi-e evolved out of historical and cultural influences noting the characteristics and elements, including images as examples of its stylistic development. This is followed by a review of the available literature on ink painting in Asia and why there are various unfamiliar aspects of art critique approaches to understand. Following that is a discussion of contemporary ink painting emanating from China and Japan and the divergent or dualistic approaches that exist between traditions in ink painting, and what has become fine art which is more modernist or ‘Western’ in style. (‘Western’ is commonly used in Japan to differentiate traditional Japanese artmaking from international artmaking). This leads to my theoretical framework, which deals with the canon (in this case, of Sumi-e), artistic innovation or departures from the canon,<sup>3</sup> and materiality, something which I have identified as an important characteristic of my own artworks.

### 2.2 History of Sumi-e

Understanding the history of Sumi-e is a way of unravelling “what” Sumi-e is about and how the distinguishing characteristics of the artform have evolved.

Sumi-e may be said to be historically rooted in Buddhism, calligraphy, ink painting and Taoism which stemmed from the Chinese. However, the Japanese “wish to be thought of ... as having a genius for assimilating cultural influences into a synthesis uniquely their

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<sup>3</sup> The first canons for the practice of ink painting laid down in the Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting (Sze, 1956).



own” (Hall, 1968: 9). Indeed, this will be revealed through an understanding of how the propagation of the distinctly Japanese art form, Sumi-e, evolved.

The earliest known surviving ink painting excavated from tombs in Hunan, China, during the Warring States Period, is the *Silk Painting of a Lady, Phoenix and Dragon*, Figure 8, dated broadly to 475-221 BCE, although there are claims that this art form originated as far back as 4000 years (Asia-Art.Net, 2005)



**Figure 8. Silk painting with female figure, dragon and phoenix patterns, 475-221 BCE. Ink on silk, 2251mm x 310mm. Hunan Provincial Museum, Changsha, China.**  
Source: Hunan Provincial Museum (2019)

Confucianism and Taoism were the two prevailing philosophies in China prior to the influence of Buddhism. Buddhism stemmed from India<sup>4</sup> and was said to have been “formalized in China” (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000) late in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BCE (Barnett and Burto, 1982: 8) and was influenced by Taoism (Hall, 1968: 8). Japanese Buddhist monks travelled to China in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries to learn about the “high civilization under Chinese tutelage” (Toynbee cited in Hall, 1968: 35) as well as from Chinese Buddhist monks who took up residence in Japan. The Japanese Buddhist monks

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<sup>4</sup> Buddha was born, in 563BCE (Barnet & Burto, 1982: 8) Buddha, Sidhartha Gautama, was in born in Lumbini, known today as Nepal (UNESCO, 2019), and attained enlightenment in Bodh-Gaya, known today as the state of Bihar, in India (BuddhaNet, 2008).

were “overwhelmed ... and driven by imitation” (Sansom and Toynbee in Hall, 1968: 35) in relation to the Chinese administration, systems of government and calligraphy.

Hall states that the Japanese stubbornly preserved their essential differences “throughout their historic development” (1968) and this became apparent when the Japanese developed a calligraphy of their own style, called *shodo* (a “more sensuous hand”), comprised of simple “elegant *kana*” (Stanley-Baker, 2014: 9, 80) differing and yet retaining vestiges of Chinese influences. Zen calligraphy is considered an art form in itself, as well as being part of Sumi-e, and spiritually expressed through a union of the brush and heart. As in China, the Buddhist monks progressed from calligraphy to ink painting and it appears that this was the norm in teaching Sumi-e, first mastery of calligraphy, and thereafter painting: “There is no difference in the brushwork of calligraphy and painting; both use the same approach” (Hsü cited in Sze, 1956: 30).

The earliest paintings were linear portraits of important people, ‘masters’ such as abbots and the Emperor. These became the chosen subject matter of Zen monks, inspired by portraits of Chinese masters brought back to Japan. These were presented to disciples by their masters, with a message in calligraphy. Thus, in the artworks “the painting and calligraphy ... intimately connected in their purpose and meaning” (Fontein and Hickman cited in Stanley-Baker, 2014: 114).



**Figure 9. Rankei Dōryū, 1271. Portrait of Lanqi Daolong. Ink and light colour on silk, hanging scroll, 10480mm x 4640mm. Kamakura Museum of National Treasures, Japan.**  
Source: Alamy Historical Art Collection (2017)

It was in Heian culture, (now known as Kyoto), that an art form encompassing calligraphy, painting and poetry was first developed, learnt from the Chinese, and evident in the artwork shown in Figure 9. Sir George Sansom characterised late Heian culture (794-1185 CE) as “a rule of taste” which “extended into nearly every facet of daily life and made ... religion into an art and art into religion” (Stanley-Baker, 2014: 66). This reveals that art was not an isolated pursuit, but rather an extension of life and spirituality and may be said to be what partly contributed to my idea of traditional Sumi-e as an holistic art form. This will be evidenced in the framework of reference later in this chapter.

Below (Figure 10) is an artwork executed by Josetsu, a forerunner of Sumi-e showing 31 poems in calligraphy, inscribed by Buddhist monks, and the ridiculous situation of a monk attempting to catch a catfish with a gourd. This may be said to reveal Zen humour in a didactic way, implying one should not have “unrealistic expectations” (Van Loon, ‘pers. Comm’ 2016) and “rational thought cannot grasp enlightenment” (Barnet and Burto, 1982: 64). It may be said that Sumi-e was not commonly used didactically, and many paintings expressed spirituality and reverence of nature.



Figure 10. Taikō Josetsu, 1413. *Catching a Catfish with a Gourd*. Ink and light colours on paper, 1115mm x 758mm. Taizo-in Temple, Kyoto, Japan.  
 Source: Barnet and Burto (1982)

Spirituality in traditional Sumi-e may be said to be partly the result of the practice of meditation. Eisai (1141-1215 CE) and Dōgen (1200-1253 CE) studied in China and are credited by Stanley-Baker for introducing *Chan*, pronounced as zen in Japanese (Stanley-Baker, 2014: 114) or translated as *zazen* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), both of which mean meditation.

“Traditional Sumi-e arose out of Heian culture and Zen Buddhism” (Ibid).<sup>5</sup> This link with processes and expression of spirituality is said to be “a tradition of art practice within Zen. Art arises spontaneously and manifests the buddha-nature within you” (Buddhism Stack Exchange, 2018: 1).

Historically traditional Sumi-e is linked to the “rising status” of the Zen Buddhist monks as the main teachers and practitioners [who] heralded “the etiology of splashed ink in East Asia,” the main proponent being Sesshū Tōyō (Lippit, 2012: 53) and echoed by Nute (1995: 26). Josetsu was another renowned Sumi-e Zen Buddhist painter (Barnet and Burto, 1982: 24). Rosenfield stated that “little or no painting ... from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century through the 11<sup>th</sup> Century could be found in Japan that was not Buddhist in inspiration” (Rosenfield cited in Cohen, 1992: 184).

However, it is possible that not all traditional Sumi-e painters followed the path of Zen Buddhism, but interpretations may have been seen to reveal Zen. An example is Figure 11, *Night Heron*, painted by Ta’an Chiden, who did not follow Zen (Barnet and Burto, 1982: 78). In Zen, birds may be considered an analogy for living without encumbrances as expressed in the Zen phrase: “To follow the bird’s path” (Ibid).

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<sup>5</sup> Heian is known today as Kyoto and is considered to be the center of traditional culture with seventeen UNESCO world heritage sites comprised of two shrines, one castle and fourteen temples, many of which display Sumi-e paintings on screens and hand scrolls.



Figure 11. Ta'an Chiden, 1500. *Night Heron*. Ink on paper. 329mm x 491mm. Tokyo National Museum, Japan.

Source: Barnet and Burto (1982)

The choice of birds, creatures and flowers are also a genre of traditional Sumi-e, but I have purposively selected landscape as a genre, because it relates to my own works as well as that of Senju and Ikezaki.

Expressing nature and especially landscape as a genre, could be said to reflect Zen Buddhist and Taoist views of humans' symbiotic relationship with nature, called 'cosmocentricism' in English, but not translatable as a single word into Japanese. *Myō*, meaning "a sense of awe to the dimension in the depth of the universe" (Mara, 2010) may be considered an analogy for cosmocentricism in Japanese. Barnet and Burto sum up a Zen Buddhist outlook: "attaining an uncluttered mind of inner spirituality, symbiosis of man and nature" and "an intuitive awareness of the underlying Way of the Universe ... oneness with all" (1982: 9), although it does not refer to 'cosmocentricism.' However, Garfield acknowledges this: "Oriental art ... has been cosmocentric. This stems from *Wu Wei*" (2009: 96). Watts, a Zen Buddhist, acknowledges the influence of Taoism in Zen with phrases such as: "living the Tao", "being at one with nature" and "flowing with the moment" (Watts, 1975: 96). Nature, Zen Buddhism, Taoism and Shintoism have all played a part in the evolution of the art form, Sumi-e. The last mentioned, Shintoism, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Below (Figure 12), Seeshū Tōyō has painted an aerial view of a coastal scene with diminutive signs of habitation, soaring mist enveloped mountains, and humans as a microcosm of a macrocosm, endorsing the concept of cosmocentricism.



**Figure 12. Sesshū Toyo, 1501. *View of Ama no Hashidate*. Ink on paper, No dimensions. Kyoto National Museum, Japan.**  
Source: Kyoto National Museum (2018)

Contemporary culture may have impacted on this outlook of cosmocentricism and affected contemporary Japanese painting as well as traditional Sumi-e, possibly resulting in anthropocentric attitudes, said to be a perception of “Asians about Westerners” (Carter, 2007: 35; Yamauchi, 1994: 4) and debated by Bergant (Brown, 2000: 147). With further consideration, the above opinions may apply to traditional Japanese culture, but may no longer apply to a contemporary context and could be said to be outdated. But, traditional Sumi-e extended through centuries and we need to take cognisance of issues relevant to the traditional art form. In addition, the indigenous ancient beliefs of Shintoism have continued to this day, co-existing with Buddhism as the two main philosophies. Prideaux believes that Shinto is “the backbone of Japan’s cultural identity ... an ancient system of animistic beliefs and customs ... venerating nature” (2007: 1)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> In Chapter 5, this concept of animism reflected in the artwork of Senju, will be further discussed.

The inspiration of nature for Sumi-e painters should not be underestimated. “Enlightenment came when the mind was empty and the heart in direct tune with nature” (Lippit, 2012: 51). To capture the inner essence of a scene (Hearn, 2000) rather than a realistic representation of a scene, may be considered fundamental to Sumi-e. Fennollosa in *The Lessons of Japanese Art*, explained: “The mere representation of an external fact, the mechanical copying of nature, has nothing whatever to do with art. This proposition is asserted by all oriental critics, and is a fundamental canon with all Japanese painters” (Fennollosa cited in Nute, 1995: 28). This opinion may be said to apply to traditional Sumi-e painters, and a century ago it could be said that artists captured the essence of reality, but to apply this to all Japanese painters today now seems a generalisation.

Implicit in the veneration of nature are certain concepts, one of which is to confuse Zen Buddhist and Taoist concepts of “emptiness”, “void” and “cosmic emptiness” with “nihilism” (Watts, 1975: 369). Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945) developed an indigenous Japanese philosophical movement centred on the assertion that whereas the “...West had taken ‘being’ as the ground of reality, the East had ‘nothingness’ as its ground” (Nishida cited in Faure, 1995: 251; Davis, 2019: 31). The opinion of Nishida could be refuted when one considers the void as expressed in certain Modernist and contemporary artworks, such as Mark Rothko’s 1969 *Untitled Black on Grey* series (Tate National Gallery of Art, 2019). In this artwork there is a black void with a mass of grey below. Ikezaki frequently uses a void or *ma*, and this can be seen in *Timeless Auras 617*, to be discussed in Chapter 4. In traditional Sumi-e the void may be considered a necessary compositional element, and painting in an intuitive way – capturing the essence of a scene, leaving out unnecessary details – may well facilitate this.

Another important characteristic of traditional Sumi-e is the concept of *chi*, or *Ch’i*, or *ki*, or *qi*. The aim is to incorporate *chi*, “vital energy or natural force” (Kim, 2012: 1), within the artwork through the process, thereby “encouraging the spirit (*ch’i*) to rise” (Sze, 1956: 34). The concept of *Ch’i* was the first canon of six, formulated by Hsieh Ho, in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, and continued to be one of the most important canons throughout the publication, over centuries, of *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (Sze, 1956: 19-23).



*Chi* may have been considered part of everyday life and traditional Japanese culture (Ikezaki, 2016; Senju, 2016; Kim, 2012: 1), “echoing Taoist and Zen Buddhist values” (Sheng, 2006: 33). Van Loon frequently refers to *chi* in his teachings. He says the “dragons enter the painting through this unpainted space, called *chi*, but are chased away by over painting” (‘pers. Comm’ 2016). *Chi* is not something that can easily be understood and is a distinctive concept. This unpainted empty space in Sumi-e, or void, may be said to be vital to the Zen art form, as well as a means of expressing *ma*.

Language adds to the complexity of understanding Japanese culture, art and especially traditional Sumi-e, because “Japanese language affects the nature of Japanese criticism”, and the relationship between Japanese “thinking and aesthetics and criticism” (Ippolito cited in Hisayo, 1998: 28).

*Yūgen*, is a word meaning: “inexplicable feelings evoked ... deep in oneself ... about nature” (Apple, 2017: 1). In addition, the “aesthetic experience of *yūgen* participates in the structure of *shikan* thought and meditation ... it implies a collapse of the distance between object and subject” (Mara, 2010: 10). My interpretation of this is a collapse of the distance between the artist and the subject, implying envelopment of nature and meditation through nature. The Japanese language includes paradoxical words that are not always clearly translatable into English, resulting in a “deliberately ambiguous expression which opens up rather than obstructs” (Heine cited in Mara, 2010, 9). An example is *k’ung* meaning ‘emptiness’, but which has ‘*se*’ (form) (Watts, 1973: 25).

Van Loon (‘pers. Comm’ 2016) has illuminated many words applicable to Sumi-e, such as *wabi-sabi*, an expression referring to the concept of imperfect beauty, rather than absolute perfection, and *shibiue*. The latter has many meanings, one of which refers to unobtrusive or subtle beauty. Beauty in contemporary culture is associated with “a combination of qualities ... that pleases the aesthetic senses” (Lexico, n.d.). In Zen Buddhism, and when discussing Sumi-e painting, beauty has been spoken of in many ways and with reverence: “delicate sensitive-ness to the beautiful” (Dow cited in Boyle, 2013: 63), “transcendence enhanced loveliness ... beauty all the more arresting for the certainty that it must perish” (Hoover, 1977: 24).

Rowley suggests that “Westerners” are often unaware of subtleties in meaning. He states: “the types of *yin-yang* ... are many and various, and will often escape the careful scrutiny of the ‘Western’ eye and the analytical appraisal of the ‘Western mind’” (Rowley cited in Cohen, 1992: 168). Rowley has a point which cannot be refuted, but my intention is that through attempts at defining pertinent vocabulary, the subtleties, paradoxes, concepts, aesthetics and philosophy, I will be able to gain and convey a better understanding of traditional Sumi-e in order to contextualise the origins of my own work and how this has shaped my perceptions of the work of Senju and Ikezaki amongst others. Explanation of the teaching processes within the historical and cultural context will further enhance this understanding.

The teaching processes of traditional Sumi-e are distinctive. The primary Chinese, English and Japanese ink painting instruction publication, regarding the process of teaching Sumi-e, and which has endured through centuries, is *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (Sze, 1956), called *Zenyaku Kaishi-en Garden* in Japanese (Hutt, 1987: 26: 39). The condensed instruction books of Sato (2010), Okamoto (1996) and Suidzinski (1983), endorse the method of *den-sho* teaching, which means to pass on to the next generation. This entails the master, who was shown by his master, demonstrating and the students copying the paintings of the master (Adams, 2016: 21: 39). “In copying, seek to pass on the essence of the master’s brush and methods” (Hsieh Ho cited in Sze, 1956: 19). This quote forms one of the six canons, proclaimed by Hsieh Ho in 500 CE (Ibid)Sze, 1956: 19). In addition the books of trees, rocks, orchid, bamboo, plum and chrysanthemum, the last four named the Four Gentlemen (Adams, 2016,13, Hoover, 1977, 22), or in Japanese known as *shikunshi*, together with the use of all-natural materials, have continued to form the basis of learning traditional Sumi-e.

These materials are embodied in a process which may be considered conducive to meditation. “Art practice is mindfulness training” (Buddhism Stack Exchange, 2018: 1). The title of the instruction manual by Siudzinski (1978) *Sumi-e A Meditation in Ink* can be said to indicate the value of meditation for Siudzinski in teaching the art form, echoed by (cited in Adams, 2016: 23), myself as a teacher of the art form, and Kataoka, a contemporary Sumi-e artist, who stresses the importance of “entering a deep contemplative state ... at the core of the creative process” (2016).

The art form is taught in a disciplined way with specific materials and processes resulting in distinctive characteristics. The phrase “learn the rules and thereafter break the rules” is mentioned by Sze (1956: 17) in the first chapter, and echoed by contemporary teachers (Adams, 2016). This licensed freedom – “the end of all method is to have no method” (Sze, 1956: 17) – is also echoed by Covell, discussing the 16<sup>th</sup> century *Splashed Ink Landscape* by Sesshū: “intentions and methods were an impediment, rationality a hindrance” (Covell cited in Lippit, 2012: 51). “Unmediated artmaking” and “unpremeditated mark making” is attributed to the same artwork (Ibid: 52). The accomplished Sumi-e artist is expected to paint spontaneously, without sketching out first and I believe that “intuitive, spontaneous” and “unpremeditated” are fundamental to Sumi-e practice.

The modes of display of traditional Sumi-e in certain formats and specific contexts is another distinguishing tradition of the art form. Context and “recontextualisation” (Kee, 2010) will be considered because the context and display of traditional Sumi-e has been site specific, namely in temples, castles and in the last century, museums. Sumi-e was painted on fans, screens, temple ceilings and scrolls; the last mentioned were “never intended to be seen in their entirety, fully unrolled ... should be seen, bit by bit” (Hutt, 1987: 28). “Folding screens called the *Namban-byobu* were produced in great number by artists of the Kano School from the end of the sixteenth through the seventeenth century” (Mizutani and Nakamura, 1998). Contemporary displays of these screens in museums may be shown in sections and occasionally on full display, such as *Pine Trees*, which was installed in 1872 when The National Museum of Tokyo was opened (Figure 14).



**Figure 13. Hasegawa Tohaku, 1539-1610. *Pine Trees*. Ink painting on paper, a pair of six screens, called *fusama*, the individual screens measure 1568mm x 356mm. Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.**

My viewing of exhibitions in Japan in 2016, 2017 and 2018, together with the handbooks of the Hiroshi Senju Museum in Karuizawa (Senju, 2012), the Akita Museum of Art in Akita, the Teshima Museum on Teshima Island, the Yayoi Museum in Tokyo, teamLab Borderless in Odaiba, Tokyo, have all been sources of information for me regarding contemporary display and contextualisation of artworks. In addition, O’Doherty (1986) suggests context within gallery space can be manipulated to create an aesthetic encounter. These will be discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. In my personal exhibition held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2019, at the KwaZulu-Natal Society of the Arts (KZNSA), Durban (Appendix C) I utilised light and shadow, vertically divided screens, triptychs and heptptyches, suspension of three dimensional compilations of autobiographical materials, as well as a film of paintings strung up in our local forest. The latter was also projected over the artworks from the mezzanine level of the gallery, as well as shown in the theatre on a continuous loop.

Viewing historical Japanese concepts, vocabulary, Zen Buddhism and philosophy bound in the traditional culture together with its distinguishing characteristics assists in unravelling traditional Sumi-e. What should be evident to the reader is how this combination of characteristics and processes combined to form a holistic and unique artform. Whether and how elements of these concepts, philosophy and characteristics are identifiable in the contemporary artmaking of Ikezaki and Senju will be considered in Chapters 4 and 5.

### **2.3 The development of literature**

There are several publications of instruction books, mainly dated between 1960 and 1988, on traditional ink painting and Sumi-e, most of which are in Chinese. NACSIS-CAT/ILL, the Japanese academic interlibrary site, has not been accessible by me in English, or by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) librarian, Ms. J. Sibisi (‘pers. Comm’ 2017). Perusing twelve publishers’ catalogues on art books for 2017 from the United Kingdom and Europe – more than 1000 publications – I found only three publications on Japanese artists, none of which provided information on Sumi-e, ink painting, Ikezaki or Senju. The paucity of literature since 1988 indicates that over the last five decades ink painting, and

specifically Sumi-e, has largely declined in popularity. Post WW2 in Japan saw a dramatic surge in avant-garde artmaking resulting in diverse genres: “Post 1945 ... artists, intellectuals and the long-suppressed left initially embraced the US Occupation for ushering in a liberal democracy” (Pangburn, 2016).

It appears that Japanese culture has embraced many aspects and art forms. Bao et al believe that “Cultural imprinting and “personal identity is supported and enriched with cultural belongingness” (2016: 1). What this evolving context means to Sumi-e will be revealed further on in this research. The idea of cultural appropriation (Matthes, 2015: 2) and ethnocentrism, are additional concerns which compelled me to delve into what I understood to be ‘Japanese culture.’

Throughout Japan’s history of artmaking there have been influences from outside of Japan, as well as periods of self-imposed isolation over centuries, called *sakoku*, from 1633 to 1854 (Tran, 2017: 1; Winther-Tamaki, 2012: 1), as well as the isolation of Japan as a group of islands. An already existing traditional culture could be said to have further incubated over this period, and the influence of this will be seen in the artworks of that period, as presented in this section. In 1854, at the end of Japan’s self-imposed exile, the Japanese opened their doors to further outside influences which has been said to have led to an infatuation with Western art, described as “the tragedy of the Japanese abandoning their artistic traditions in the rush to modernize” (Nute, 1995: 25). Fenellosa, an American historian who resided in Japan from 1878 to 1890, crusaded for the continuation of traditional Japanese artmaking, together with Okakura Kakuzo and Ariga Nagao (Nute, 1995: 28; Boyle, 2013: 63). The result was the recognition by the Japanese government of two acknowledged art forms: *Nihonga*, which embraced traditional Japanese painting methods using all-natural materials, and *Yoga*, Western style art (Foxwell, 2015: 27; Sandrey, 2017: 2). Using the word ‘Western’ as a descriptor seems somewhat dated, post-globalisation, however it is still in common usage in literature (Jordan, 2017: 272, Winther-Tamaki, 2012: 1) and in the Tokyo University of the Arts curriculum (Tokyo University of the Arts, 2017). It appears to be a way of differentiating Asia from Europe/America. For this reason I use it, recognising its imperfections, but for want of a better term. Where possible I will avoid this term and use contemporary or other relevant terms instead.

The limitations of literature available and the “different perspectives and expectations of art criticism between Japanese and Americans” (Hisayo (1998: i), seems generalized and possibly culturally prejudiced, which I became conscious of during the course of my research. I realized that I needed to reconsider my ways of assessing traditional Sumi-e and the artworks of Ikezaki and Senju. My knowledge of art criticism has been grounded in Western modes. My recent investigations for this research, and what I continue to learn from my first Sumi-e teacher, Van Loon, is that within traditional Sumi-e, artists do not explain or discuss their artworks because they expect that viewers will respond subjectively.

My conversations with Van Loon reported in this dissertation are based on prior personal communications (‘pers. Comm.’ 2016-2019), and on the findings in my Honours research report (Adams, 2016). I also felt it was important to supplement the limited information available in English on the work of the two Japanese artists with further information on how they interpret their own art practices. Therefore questionnaires were an appropriate method to collect data, given that I was not able to interview them in person.

In the last decade there appears to have been a turnaround in attitudes towards artistic critique by a few Japanese academics, suggesting that independently expressive opinions on painting are becoming more acceptable.

Yukio Lippit, Professor of Asian Studies at Harvard University, provides an enlightening account of Sesshū’s *Splashed Ink Landscape* (1495) artwork and reveals dissenting opinions of persons “projecting assumptions concerning the nature of Zen experience and Japanese art as a whole” (2012: 50). Zen Buddhism is not a skill learnt by rote or through short-cuts, and ‘mindful living’ with ‘compassion’ is only a small part of Zen. Knowledge of Zen, such as pertinent words and phrases, assists in understanding the Sumi-e paintings of the masters, as well as the meditative processes of Sumi-e painting and certain aspects of Japanese culture. Zen Buddhist aesthetics can be further accessed in publications by Edleglass and Garfield (2009), McArthur (2018), Mara (2010), Watts (1975,1973) as well as the website Karmapa (2019).

Shiniki Nakazawa is a contemporary curator in Japan, an anthropologist and Director of the Institut pour la Science Sauvage at Meiji University in Tokyo. He curated the 2017 exhibition titled: *Wild: Untamed Mind, 2017*, which I visited in October 2017, at DESIGN SIGHT 21\_21 Gallery, in Tokyo Mid-Town (DESIGN SIGHT 21\_21, 2017). An enlightening Japanese aesthetic is revealed in the accompanying catalogue, overturning my preconceptions of restrictive Japanese art criticism. Here the texts for each artwork explain the rootedness of the “untamed mind” ranging from a Jomon ceramic vessel, African ritual dress, 12<sup>th</sup> Century Sumi-e (Figure 17), contemporary digital art, to an installation of dried magnolia buds meandering in waves across a platform by Seizo Tashima (Figure 18). This critique indicates a contemporary view of art, where categorising artworks and formalist critiques are not employed. The common denominator, ‘Wild: untamed mind’ could be likened to “the anti-irrational counter mind” (Hoover, 1977: 4) and to the intuitive art practice of Sumi-e.

#### **2.4 Additional influences on my own art practice**

When considering sources of literature for my own artmaking, I have utilised published texts, YouTube clips, on-line reviews, catalogues, questionnaires and artworks of Ikezaki and Senju, as well as note taking from exhibitions, photographs where possible, and postcards.

Options for displaying my artworks have evolved from “off the wall” (Brätsch, 2018, 1), arising from my viewing of the displays of Senju within the Hiroshi Senju Museum and the installation for Kongbuji temple, my experience and the catalogue of the digital virtual reality installation (teamLab Borderless, 2018), and notetakings on site and the catalogues of The Teshima Art Museum.

The displayed text at the exhibition *Wild: Untamed mind* (DESIGN SIGHT 21\_21, 2017); and the publication *Memory of Life* (Seizo, 2010), provided me with fresh insights on the implications of nature in Japan and the opportunity to consider opinions of resident Japanese persons in alternative ways of viewing and representing nature.



**Figure 14. Seizo Tashima, 2010. *Howling Beast*. Collage of magnolia buds. Installation, no dimensions. Viewed: Exhibition: *Wild: Untamed mind*, 2017. 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT Gallery, Tokyo. Source: DESIGN SIGHT 21-21 (2017)**

The artworks and publications of Jeannette Unite presented in *Terra* (Lambrecht and Powell, 2012), and the catalogue obtained at the exhibition visited in June 2018, titled *No Man's Land Where Beauty Alone Reigns* (Reykjavík Art Museum, 2018), provided additional sources on artworks inspired by land and geology.

Literature on paper making in Japan, *Which? Paper* (Turner, 1992), and the practice of papermaking propelled my experimentation, developed from notes I made when viewing a film and live demonstration of mulberry paper making at Ozu Washi (Tokyo) in October 2017, as well as literature on *ganpishi*,<sup>7</sup> my paper choice of for some of my latter artworks because of its transparent quality. Added to this is literature on the paper making of Yoshio Ikezaki (O'Neill, 1988) who also teaches the subject in the USA. Extending my artmaking into paper making has enabled a deeper involvement with my materials and a progression towards materiality.

Lippit touches on materiality, which has become the thrust of my artmaking and which I believe has been propagated through my materials. Referring to Sesshū's *Splashed Ink Landscape* (Figure 1), he mentions how “the materiality of the ink painting medium itself could determine the interpretative potentiality of a given work” (2012: 72). This quality in

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<sup>7</sup> Ganpishi is made of “bast fibres from a Ganpi tree, (*Diplomorpha sikokiana*) a plant of the Thymelaeaceae family ... paper makers have to rely on trees growing in the wild” (Musashino Art University, 2017).



a traditional Sumi-e painting dating back to 1495 endorses my belief that the very materials of traditional Sumi-e predispose the practice to experimentation and ultimately materiality and interpretation. Birch (2018) postulates a theory of ‘unknowing’ in art practice which may be said to reflect “intuitive” artmaking. These opinions I believe are how one may approach Sumi-e practice as well as “breaking the rules”, and extending beyond the parameters of traditional Sumi-e.

My searching for artworks and literature on artists involved with their materials and possibly expressing materiality, working with their intuition rather than mediated art practice, as well as looking for inspiration in nature, led me to a number of inspiring artworks and artists.

Inspiration has come through correspondence with the German artist Ines Seidel (‘pers. Comm’ 2019), viewing of artworks by the Japanese artist Yu Sora (Tokyo Midtown Design Touch, 2018), Nandipha Mntambo viewed at Zeitz Museum (2018), a journal article on the artwork of Mary Sibande by Henderson (2018), the installations of Doris Salcedo (Takac, 2017) and Park Chel Ho (Baik Art, 2018), note taking at Okayama Prefectural Museum of Art (2018), and Gallery MOMO of the artworks of Pedro Pires (Pires, 2018), and lastly the citation of Birch (*Poised in space: between mark and maker, investigating the effects of unknowing on my artistic practice*, 2018).

Background reading on the history of Japan, the culture and the artmaking together with Zen Buddhist and Taoist literature has broadened my outlook on Japanese culture which I now realise, although steeped in history and tradition, is not simply a homogenous culture. Mindful of the concept of cultural appropriation, I address the limitations of my etic positionality in the Chapter 3 (Methodology).

My practice-led artmaking has been consistently compiled since my enrolment, in a series of workbooks, where I have noted extracts of literature, my photographs of ideas, my artworks and processes. Information from these workbooks assisted in the compilation of Chapter 6.

## 2.5 Theories of materiality

Materiality “as an aesthetic concept” is said to have “evolved out of formalism’s interest in the purely visual aspects of art and structuralism’s interest in context and communication” (Mills, 2009: 1). This opinion could be interpreted as categorising ‘materiality’ chronologically as an art practice. Indeed materiality is embedded in a multiplicity of materials used in contemporary art practices, ranging through digital, film, environmental, abject art, performance, dance, lighting, industrial materials such as steel, concrete, foam, plastic, glass, and organic materials such as rubber, fat, rope, plants, fibre, wood and paper.

Precedents may be identified in the unusual appropriation of materials in the artworks of Joseph Beuys, who used felt and fat,<sup>8</sup> Jackson Pollock who splattered and poured house paints on very large canvases<sup>9</sup>, Cubist artists such as Georges Braque who used base materials such as newspaper and imitation wood in his collages<sup>10</sup> and Gutai artists such as Tsuruko Yamazaki<sup>11</sup>, who created a ‘mosquito net’ out of vinyl, wood, metal, light bulbs and bolts.

Atsuko Tanaka, representing the Gutai artists (Japan post WW2), said: “our work is the result of investigating the possibilities of calling the material to life” suggesting the potential of ‘life’ implicit within the material (Lange-Berndt, 2015: 34:). Enmeshed together, the artist and his/her materials create a physicality. Atsuko also says: “the human spirit and the material reach out their hands to each other” (Ibid: 33). This intimate connection between the artist and his/her tools is reflected in the resulting materiality which may be sensed and interpreted in different ways, according to the responses evoked by the artwork. The very physicality of these materials conveys layers of meanings, as stated by Mills: “physicality impacts content and, subsequently, meaning” (2009: 1).

Various processes, experiments and exploitations of my materials results in a materiality

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Beuys, 1963. *Fettbatterie*, Felt, fat, tin, metal and cardboard 132 x 373 x 248 (Tate National Gallery of Art, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Jackson Pollock, 1952, *Convergence*. oil on canvas. 2370mm x 3900mm (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Georges Braque, 1913. *Le Courier*, Paper and newspaper, imitation wood, charcoal. 508x 558 (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Tsuruko Yamazaki, 1956-214. *Red* (shaped mosquito net). Vinyl, wood, metal, lightbulbs. 2250mm x 3000mm x 3000mm (Take Ninagawa Gallery, 2019).

which prompts me to investigate literature dealing with the subject, although such literature is considered “surprisingly rare” (Ingold cited in Lange-Berndt, 2015: 13). However, what sources I have found have been enlightening, such as a suggestion to involve myself mentally in “material thinking” (Bolt, 2006, 5). This has not been easy to master, verbalising thoughts on my processes which intuitively arise out of handling and feeling my way, responding to “the intelligence of materials and processes in practice” (Ibid: 5). Morris talks of “chance” and implied “indeterminacy” resulting in another “configuration” (cited in Lange-Berndt, 2015: 93). Constant ‘playing’ with my materials, combining different inked pieces together in collages, generates transformation resulting in new configurations. The “generative potential” of allowing one’s tools to lead one in intuitive processes, may result in “new insights” (Bolt, 2006: 7).

These opinions resonate with how my art practice has evolved, through my rejection of subject references, working in an intuitive way, my intimate feelings for my materials, the surprises and unexpected outcomes, and lastly how I am learning to communicate my thoughts about my practice. The final outcomes for the viewers will allow subjective meanings to arise, through their responses, possibly recalling associations with similar materials and textures, and forming their own interpretations.

## **2.6 Manifestations of materiality**

Searching for contemporary artists in Japan whose practice emanates from Sumi-e has offered a small selection of calligraphy artists, although there are plenty of painters on Pinterest, but not fitting the fine art or traditional Sumi-e realm. *The Curious Case of Ink Painting* (Kee, 2010: 106) presents a number of artists from China, Taiwan and South Korea, but only mentions Japan within the historical context, referring to *Nihonga*. This search has therefore led me to also consider contemporary ink artists from China. Photographs and texts of these inspirational artists are recorded in my workbooks. Although these artists are important to my own artistic involvement, they do not relate directly to the topic and the research questions. I have excluded them in aid of focusing on the particular concerns of the research project.

## 2.7 Theoretical framework of Sumi-e

The Sumi-e framework as I understand it is established through the recurring characteristics evident in the artworks shown of Tenshō, T'an, Sōjō, Josetsu, Seeshū and Hasegawa, as well as the information in the literature and manuals I have used over the years. This 'framework' of principles consists of the following characteristics:

- The use of all-natural materials
- Shibue or accidental beauty
- Painting instinctively as a form of meditation
- Nature as a source of inspiration, *chi* and cosmocentricism
- Contexts of display
- Japanese cultural terms and vocabulary
- Spirituality
- Learn the rules, break the rules
- Calligraphy
- Mark making with economy, intuitive processes, capture of the essence
- Zen Buddhism
- Holistic art practice
- Calligraphy
- Colour
- Content

It is my understanding that these characteristics of Sumi-e create a holistic and unique artform that I use in my analysis of the artworks and practices of Ikezaki and Senju in the following chapters, so as to address my research questions. They are also qualities and factors that have been highly influential in my own art practices and personal beliefs.

## 2.8 Theoretical framework of materiality

The aesthetic concept of materiality is constructed through the characteristics evident in the artworks of: Yang Jiechang, Natsunosuke Mise, Ines Seidel, Yoshio Ikezaki, Hiroshi Senju, Gao Xinjiang, Kanashiki Shinbo Kaita, Yu Sora, Xu Longsen and Pedro Pires. Added to

this are ideas sourced from the literature of Bolt (2006), Mills (2009), Lange-Berndt (2015) and Barrett and Bolt (2007).

- Processes
- Intelligence of the materials
- Intimate connection with tools and materials
- Life within the materials
- Chance and experiments
- Intuitive processes
- Intuitive handling
- Material thinking
- Generative potentials
- Physicality

## **2.9 Conclusion**

Having reviewed the literature and other relevant influences on my research, and having presented the theory which informs this study, the following chapter explains the methodological approaches adopted.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods I followed in the process of this study, which combined practice-related research (PRR) with aspects of case study in order to frame the starting point of Sumi-e. Sullivan's description of an "arts based educational enquiry" fits this investigation because, as the author says, it "helps broaden the way we understand things and thus can be used to expand how information is gathered and represented" (2010: xiii).

My investigations into literature on art practice as research offered varying opinions, by authors such as Sullivan (2005), Gray and Malins (2004), McNamara (2012), Bolt (2006), Green (2015), de Bolla (2002), Hannula, Suoranta and Vaden (2014), and Skains (2018). The guidelines for my methodology initially appeared to be broad, and I realised that these needed to be streamlined. Gray and Malins suggest "if no established methodologies exist then invent them!" (2004: 18). It appears that the type of methodology used may be adapted to fit the research questions to be answered, as stated by Sullivan: "the use of a suitable methodological base that supports the questions being asked ... may take the researcher beyond existing content boundaries" (2005: 112). It seemed that it was in fact wise at the onset to not narrow down a particular methodological approach. "It is not rational to exclude any form of critique or methodological principles of enquiry at the start", according to Eskola and Kurki (2004: as cited in Hannula, Suoranta, and Vaden, 2014: 6). My subsequent investigations led me to establish what I believed was appropriate for the aims of this research.

These aims were to identify the elements, characteristics and philosophy behind the traditional practice of Sumi-e, and whether these elements are discernible in the artworks of Ikezaki and Senju. In addition, I aimed to explore how 'learning the rules' behind the practice and thereafter 'breaking the rules' has impacted on my own art practice, together with the influences of these two artists and my formal art training.

## **3.2 Research design**

### **3.2.1 Practice-related research**

Practice-related research (PRR), is also called “action research” (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, cited in Skains, 2018: 2). This covers arts-based research, practice-based research (PBR), practice-led research (PLR), practice-centred research and studio-based research (Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes, 2007: 7, cited in Skains, 2018: 1). Candy considers that there are only “two main types of research that have a central practice element”, namely, PBR and PLR, but the terms are “often used interchangeably” (Candy, 2006: 3). Skains stated that in PBR “the creative act is an experiment ... designed to answer a directed research question about art and the practice of it, which could not otherwise be explored by other methods” (2018: 4). PLR “is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice” (Candy, 2006: 1). Bolt offers a deeper insight into PLR, which she states should be a “double articulation between theory and practice whereby theory emerges from a reflective practice at the same time that practice is informed by theory” (Bolt, 2006: 4). Conversely, McNamara says that in PLR one must avoid a relationship between theory and practice that risks “conflating practice with research” (2012: 7). The opinions of Bolt and Candy are most credible for my type of artmaking and the nature of this research is intricately linked with practice.

McNamara outlines some of the difficulties that may be encountered, and states in his six points to consider for PLR that writers should “eliminate I” and “avoid recourse to one’s own experience as the justification for the research ambition” (2012: 5). Skains, on the other hand, says that “creative research questions are often inseparable from artist identity, experiences, and culture” (2018: 37). Sumi-e is, and has become, the crux of my own artmaking and my teaching, which together with my working experience has certainly channelled this research ambition. McNamara is correctly suggesting that artist researchers should venture beyond their individual practice. One should source alternative critiques of other researchers, collaborate with other artists, seek additional possibilities of contexts, all of which can then create new questions. This is sensible and circumvents a linear and purely subjective research account by oneself.

This research and art practice has been an exploration using constant documentation and photographs recorded throughout my practice of various processes, creating new outcomes and understandings about my tools and materials. The “generative potential of process” has “the potential to reveal new insights” (Bolt, 2006: 7). Conflicts and challenges in my artmaking have led to disruption of my previously regular art practice. Sullivan sees this in a positive light, and that through “acceptance that contradiction, conflict and opposition are useful states of mind ... insightful outcomes are revealed and the most important questions arise” (2010: 226). Venturing beyond traditional Sumi-e will become evident from my notes and photographs recorded in my workbooks. Green explains that research as practice is “far less linear and planned than it is emergent and inventive” (Green, 2015). The previously mentioned opinion of Bolt (2006: 4) of a “double articulation” makes more sense in terms of my investigation which is both research as practice and practice as research. Experimentation and innovation fuels theory which then plays back into practice.

Practice-related research is relevant to this research, because Sumi-e functions as an art practice offering eventual exploration through process, enabling change and altered perceptions. My purposeful choice of these two participants are because they are contemporary Japanese ink artists. relevant to my research questions. The establishment of an appropriate case study to fit this PRR will be discussed in the next section, 3.2.2.

### **3.2.2 Case study**

My reasoning for the choice of a case study method is credibly defined by Yin who says that a case study is “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomena within its real life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (1994: 13). My choice of Sumi-e, personally practised and taught, is hardly known as an art form in South Africa, nor is Japanese culture. Japanese culture has had a large influence on the art form, but at the same time global influences have affected artmaking and artists in Japan. These influences have filtered down into my own art practice, and a case study will reveal how, why and what outcomes have resulted.



The various options and approaches as presented by Cavaye's<sup>12</sup> approach to case research appeals to me because it is open to "almost any combination" between extremes (Cavaye, 1996: 227-228, cited in Dobson, 1999: 1). This suggests rather broad leeway. Silverman suggests that "discrepant instances help to sharpen the conceptual clarity of categories and cases" (2001: 36 cited in Sullivan, 2010: 37). My research is not straightforward. Various difficulties, such as the evolving culture of Japan, achieving an understanding of Zen, difficult communication with the two artists who are the subjects of the case study and whose English is limited, and the sparsity of literature available on Sumi-e, presented a formidable challenge. A full understanding of all of these issues are necessary to achieve a reliable research study with credibility. My choice of an appropriate case study methodology follows.

Tobin summarises a descriptive case study as "one that is focused and detailed, in which propositions and questions about a phenomenon are carefully scrutinised and articulated at the outset" (2010: 1). My focus on Sumi-e has identified a framework of reference, detailing characteristics of the art form as well as questioning influences and developments beyond Sumi-e, which fit a descriptive case study. However, an interpretive case study also appears appropriate, although there are a variety of opinions defining this. Choosing between the two, interpretivist or descriptive, it appears that an interpretivist case study is more appropriate for investigating this field due to the lack of specific literature on Sumi-e for the project, because of my passion for this art form, and because of my personal conviction that this artform is worthy of exploration. "In the interpretive tradition there are no correct and incorrect theories" (Walsham, 1993: 478 cited in Dobson, 1999: 263). This opinion seems to offer unlimited leeway. Alvesson and Sköldbberg talk of "interpretive flexibility" meaning that researchers are influenced by their "own frames of reference and make their interpretations in accordance with these" (cited in Sullivan, 2012: 103).

Investigating the influences of Sumi-e on my work and how I see this in the work of others, it is inevitable that some subjective bias will influence my interpretations. Walsham partly mitigates his first statement: "Our quest should be for improved theory ... and for theory

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<sup>12</sup> "a positivist or an interpretive stance, can take a deductive or an inductive approach, can use qualitative and quantitative methods, can investigate one or multiple cases. Case research can be highly structured, positivist, deductive investigation of multiple cases; it can also be an unstructured, interpretive, inductive investigation of one case; lastly, it can be anything in between these two extremes in almost any combination." (Cavaye 1996: 227-228 cited in Dobson, 1999: 1).

that is relevant to the issues of our time” (1993: 478 cited in Dobson, 1999: 263). I am investigating the influences of a traditional art form on contemporary artmaking in order to present an interpretive case study relevant to the contemporary artmaking of Senju and Ikezaki as well as my own artmaking here in South Africa.

### **3.3 Data collection**

The questionnaires answered by Ikezaki and Senju provided me with many answers which were not to be found in the limited literature on these two artists. This method was the only possible way of communicating with the two artists and a means of discovering their personal ideas about their respective art practices’. I have added these questionnaires into the appendices, D and E.

Personal communication with Van Loon I have referred to because he was my first teacher of Sumi-e and Zen Buddhism. His experience of learning traditional Sumi-e in Japan with a Zen monk, provided me with additional information that I was not able to find in the sparse literature. Professor Kawashima is a practising Sumi-e lecturer at tertiary level as well as in secondary education, and through an interview with this academic I was able to establish what current methods are used for teaching Sumi-e.

The additional sources of my data have been Sumi-e literature and examples of artworks, museum and site visits, the artworks and practices of Senju and Ikezaki, as well as my own workbooks, sources and artworks.

#### **3.3.1 Sumi-e literature and examples**

Sumi-e provides a starting point, “the inside-in” and the conclusion to which this research returns (Hannula, Suoranta and Vaden 2014:1). Information from instruction manuals such as *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* by Sze, (1956) which contains the original canons for teaching Sumi-e, and those of Sato (2010), Okamoto (1996) and Siudzinski (1983) as well as photographs of traditional Sumi-e paintings are presented in order to create an understanding of the art form. The materials are described and explained in order to show how the uniqueness of each of these have enabled distinctive outcomes and characteristics. Words and terms applicable to traditional Sumi-e are consolidated with the

above to create a framework of reference where the materials, characteristics, elements, processes, materials, spirituality and context are made evident.

### **3.3.2 Site visits**

The need to experience firsthand the alternative contexts and the display of traditional Sumi-e as well as contemporary art, in particular the artworks of Ikezaki and Senju, prompted my trips to Japan in October each year, 2016, 2017 and 2018. Visits to museums and art galleries to view various contexts of display as well as Sumi-e and contemporary artworks resulted in note taking and photographs where possible. These sites are:

- The Hiroshi Senju Museum in Karazuiwa
- The Hiroshi Senju Installation of Fusuma paintings for Kokobonji Temple in Koyasan, exhibited in Akita National Museum of Art
- The Teshima Art Museum on Teshima island
- The Chichu Museum on Naoshima Island
- Inujima Island, where I viewed the permanent outdoor art installations
- The Adachi Museum of Art in Yasugi
- The National Museum of Tokyo
- The Yayoi Kusuma Museum, Tokyo
- The Design Sight Exhibition at Tokyo Midtown
- The Museum of Contemporary Art in Karuizawa

These sites have provided me with material on traditional Sumi-e and/or contemporary artmaking, as well as literature, relating to my concerns for this research.

Through my regular walks in Virginia forest here in Durban I located a site for filming ten of my artworks. These are in digital format and were shown at my final exhibition, at the KZNSA gallery, Bulwer Road, Glenwood, Durban in July 2019.

### **3.3.3 The works and practices of other artists**

My third source of ‘data’ for this study has been the two artists Ikezaki and Senju whose artworks I have accessed online and in the literature that I have collected so as to analyse

them to determine evidence of the influence in their words of traditional Sumi-e. The framework of reference outlined in the literature review assists in this analysis. The technical virtuosity of both artists in handling Sumi-e materials such as ink, water and *washi* are explained and shown in photographs, revealing the infinite range of tonalities from silver grey to pitch black. The combination of these traditional materials together with contemporary materials are described. For example, Senju uses a spray gun and natural pigments, such as *gofun*, whereas Ikezaki uses collage and colour on some of his artworks, mica, as well as sculpting organic forms out of his own handmade mulberry paper. These latter materials and innovative processes place the two artists within modes of contemporary artmaking. Photographs support these artworks.

In addition, I have sought out artists whose artmaking resonates with my own concerns. Although the research questions and the topic are very specific about the boundaries of the project, it feels important to mention influences that emerged during the course of the study that seem relevant to the concerns of the research. At risk of losing focus I mention these by name only to acknowledge their role and relevance in the hard-to-define-and-limit processes of my own art practice-related research. Documentation in my workbooks of the ways in which their artmaking has contributed to my personal explorations will be presented in Chapter 6. However, I have been mindful of the importance of maintaining focus on the research topic and specific questions.

Materiality has become a distinctive element within my artwork. Although there are many artists of the last decades creating content through the physicality of the materials, discourses and critiques in this regard are not common (Ingold cited in Lange-Berndt 2015: 13; Mills, 2009: 1).

### **3.4 Analysis of data**

My data which I have collected and analysed and from which I have drawn my conclusions includes:

1. The characteristics, elements, processes, materials, spirituality and context, as listed in the framework of reference for traditional Sumi-e in Chapter 7.

2. The translation into English of answers from the questionnaires answered by Ikezaki and Senju. The answers to the questionnaires were assessed together with information gathered from the literature review.
3. Added to the empirical data are my workbooks which plot my findings together with my art practice including questions, inspirations, dead ends, failures, additional materials and photographs of works in progress and completed artworks.
4. Sketchbooks filled with drawings in situ and watercolours of organic forms and landscapes.
5. Note takings of group sessions within the Centre for Visual Arts at the UKZN as well as from meetings, brainstorming, discussions and feedback sessions with colleagues and my supervisors.
6. Digital clips from YouTube.
7. Films and photographs made using my iPhone.

### **3.5 My own art practice and reflection thereon**

My life-long passion for all-natural materials, which I continue to find enticing in multiple ways, has fermented over the years and culminated in experiments, due to the very nature and malleability of the materials. “The term materiality ... generally addresses the many upheavals of post modernism and post structuralism ... the experimental system” (Rheinberger cited in Lange-Berndt, 2015: 14). Materiality, where the physical being of the material offers meanings for interpretation, appears to overturn the modernist idea of art as an object which may be analysed in a formalist way. Lange-Berndt presents a view which aptly describes my processes and aims: “Focusing on the moment when materials leave behind the confines of the white cube, become wilful actors and agents within artistic processes and enmesh their audience in a network of connections.” (2015: 18).

My materials indeed frequently dictate direction and even context, which will be discussed further in this chapter. I have shown with my recordings and photographs how pushing the boundaries of Sumi-e practice and exploiting my materials has catalysed my artmaking. I have experimented with various treatments of the papers, adding in natural fabrics and alternative mediums such as sand and glue, all of which in turn have added dimensions and enhanced the materiality of the work.

In Chapter 2 theories of materiality are presented. Experiments and collaborations with my materials have diverted my processes tangentially from the practice of traditional Sumi-e. Bolt suggests “material thinking” is about artists “collaborating” with their materials (2007: 30). These collaborations are evident in my retention of the original identity of some of my materials through layering of different thicknesses of paper together. Some papers I have crushed and painted at the same time, during which I have photographed the processes and revealed the results of these, some being successful and some being disastrous. Ikezaki and Senju used similar techniques, demonstrations of which I have accessed on YouTube. I have recorded these influences and shown how they are apparent in some of my experiments. “The researching disposition is ... one that encourages attending to what arises in and through practice, or what is emergent, and learning in a very particular way how to go on, and what to do next” (Green, 2015:). My very processes move backwards, forwards and sideways, reframing my materials in different ways. They work both together and apart, creating new meanings.

Within this fluctuation of my processes I have continued to use Sumi-e materials, the meditative process and the inspiration of nature as explained in my recordings. Aspects of my previous formal art training which continue to impact on my current artmaking is revealed, evident in how I sometimes fail at Sumi-e when I overpaint, making splodges and not leaving sufficient unpainted white space. (Conversely, this method of making corrections in oil painting, and filling the canvas with colour and brush marks, can improve an artwork).

My tendency has been to analyse artworks in both modernist (Greenberg and O’Brien, 1986) and post-modernist (Krauss, 1986) ways, the former comprising formal elements such as composition and content, the latter opposing formal analysis and categorisation, all together compounded with ‘Japanese’ and ‘Zen’ ways of considering Sumi-e, an art form rooted within a distinctive way of life. More importantly, my need to create alternative methods of analysis for my own artworks has arisen through my increased focus on materiality, as opposed to painting and form. I have revealed these alternative ways of analysis within the assessments of the artworks of Ikezaki and Senju, as well as in the

materiality of my own artworks, where the materials inform the content and meaning through physical manifestation.

I have also employed the framework of reference for my own assessments. Selected photographs of my own artworks highlight areas showing where specific techniques learnt through the canons are identifiable, such as one brush mark creating a wide diffuse area together with a fine line in the branch of the plum, as in one of the *Four Gentlemen*. A photograph of this technique is shown in Chapter 6. I have explained how this is not possible with an oil painting or water colour brush, because of the very nature of a Sumi-e brush. Close up photographs reveal how my repertoire of brush marks have been enabled through the innate potential offered by the unusual construction of the brush and the Japanese unsized papers, in particular the mulberry (*kozo*), and *ganpishi*.

At the same time, my incorporation of fabric, hand stitching, collage, paper-making and layering are a departure from traditional Sumi-e resulting in artworks with enhanced materiality and enigma. Travelling beyond Sumi-e in my art practice is thoroughly examined and substantiated with examples. The framework of reference will be used to establish the influences of traditional Sumi-e as well as to how far beyond Sumi-e I have ventured. This framework of reference is compiled in the previous chapter, 2.7.

## **3.6 Limitations**

### **3.6.1 Etic position**

At the start of this research I felt conscious of the fact that I was an ‘outsider’ investigating an art form inextricably bound up in Japanese culture, different from my own. I have attempted to remedy this through visits and explorations within Japan from 2016 to 2018, and I have read literature from a wide variety of sources, emanating from Japan, Zen Buddhists, and/or Western authors who write on Japanese art (for example *Multiculturalism in the new Japan* by Graburn, Ertl, and Kenji Tierney (2008) and *Review of Japanese Culture and society* by Lubarsky (1993). *Shinto and Buddhism in Japan, Japan’s Shinto Buddhist religious medley* by Prideaux (2007) presents an insight into why Shintoist customs continue to prevail and influence Japanese culture. Literature on the

*Gutai* art groups post-World War Two, for instance *Japanese art after 1945 scream against the sky* (Munroe, 1994) jolted my long held naive opinion of the prevalence of Japanese traditional arts. I have realised that the notion that Japan is a largely homogenous culture is unrealistic.

In addition, I have aimed to gain understanding of traditional Sumi-e and ink painting in different ways beyond formal modernist and post-modernist analysis. I have read literature from a variety of sources, including literature from China (Xingjian, 2002), Japan (Minoru, 2017; Sawaragi, 1992), Zen Buddhism (Suzuki, 1956; Watts, 1973, 1975), and Western authors who write on Japanese art (Lippit, 2012; Lucken, 2012; Minoru, 2017; Winther-Tamaki, 2012). Although it is not possible to change my etic position, as a researcher I have done what I can to acknowledge and allow for the effects of this on my practice and findings.

Sometimes obtaining translations of Japanese words which seemed pertinent to my research has been another hurdle. My perception that traditional art and culture remains predominant in Japan was incorrect and my knowledge of the diversity of contemporary art forms, and contexts of display has expanded. The wide diversity of artmaking since World War Two has mushroomed as part of an increasingly evolving culture. This aspect is an important part of my findings which I discuss in detail in my concluding chapter.

### **3.6.2 Translations**

Translations could have impacted on the answers to the questionnaires I received via the respective secretaries working for Senju and Ikezaki, both of whom are Japanese and have limited English skills. The translator, Ami Matsumara, with whom I worked in Kyoto, in 2017, received my questions two weeks before our interview with Professor Kawashima<sup>13</sup> in order to mitigate any misunderstandings ahead of time, but I am still reliant on her interpretations of our interview.

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<sup>13</sup> My interview with Professor Kawashima is not listed in the appendices because although this meeting provided insight into the contemporary teaching of Sumi-e, I concluded that this was tangential to the main research questions.



### 3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained for this study from UKZN (Appendix A), which included approval for conducting one interview with Professor Kawashima and questionnaires for the two artists Ikezaki and Senju. The main principles governing ethical research are that the research should do no harm (non-maleficence), and that participants have the right to informed consent, to anonymity, and confidentiality (Candy, 2006: 9). A process of informed consent was followed for each of the participants during which they were provided with a letter of information in which they were informed of the purposes of the research and the process to be followed, and they signed a consent form consenting to answer a questionnaire and for their photographs to be used for research purposes (Appendix B). They were informed that could choose not to participate or drop out at any time without any need for explanation. The principle of anonymity was not really applicable to the two artists or the professor, because they had been purposefully selected based on their well-known work and relevance to my research interests. If they had wanted to remain anonymous that would have been respected but this did not seem to be an issue. No participants were asked to reveal any sensitive personal information, and none did so. The translator assisted in confirming that the amount and level of information for the Japanese participants was at a “level appropriate for comprehension”, including translation of the informed consent form (Ibid).

Japanese protocol (*nemawashi*), in order to ‘save face’ (*mentsu*), was observed. When compiling these questionnaires, I realised that I should observe “meticulous preparation” and considered that “open questions may be preferable to closed questions”. This was in order to allow participants to respond freely allowing me to possibly gain richer information as a result (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982: 50-51), and according to what might be more culturally acceptable. My intention to avoid embarrassing questions led to avoiding questions on spirituality and personal religion, such as Buddhism. However, I did include a few words, such as *shibue*, knowledge of which would indicate familiarity with Japanese aesthetics and Zen. I did inform the participants, Senju and Ikezaki, that they could avoid answering any of questions and I sent the questions to the translator first to look over, in case there were any that might be offensive.

### **3.8 Evaluation of findings**

The wide sourcing of my data and empirical findings has enabled a sifting of information, as well as comparisons to be drawn, in order to present a trustworthy and reliable account so as to frame traditional Sumi-e, which is the starting point for this research.

Firstly, the framework of reference is established through the translation of the interview with Professor Kawashima, answers to the questionnaires forwarded by Senju and Ikezaki, note takings from my meetings with Van Loon, my experience as a teacher of the subject, and the literature available.

The empirical data of the artworks of Senju and Ikezaki, digital clips from YouTube, as well as the literature sourced relating to their respective exhibitions forms the second part of the evaluation.

Lastly the transparency of my art practice is revealed in my workbooks where my reflection on practice is clearly annotated, on clips on my iPhone, in photographs, in collections of organic and mineral matter, and lastly, in my artworks.

The triangulation of the three main sources detailed above has enabled cross checking of data, “converging on a trustworthy interpretation” enhancing the reliability and credibility of this investigation (Sullivan, 2010: 40).

### **3.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explained the PRR methodology which was used in this study, as well as the case study style of research I used to consider Sumi-e as an inherently Japanese approach to artmaking. In the following chapters I will present and examine my findings on the practices of the two artists Ikezaki and Senju before reporting on my own artmaking.

## CHAPTER 4: YOSHIO IKEZAKI

### 4.1 Introduction

Thus far, Chapters 1 to 3 have explained the background to my study, the objectives and research questions, and provided literature and theory which frame the research, including my art practice. This chapter considers the work of Yoshio Ikezaki, a Sumi-e trained artist whose development beyond the rules of tradition relate strongly to my research questions. In this chapter I will discuss his work and draw on information gained from my own questionnaire data which Ikezaki supplied. Where there are quotations without a source referenced, this indicates that I am using information from his answers to my questionnaire. I will also make reference to other sources and authors who have written about Ikezaki's work. From his training, there is no doubt that the characteristics of Sumi-e are evident in many of his artworks, but he also stretches its boundaries considerably.

### 4.2 Ikezaki's artistic training and background

Yoshio Ikezaki was born and raised in Japan where he learnt calligraphy and Sumi-e from the age of ten years. He completed his tertiary art training (MFA) at Florida State University and thereafter he trained for six years in papermaking in Japan with Shigemi Matsuo (Time4art, 2008). He has exhibited in Europe, China, the United States of America and Japan and teaches between Japan and the United States of America in papermaking, brush painting, Japanese aesthetics, and philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Today we may say that Ikezaki is a contemporary practising artist based in both countries, Japan and the United States of America. Whether Ikezaki shows influences of his early training in traditional Sumi-e will be revealed through the framework of reference.

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<sup>14</sup> Tama Art University and Musashino Art University in Tokyo. Professor at the Pasadena Art Center College of Art and Design, Art Center College of Design, Otis College of Art & Design, Rhode Island school of Design in Rhode Island, Southern California Institute of Architecture, Cooper Union, Pratt Art Institute and the Parsons School of Design in New York.

### 4.3 Key works by Ikezaki

“Without words, the painting speaks itself.” (Ikezaki, 2019). Ikezaki’s opinion will be seen to be evident in certain titles of his artworks, which are vague, allowing the paintings to communicate with the viewers. Barnet and Bartho refer to Zen paintings which invite “the viewer to participate sympathetically – to merge, as it were, with the painter and the painting” (1982: 74).

The artworks of Ikezaki have titles such as *Timeless Aura* (Figure 15) for an abstracted landscape painting, or *The Earth Breathes 04* (Figure 18) for a paper sculpture form, providing little indication for viewers as to what the content of his work is about. The idea that a Sumi-e painting is enigmatic intended for the viewer to interpret, stems from the tradition where Buddhist acolytes were intended to decipher meanings, sometimes through *koans* (Van Loon, ‘pers. Comm.’ 2017), poems (Barnet and Burto, 1982: 64) and occasionally an autobiography, biography or a ‘transmission of experience’, shown in Figure 1, page 2 (Ibid: 74). That Sumi-e artworks are intended to evoke feelings in the viewers and for them to discover personal meanings is echoed by Van Loon (‘pers. Comm.’ 2017) and by the Ikezaki quotation above. Many of Ikezaki’s paintings are not instantly recognisable scenes, or forms, but rather abstractions which may be said to be personal interpretations of nature and the power of the elements, such as Figure 16.

Ikezaki uses traditional all-natural Sumi-e materials because of their “simplicity and depth as an art medium.” Ikezaki is not content to use ready-made paper, believing that the value of his self-made paper adds to the meanings behind his artworks. “Through the years I have come to know *washi* as a medium for expression rather than just a material to be used as a foundation” (Ikezaki cited in Apple, 2017: 9).<sup>15</sup> He uses the traditional Japanese *Nagashizuki* technique (“sloshing way to make paper”, Frank, 2016: 4), showing dedication and commitment to his all-natural materials. This method, and papermaking in general, is time-consuming and requires accomplished skills. He says that by understanding “the character of paper ... for my study of sumi ink painting ... the relationship between paper

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<sup>15</sup> Jacky Apple has provided the largest source of information for this investigation in a catalogue for Ikezaki’s 2017 exhibition titled *Elements*, which Ikezaki recommended and sent to me. It is partly a biography, a study of his processes as well as his personal philosophies of life and art. The other literature that I have found online is limited.

and sumi ink is essential”. He considers the inherent qualities of paper to be a vital part of his artmaking: “In Japanese *kami* is paper, and *kami* is God ... it is the same spirit” (O’Neill, 1988). It is evident that Ikezaki feels ‘life’ and ‘spirit’ within his own paper which adds to the layers of meanings within his artworks. He considers that the memories embedded in the *kozo* fibre, which was a living plant, “must remember the graceful memories and the hardship experienced through nature” (Ikezaki cited in Apple, 2017: 9).

Ikezaki believes that there are “unlimited possibilities using Sumi ink for a variety of artmaking” (Appendix D: 180). In the artwork below, Figure 15, it is evident that Ikezaki has used copious water to bleed his ink, and he has successfully created multiple nuances of tones from the palest silver grey to intense black, taking full advantage of the absorbent *washi* and the range of tonalities offered by the Sumi ink. Apple’s opinion that “almost all of the paintings before 2015 are black and white, covering a wide range of grays from cold to warm tones” (2017: 4) I find to be an understatement. His paintings, in my opinion, are hardly “black and white” and further the inherent qualities of an inkstick may be cool tones, or warm tones, not both, unless mixed with colour. Below we observe unpainted white void above, a mid tone grey band punctuated with slivers of wriggling vapours or veins in delicate tones of silver and pale grey, emphasised with darker grey behind. An ominous belt of darkness forms the base and diffuses into the middle band, suggesting a percolation of gas or a heat haze. The tones of grey here are the same family of warm greys, suggesting one ink stick was used.



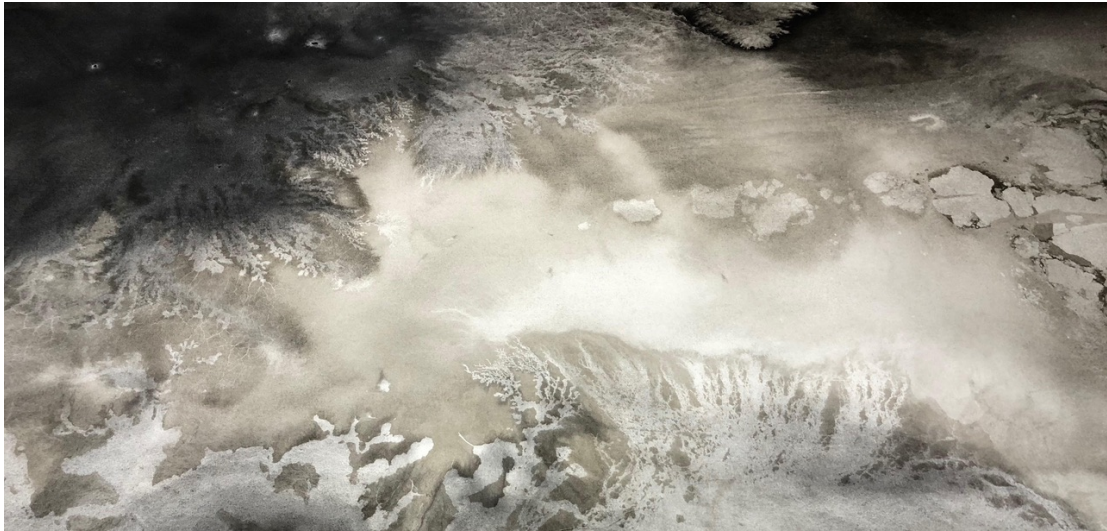
Figure 15. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2008. *Timeless Aura Series*. Sumi ink on paper. 567mm x 394mm. Sando Studio, Beverly Hills, California.

Source: Sando LLC (2008)

Ikezaki considers himself to be a Sumi-e painter but he also uses *Nikawa* glue and Japanese watercolours, as shown in the *Dot Connection* series (Figure 27). The latter is part of *Nihonga* painting materials. Use of colour is seldom observable in traditional Sumi-e paintings and Barnett and Burto state that the Zen painters replaced colour in landscapes with monochrome (1982: 74).

In Ikezaki's processes, the beginning is his paper making, which is mediated "in order to control uniform thickness and fiber distribution", and where the resulting formats of papermaking are determined by the screen sizes (Time4art, 2008). However, in many of the Sumi-e paintings of Ikezaki, chance and intuitive practice are discernible. In the painting below, Figure 16, this can be seen in the bleeding of ink, revealed by the arterial-like tendrils wriggling down from the dark void above. Bleeding with ink and water on *washi* is a risky venture, and to have achieved such fine tendrils of unpainted white and silver grey indicates a high level of technical virtuosity.

One may assume that Ikezaki did not set out with a fixed idea of a realistic landscape in mind, but rather has conveyed an abstracted impression of feelings, capturing with immediacy a moment in time, a fusion of manipulated and intuitive processes. His transmissions of power and energy in nature, collisions and catastrophies may be seen in in Figure 16. Here we witness a cataclysmic event which might be eruptions of lava, water or a viscous suspension of particles, spewing and jostling with fractured rocks juxtaposed against a calm stretch of water or sky. It is evident from this artwork that Ikezaki has deeply engaged with his materials allowing these through his coaxing to dictate outcomes: bleeding, spreading, mopping, and pouring and finally arriving at *shibue*.



**Figure 16. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2018. *Deep Impact*. Sumi ink on paper. 654mm x 1333mm. Kylin Gallery, Beverly Hills, California.**  
Source: Kylin Gallery (2019)

The use of water in Ikezaki's paintings, apart from that mixed with ink, leads to surprising "forms that are unpredictable departures from the standard" (Apple, 2017: 3), which we may say reflect *shibue*. Ikezaki speaks of these "intended accidental collisions of ink and water" (Ibid: 4). In the painting below, Figure 17, Ikezaki reveals the extremes to which he ventures in this process. The profusion of tendrils of clouds, lava, water or fire, splaying across and down from the white void seem to reflect in what could be water. Stunted diffused tones of grey and dark charcoal creep upwards and downwards suggesting possible conifers. Again, we observe what could be an abstracted landscape or the culmination of a series of collisions between ink and water resulting in an ethereal projection of nature, manifesting "beauty ... inherent in each encounter" (Apple, 2017: 3).



**Figure 17. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2015. *Reflection of Stormy Sky 667*. Sumi ink on Western paper, 279mm x 368mm. Kylin Gallery, Beverly Hills, California.**  
Source: Kylin Gallery (2019)

From the above sections the reader should now be aware of Ikezaki's performative processes. The very processes that Ikezaki uses require intense concentration and meditation, "to unite his mind, body, and spirit so that his intention and his intuition can act in harmony with each other" (McArthur, 2018: 6). These meditative processes imply that he paints and creates instinctively because he is at one with his artmaking, unhindered by copying photographs or planned out representations of nature and landscapes.

Apple talks of Ikezaki being grounded in "sensitivity to the subtle moods of nature" and *yugen*, which means inexplicable feelings evoked within one by nature, and his "deep regard for the value and meaning of the Japanese relationship to the natural world" (2017: 3). I questioned Ikezaki as to whether the expression of *yugen* applied to all of his artworks; he answered in the affirmative, but said that in the *Dot* series (Figure 27) *yugen* was "hidden deep in his heart" (Appendix D: 183). This answer, I believe, is evidence of Ikezaki's belief in nature as being the root of inspiration in all of his artmaking.

When I questioned Ikezaki as to whether he believed in the Taoist idea that humans and nature are one, he answered: "I agree strongly myself" (Ibid). In response to my question whether he believed in cosmocentricism, Ikezaki stated that one should respect and appreciate nature and that nature does not belong to humans to "conquer ... for their own



benefit.” The word ‘cosmocentricism’ appears to be unfamiliar to Ikezaki and is not translatable into Japanese, according to Google Translate, but his expressed opinions indicate that cosmocentricism is what he believes in and is averse to anthropocentricism, as per his latter opinion.

After the Tohoku earthquake (2011) and the tsunami and subsequent leakage at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, and having common knowledge of the ongoing threats of earthquakes in Japan such as Shinmoedake volcano (2018) in Kyushu where Ikezaki was raised, and in California where he also lives, Ikezaki sought to express concerns on critical environmental threats. These concerns are translated in the artworks for the exhibitions titled *The Earth Breathes* and *Elements*. These too distinctly relate to nature but reflect Ikezaki’s shift from mesmerising and ethereal landscapes to evocative organic sculptural forms, some created as early as 2008, but displayed as a group in installations in 2017. These are shown in Figures 18, 19 and 20.



**Figure 18. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2008. *The Earth Breathes 04*. Washi paper, Sumi ink, Japanese water colour, 533mm x 292mKylin Gallery, Beverly Hills, California.  
Source: Kylin Gallery (2019)**

An installation of Ikezaki’s sculptural forms, Figure 19, was displayed in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in 2017 in an exhibition entitled *A History of Mist*. Poundstone (2017), in a blogpost on the LACMA website regarding the exhibition, described this installation as “a group of sculptural watercolours on crumpled and twisted mulberry paper”. This descriptive and insensitive opinion overlooks Ikezaki’s concerted efforts to, firstly, create the paper out of *kozo*, and thereafter compress multiple sheets of *kozo* to sculpt forms imbued with energy and which appear to be wafting through space.

Ikezaki has arranged the forms dynamically, which interact and form a dialogue through their varied earth colouring, their common material, and the way they move, leaping upwards from the middle ochre form, downwards to the lower white form and hovering (fourth from the right). It appears that Ikezaki understands the restrictions of more modernist museum and art gallery design and conforms to these formal contexts to display his artworks.



**Figure 19. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2008. *The Earth Breathes – Mind Landscape*. Self-made washi, Sumi ink and watercolour. Exhibition at LACMA, 2017.**

Source: Chi-Young (2018)

In traditional Sumi-e the display of artworks was largely in shadowed temples, on *fusuma* and *shoji*, or scrolls where contemplative viewing in silence, was and continues to be, the norm. Ikezaki believes that his artworks “need to be approached with a certain reverence and understanding of the meditative process required for conscious viewing” which is contrary to contemporary expectations of “entertainment” and “this era of short attention spans” which has “replaced contemplation, reflection and the demands of deep thinking” (Ikezaki cited in Apple, 2017: 12). This ideal of Ikezaki’s may be unrealistic for younger generations raised in the digital era, and for persons not raised in traditional Japanese culture and connoisseurs of art.

I questioned Ikezaki as to whether he thought his exhibition in the Zen Rinzai (Shokoku-ji) temple in Kyoto (2008) displayed his work appropriately by using easels on tatami mats rather than wall hanging. He replied in the affirmative and said: “It is common to use the

method of *Tokonoma* or in front of traditional house gate for large paintings. So I am comfortable using the system they provided” Appendix D: 185). He indicated that because of his study and practice of the “Hannya Shingyo sutra” reflected in his artworks, he was honoured to be selected to exhibit there and it appears that Ikezaki found this context satisfying.

Ikezaki commented that National Museums and galleries present certain difficulties “matching my work with space, but it is the reality. We always do our best” (Ibid). He says he makes suggestions to optimise his display. For his exhibition *Gathered Dreams*, displayed at the Kylin Gallery in Beverly Hills in 2016 (Figure 20), he “made a Zen garden in the space so that it creates a dialogue between artwork and space” (Frank, 2016: 2). This idea of combining artworks and architecture is an historic tradition for displaying traditional Sumi-e as well as in contemporary art, such as the new Norval Gallery, Steenberg, Cape Town.



**Figure 20. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2016. *Kylin Gallery Garden with Sculpture by Ikezaki.* Beverly Hills, California.**

Source: Frank (2016)

The exhibition titled *Elements* shows displays of Ikezaki’s artworks in a gallery setting, with white and charcoal grey walls and spot lighting (Figure 21). The dark wall appears to have slightly subdued lighting, but not as dark compared to the shadowed temple display. The sculptures are presented on mounts of varying sizes and shapes, from cubes to shallow diamonds, in white and charcoal, suggesting formats of a jewellery display but on a larger scale, and the paintings hang vertically. The overall cohesion of sculptures and paintings,

organic in feel and inspired by nature, linked by meandering pathways between the artworks, enable individual viewing and contemplation of both genres.

In an interview for this exhibition, Ikezaki remarked: “Even if I never understand true meaning of emptiness or nothingness, I try to clarify it little by little by making my artwork as a true mark of myself” (Apple, 2017). Although he does not claim to be fully versant in all the terms associated with Zen and art, he says that *Ma* denotes “meaningful voids created by the deliberate use of blank space” (Time4art, 2008) as well as “the emptiness full of possibilities” (Apple, 2017: 3). *Ma* is seen in the expanse of unpainted flat white surfaces of Figures 15 and 17.



**Figure 21. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2017. Exhibition: *Elements, 1991-2016*. Williamson Gallery, California.**  
Source: Apple (2017)

*Ma* has been explained in the chapter on methodology, and appears to be a strong component in Ikezaki’s paintings.

Ikezaki uses particular Japanese aesthetic concepts when discussing his own artworks, such as *haiku*, *chado*, *ikebana*. (Apple, 2017; Frank, 2016; O’Neill, 1988). Ikezaki proclaims *ki*<sup>16</sup> to be “the essential element for my own artwork”, an inherent potential for everyone

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<sup>16</sup> As explained earlier, *ki* is the Japanese word for spirit/ energy, and in Chinese it is *chi*. Ikezaki uses *ki*, Senju uses *chi*, I use *chi*.

that “can be enriched and developed by daily practice of concentration and meditation” (Ikezaki cited in Apple, 2017: 4). Frank credits Ikezaki with “having mastered his own ‘*chi*’ by using this energy to move the ink across the paper” (2016: 3). Apple states that *yūgen* applies to the artworks of Ikezaki, denoting a “profound awareness of the universe” that evokes powerful feelings, “inexplicably deep and mysterious, ... rather than directly indicating reality” (Apple, 2017: 3). This *yūgen* is realised in Ikezaki’s seemingly immense and abstracted landscapes, such as Figure 24, where the distance is unfathomable and the enigmatic rising vapours compound to create a scene of wonder.

*Mono no aware* is translated by Apple as meaning the transience and the ephemeral nature of experience (2017: 4). This concept is revealed through Ikezaki’s focus and discourses on the cyclical nature of the universe and impermanence, in line with Zen Buddhist philosophy: “*Shogyo Mujyo* ... everything on earth evolves, changes, and perishes but spirit remains to [be] reborn [in] a new life” (Ikezaki cited in Time4art, 2008). Figures 15,16 and 17 are examples where this is illustrated. In these paintings we can say that a moment in time is expressed through the wriggling vapours and vibrating forms, leaving the viewer to anticipate the outcomes. “Ikezaki’s imagery reflects on a living earth in process, alluding to both geologic time and the disruptions of the immediate present” (Time4art, 2008).

According to Apple (2017: 2), Ikezaki says there is: “a dialogue between materials and images that exemplify four essential elements and their ongoing states of process: Fire/Earth (*Hi/Taichi*), Water/Air (*Mizu/Kuki*), Mind Essence/Beingness (*Ki*), Matter Energy/ Impermanence (*Ku*)” (2017: 2). *Hi*, *Taichi*, *Mizu*, *Kuki*, *Ki* and *Ku*, are terms used in Zen Buddhist philosophy and part of Ikezaki’s personal philosophy: the cycle of life in nature, geology and human life.

Spirituality within the artworks and materials of Ikezaki are frequently referred to in the literature accessed, for example his “visual expressions of the most complex paradoxes of Japanese Spirituality” (McArthur, 2018: 6). Ikezaki talks of ‘spirit’ within his paper (O’Neill, 1988) as having transformed from a living plant, *kozo*, into a piece of paper with a history of memories, as mentioned early in this chapter. This suggests inklings of animism, passed through the Shinto philosophy to Zen Buddhism. The latter philosophy is

not a clearly defined doctrine with answers, which Ikezaki mentions (Apple, 2017: 11), and yet frequent references are made to the influences of Zen Buddhism on his work, for example, “Ikezaki’s paintings are powerful expressions of Zen Buddhist concepts and artistic forms” (McArthur, 2018: 7).

Zen Buddhism is complex but an initiate can identify with the way of living mindfully in the moment, with awareness of the impermanence of life (*Ku*). The four essential elements mentioned above describe the cycle of life, a concept of Buddhist philosophy. One such vital concept for Ikezaki is *Shogyo Mujyo*, where the “spirit remains to reborn a new life” (Time4art, 2008). This idea of the spirit rebirthing may be considered an analogy for Ikezaki’s self-made paper which he sees as human skin and spirit (Ibid: 3), as well as the transformation of his paper into organic sculptural forms (Figure 18). He uses his paintings and sculptures and paper making to reflect concepts of disintegration and regeneration. His paper making processes also reflect these concepts, as discussed above.

Yūgen evokes rather than captures physical reality, through an awakening of “inner states of consciousness” (Apple, 2017: 3). In Figure 22 there is an economy of brush marks; so few, but the work is “charged with meaning and stripped of unnecessary details” (PYO Gallery LA, 2011). Ikezaki’s expressions of organic forms are both subtle and brave, the latter because of the risks to be endured, where no alterations may take place, using indelible Sumi ink, both of which are evidence of traditional Sumi-e practice. His paintings are not pre-sketched and therefore intuitive. He renders his ink and water with sensitivity and a minimum of mark-making as evident in Figure 39 and as explained in his walk-through of the Williamson Gallery exhibition “Yoshio Ikezaki, ELEMENTS 1991 - 2016,” with the curator, Jacki Apple (ArtCentre College of Design, 2017). In this painting, sweeping swathes of water and ink suggest a possible landscape with swirling mist or fog, and perhaps grass or conifers with darker vibrating strata. A few large brushstrokes bleeding ink with water, or painting diluted ink on damp paper, have resulted in the capture of a mesmerising vision with minimal mark making.



**Figure 22. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2004. *Timeless Auras 993*. Ink on Japanese paper. 4032mm x1637mm. Kylin Gallery, Beverly Hills, California.**  
Source: Kylin Gallery (2019)

Water plays a big part in the artmaking of Ikezaki and I questioned this: “What, if any, are the principles reflected in use of water as an inspiration for *Reflection of Stormy Sky 667* [Figure 17] – are there any analogies or relationships to Buddhist or Taoist principles?” He answered: “Water is essential to our lives and nature. It only transforms in different shape and looks. This is related to the thought of Buddhism that it repeats a cycle including all nature and humans existed in the earth” (Appendix D: 183). He uses water copiously as a crucial part of his painting processes, and, repetitively, alternating from a wet ground to a dry ground. I have tried this out in my own practice watching his demonstrations on YouTube (Ikezaki, 2016). He says: “I use water as an active force to control the ink on wet paper. Ki serves to transform my will and intention to control the ink movement ... for both even distribution and/or intended accidental collisions of ink and water” (Apple, 2017: 4).

His painting in Figure 22 appears to contain elements of nature such as water, in abstracted ways, such as possible cloud formations or trickling water. Water is also suggested by expanses of gentle diffusions with seeming reflections opposed to turbulent and quivering forms. Moodiness and the possibility of weather cycles is implied by tones varying from intense charcoal and touches of black, through a range of tones from the palest silver grey. There is no evidence of human encroachment within this pristine setting, one that is ethereal rather than realistic, displaying a technical virtuosity in his play with ink and water on *washi*.

Ikezaki's constant use of all-natural materials as well as the influences of Zen philosophy and Japanese culture on his lifestyle prompted me to question whether he considered Sumi-e to be an holistic art practice. He agreed (Appendix D:186). My next question asked whether he thought that an holistic art practice was applicable to the old ways of Zen Buddhist monks. He answered: "I agree with that. For me, it is best material to meditate myself and focus my thought" (Ibid).

From the above discussions, it is clear that the artmaking of Ikezaki is an extension of his life incorporating the following: the use of all-natural materials through intuitive practice, resulting in *shibue* or accidental beauty. Ikezaki paints and sculpts instinctively as a form of meditation with nature as a source of inspiration. He reflects certain Japanese cultural concepts and uses some of the distinctive vocabulary pertaining to Zen and Sumi-e. His artworks reflect spirituality and ethereality and are mostly displayed in contemporary art gallery contexts. Ikezaki's artmaking reflects significant departures from traditional Sumi-e, endorsing the idea of learning the rules, which he did at a young age, and then breaking the rules, particularly in the last two decades. We may say that overall Ikezaki's art and life are strongly interlinked.

Venturing beyond Sumi-e, Ikezaki uses a wider variety of chemical materials and extends content beyond the inspiration of nature. Considering these two diversions Ikezaki can be seen as moving past traditional practice to become a contemporary artist. Concerns for environmental crises and the resulting devastations through earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes, galvanised Ikezaki's artmaking into transformations of paper resulting in sculpted forms. Additionally, he coated certain of these in bronze, illustrating his break with traditional Sumi-e processes. Ikezaki's focus on his materials, including bronze, which results from geological transformations of fire and earth (*hi* and *taichi*), have enabled his processes. The very nature of paper making with the *nagashizuk* technique enables explorations of thickness, thinness, texture and strength. For these processes he says: "*Ki* is also my concentration of muscle power, my will, and my intuition which I depend on to form my sculpture" (Appendix D:181). Through Ikezaki's intent, focus and immersion in his materials, infused with *ki*, he has extended and transformed his processes into artworks which communicate primarily through their materiality.





**Figure 23. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2008 *The Earth Breathes*. Self-made paper and sumi ink. No dimensions.  
Source: Sando Gallery, Beverly Hills, California.  
Source: Sando LLC (2008)**

In these sculptures (Figures 23, 24 and 25) layers and layers of paper are compacted into organic forms and some thereafter coated or cast in bronze. These paradoxical forms could be said to express withered bark, female genitalia, a chunk of landscape, a walnut kernel, striated rock, hardened lava, or folds of aged skin, all of which are related to nature. Frank describes these as “a cast bronze shell hung on the wall, resembling a fish, or a leaf, in water” (2017: 2), underscoring the evocative and mysterious nature of these simple forms which are imbued with energy. The use of bronze to encapsulate and transform the paper form, creating an altered physicality, could be an analogy for the cycle of evolving life from fire, mineral, earth, water and wood. Alternatively, they could be metaphors reflecting the fragility and power of nature through cataclysmic destruction, which ultimately results in regeneration and renewal of life. This transformation of material creating new meaning suggests an evolvement into an art conveying materiality. This shows a strong link with my own artmaking which will be seen in Chapter 6.



**Figure 24. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2007-2008. *The Earth Breathes. In Memory of the Tohoku Earthquake.* Coated bronze. 1080mm x1080mm. Kylin Gallery, Beverly Hills, California.**  
Source: Kylin Gallery (2019)

“At the time I thought about Zen philosophy and how all things on the Earth evolve, change and perish. The spirits remain and are reborn to brand new lives that have visible and physical forms. To be reborn my paper sculptures must go through the process of perishing with fire. The melted metal retraces the form of paper and becomes solid metal, replacing the paper” (Apple, 2017: 6). Here Ikezaki clearly states how the cyclical nature of the earth is transposed into his very methods and processes, creating “memorial pieces” (Ibid: 6), an act of reproduction and preservation resulting in a materiality and breaking the rules of traditional Sumi-e (Figure 24).

The sculpture shown below (Figure 25) is created from about 50 to 150 sheets self-made *washi* placed together and pressed with 400 pounds of weight to compact the layers and then allowed to harden for two weeks (Time4art, 2008). Ikezaki informed me that the calligraphy of the *heart sutra* was his own style and that the shape of the sculpture is derived from a roof tile of a traditional Japanese house. “It means and symbolises a warm and protected feeling of family” (Ikezaki, 2019: Appendix D). This shows a break with the ephemeral and mysterious abstracted painted landscapes reflecting nature, typical of

traditional Sumi-e. Here Ikezaki has moved into a different territory, where he has appropriated a Japanese domestic object as a cultural symbol and added a Buddhist sutra, which recalls in a different way, the Sumi-e tradition of inscriptions on artworks.



**Figure 25. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2004. *The Earth Breathes*, 2604. Self-made *washi* paper and Sumi, hand writing heart of sutra. 355mm x 431mm x 17mm x 165mm. Image courtesy of the artist and Kylin Gallery, Beverly Hills, California. Location unknown<sup>17</sup>.**

Source: Kylin Gallery (2019)

The following artwork *The Earth Breathes Yasumu* (Figure 26) resembles an open book, face down, or a traditional Japanese tile like the one Ikezaki mentioned when referring to the previous artwork (Figure 42).

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<sup>17</sup> “The whereabouts of many of these works is currently unknown” (Apple, 2017: 6).



**Figure 26. Yoshio Ikezaki, 1994. *The Earth Breathes Yasumu*. Mulberry fibre and Sumi ink, 431mm x 165mm. Kylin Gallery, Beverly Hills, California.**  
Source: Kylin Gallery (2019)

The ‘book’ could be said to convey many layers of meaning and history, and if the sculpture represents a tile, the history of family over the centuries could also be inferred. This reveals the journey through Ikezaki’s material processes, from fibre, pulp and water to paper and ink and finally fusion again with water and pressing, to create historical mementos likened to “archaeological artifacts” (Apple, 2017: 6). The deliberate ageing of this artwork is further enhanced by the collaging of what appears to be *koso* fibre in its raw state, covered with Sumi ink and superimposed on what seems like lava smothered mounds, conjuring a possible vision of geological upheaval. Alternatively, one could consider this to represent turbulent waves – both of these interpretations suggest hidden meanings to be interpreted within the book/tile. The idea of enigmatic and covert content could be said to recall the Zen Buddhist mode of creating paintings to be deciphered by acolytes, with clues embedded in koans or calligraphy, as discussed in section 4.3 of this chapter.

For a brief period Ikezaki diverted his artmaking to express his concerns with pollution and natural devastations. In *Dot Connection 94* (Figure 27) we observe a dramatic departure from Ikezaki's usual repertoire of all-natural materials, where he has used brightly coloured plastic dots and a descriptive title, without any indication of the disturbing content which he explains in response to my question as to what prompted the



**Figure 27. Yoshio Ikezaki, 2012. *Dot Connection 94*. Acrylic and plastic dots on yupo paper. 398mm x 381mm. Kylin Gallery, Beverly Hills, California.**  
Source: Kylin Gallery (2019)

incorporation of colour with painted and plastic dots (Figure 27). He replied that his choice of dots signify “a warning about our nature and global weather change.” These ready-made adhesive dots “indicate the recent convenience of human life associated with plastic and manmade products which have no strength against natural disaster such as earthquake or tsunami” (Ikezaki, 2019: Appendix D). The abstract content of this artwork poses questions, as to how Ikezaki, so accomplished in his processes and application of all-natural materials could arrive at what outwardly appears to be a light-hearted collage. In reality, the sinister implications of this playful-seeming artwork, may be detected in the disparate murky darkness behind the dots. There is no correlation with this artwork and traditional Sumi-e, other than the darkness of possible ink in the background.

Ikezaki's explanation above, endorses my belief that he has ventured beyond traditional Sumi-e and his artmaking is part of a more global perspective, where content is frequently

a critique of contemporary concerns. Further, this artwork is devoid of any characteristics of traditional Sumi-e, apart from the use of ink. “Whatever I attempt to paint or sculpt, my intention of style become fusion of East and West or the mix, because I am aware of Western culture on my shoulder”( Appendix D: 181) I don’t often think where my art should belong to. It is not important for me” (Ibid).

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Ikezaki takes cognisance of the outside influences on his artmaking when he says: “regarding individuality and self-expression, we have a strong influence from Western culture.” Ikezaki evidently believes that individual self-expression is a Western influence on his artmaking. It appears that within Japanese culture “the mastery of craft demands each generation add something new to the art form, regardless of how subtle” (Apple, 2017: 3). This licence to independently extend artmaking encourages traditional art makers and I therefore question as to why Ikezaki attributes individual expression to be a Western influence.

Ikezaki, through living in the United States as well as in Japan, is “well versed in Western modernism as he is in both Japanese traditions and the post-war avant-garde” (Apple, 2017: 4). The impact of this exposure is felt in his latter artworks where he has truly broken the rules of traditional Sumi-e. Ikezaki’s experience and intimate knowledge of his materials has propelled his transformations of these materials into artworks imbued with physicality and meaning. These have evolved into paper and bronze sculptural forms and ‘books’, or as he informed me, his compressed paper sculptures of traditional Japanese tiles. Working intently with his materials the resulting transformations of these communicate with the viewer through the very nature of their materiality. These are to be interpreted in a number of ways, such as decay, devastation and degeneration, regeneration and rebirthing, cycles of life and history, as discussed above. Apple concludes that “Yoshio Ikezaki’s art is first and foremost grounded in the fundamental principles and philosophical concepts of Japanese aesthetics, interpreted and expressed materially in a contemporary context” (2017: 3).

Ikezaki's artworks are a fusion of his deeply rooted appreciation of his culture and materials, his expertise in papermaking, his performative and skilful processes expressed in a materiality, and imbued with his spiritual beliefs. Ikezaki has adopted aspects of what he calls 'Western culture' and styles, but overall his art and life are strongly interlinked and imbued with his birth culture and his personal philosophy. He further states that he "invented and discover my own way of sumi painting method" and does not always consider himself a traditional sumi ink painter" (Appendix D: 181).

We may conclude that the heart of his painting is rooted in traditional Sumi-e. His answer to my question as to which artists he found inspiring was unexpected. I presumed he would refer to contemporary artists since he acknowledges such influences on his artmaking. However, he answered: "Sesshū Toyo" (Ikezaki, 2019: Appendix D). This esteemed master of Sumi-e painting, from the Muromachi period, in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, is the same artist to whom I referred to in the introduction of this research dissertation.

## CHAPTER 5: HIROSHI SENJU

### 5.1 Introduction

Having discussed the work of Ikezaki in the previous chapter, showing how his traditional Sumi-e ink paintings do not exclude developments beyond the canon, I now consider the work of Hiroshi Senju, an artist whose work is similarly inspirational and resonates with my own concerns that gave rise to the research questions. I discuss the background to his artistic development, and analyse his works in the light of my research questions, referring to his works as well as data collected from a semi-structured questionnaire which he answered (Senju, 2019: Appendix E: 188). This aids my reflections on whether the characteristics of Sumi-e are evident in his artworks, and how such influences relate to the development of his contemporary creative practice. In this chapter where I have not referenced to a source, the quotes come from answers to the questions in the questionnaire sent to him.

### 5.2 Senju's artistic training and background

Senju was raised in Japan and completed his Fine Arts education at Tokyo University of the Arts, where he learnt “about protecting and learning the techniques and history of *Nihonga*, incorporating the ‘one thousand year’ methods of Japanese painting” (Sundaram Tagore Gallery, 2017a). Contention, dating back to post World War 2, arose over the categories/terms ‘Western,’ *yoga* and ‘Japanese,’ and *Nihonga*, when Rekitei and the Pan-Real artists spoke of the need to desegregate artistic practice from such classifications (Foxwell, 2015: 59). *Nihonga* today appears to encompass a wide range of styles (Sandrey, 2017: 3, Foxwell, 2015: 33) and this is reiterated by Senju, who confirmed in his answers to my questionnaire that “*Nihonga* study after the WWII was all about finding something new. It was not about appreciating old Japanese style.” He expressed regret that during his training, he did not study “Sumi-e / *Suiboku-ga* in school” (Appendix E: 189). This raises the question of how this artist's work is relevant to my research which is based on traditional Sumi-e. However, thereafter he said: “When I started to live in [the] US in early



90s, I started to pay attention to Japan and its culture subjectively. I realised its wonderful concept resonated with me very much” (Ibid). I had already naively assumed that art training in Japan post WW2 would primarily have been in traditional Japanese artforms, because I had read of his using “ancient painting techniques unique to Japan” (Sundaram Tagore Gallery, 2006). My idea that parts of Japan still embrace aspects of traditional culture, I believe is correct, but my assumptions about Senju’s artmaking, and influences of Japanese culture on Senju were not correct. I had also assumed that Senju was a Sumi-e painter, after finding photographs of his cliff paintings on the Internet in 2016, and which resonated with my own aspirations of capturing sensations of nature using Sumi-e materials and principles.

At first glance, particularly when looking at photographs of the *Cliff* series, the work of Senju appears to display techniques and elements of traditional Sumi-e. However with scrutiny of his artworks at exhibitions in Japan, as well as some of the literature translated into English, reading the answers to my questionnaire, and from watching his demonstrations and interviews on YouTube (Sundaram Tagore Gallery, 2017c), I realise that my assumptions about Senju being a traditional Sumi-e painter were not well founded. My assumptions were based on the visual appearance of what appeared to be spontaneous mark making with ink on paper, knowing he had been raised in Japan, his subject matter is inspired by nature, and he shows the presence of void in the white space, as well as black space. Influences of Japanese culture became evident further on in my investigations.

I became increasingly aware that what I perceived to be traditional Japanese culture today appears to have partly melded with global culture and across many sectors, as presented in *Multiculturalism in the New Japan* (Graburn, Ertl and Kenji Tierney, 2008). Post WW2, Japanese artists reacted “to the spread of American culture” and “struggled with new cross-cultural” experiences and issues of “self-identity” (Stanley-Baker, 2014: 209). *Yoga* and *Nihonga*, “are still taught in Japanese schools” but “these historic modes of expression have been reframed by artists” (Elliot, 2011: 8). These views seem to explain how Senju may have been influenced by global developments within Japanese society and art. Realisation of the value of his own Japanese culture after he went to the USA, indicates that his artmaking could be said to be a bridge between worlds, on the one side is his formal training in *Nihonga* and the influences of Japanese culture, and on the other side, the global

influences on Japanese society, as well as American influences on his lifestyle and contemporary artmaking since living partly there from the 1990s.

In the USA, Senju has achieved recognition as a practising contemporary artist while maintaining his Japanese identity. In 2017, Senju was awarded the Isamu Noguchi award for his artwork *Shrine of the Water God (Suijingū)*. This is an annual prize given by New York's Noguchi Museum to artists who embody that eponymous sculptor's "spirit of innovation, global consciousness, and commitment to East/West cultural exchange" (Senju, 2017: 1). The artwork is shown below in Figure 28.



**Figure 28. Hiroshi Senju, 2015. 千住博筆 『水水神宮』 *Shrine of the Water God (Suijingū)*. Pair of six-panel folding screens; natural pigments on Japanese mulberry paper. Each screen 1727mm x 3772mm. Noguchi Museum, New York.  
Source: Noguchi Museum (2019)**

Senju is established as an international painter, a resident and practising academic of both Japan and the United States of America. Senju has exhibited internationally in Taipei, Hong Kong, Singapore, Milan, Sydney, Venice, Korea, New York, Los Angeles, as well as extensively throughout Japan. Senju has artworks in the permanent collections of museums in the United States of America and Japan, in private homes, public buildings such as Tokyo Haneda airport, and temples such as Daitoku-ji and Kongobu-ji in Japan. He has also represented Japan internationally and was the first contemporary Japanese artist to receive an Honourable Mention award at the Venice Biennial in 1995. In addition, he has received several awards in Japan such as the Foreign Minister's Commendation from the Japanese government for contributions to art in 2017 (Jamieson, 2018: 5). Hiroshi Senju was the president of Kyoto University of Art and Design from 2007 to 2013 and is presently a professor at Kyoto University of Art and Design. He is a director of Koyodo Museum, a

member of the masters committee of L'école of Van Cleef and Arpels, and adviser of The Tokugawa Museum.<sup>18</sup>

In the following section, I first reflect on an early artwork of Senju and how his artworks seem to reflect characteristics of Sumi-e. Thereafter I present an overview of his artmaking to reveal how his stylistic repertoire developed through his genre of cliffs and waterfalls. In conclusion I will determine whether Senju's artworks are rooted in Sumi-e and if so, in what ways his contemporary work extends beyond Sumi-e.

### 5.3 Key works by Senju



**Figure 29. Hiroshi Senju, 1991. *Flatwater #9*. Ink and natural pigments on paper. 2000mm x1410mm. Source and collection: Hiroshi Senju Museum, Karazuiwa, Japan. Source: Photograph by courtesy of Hiroshi Senju Museum (2019)<sup>19</sup>**

Figure 29, of a coastal scene showing “molten rocks spewed from Hawaii’s volcano”, revealing the earth’s billion-year history”, shows Senju’s fascination with the universe, and the cycle of life over time (Senju, 2012: 65). The impermanence of life is a theme strongly threaded throughout his artworks, and further in this chapter it will be shown how this is evident within his waterfalls and cliffs. Senju says that in his *Flatwater* series he is

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<sup>18</sup> The biography of Senju may be accessed at <http://www.hiroshisenju.com/about/bio>

<sup>19</sup> The Hiroshi Senju Museum provided me with photographs for this research.

expressing *ma* (Ibid).

This *ma* is the unpainted white space, void or nothingness, but *ma* also has form, *se*, or possibilities, which seems paradoxical in English. This concept is explained by Canning (2019, 2), using the *Kanji* for *ma*, which combines the characters of door and sun, and “together these two characters depict a door through the crevice of which the sunlight peeps in ... a door that is open to light, thus enabling growth” (2019, 2) (Figure 30).



**Figure 30. The *Kanji* for *ma*.**  
Source: Wikipedia (2018)

Another interpretation of *ma* is “... less is more ... and the emptiness of possibilities” (Wawaza, 2019).

*Chi*, according to Senju, is part of his lifestyle as well as his artworks and a term familiar to Japanese people (Appendix E: 190). This energy in nature transposed to his painting is evident in the white spray of Senju’s waterfalls. Dynamic white space, or negative space, is also a component in Western landscape genre which when effectively composed contributes to the whole composition. These terms *ma* and *chi* apply to Senju’s series of depictions of waterfalls and cliffs, as part of landscape genre, and both concepts are expressed in traditional Sumi-e.

*Cliff #6*, Figure 31 below, arrested my interest due to the outward appearance of the use of ink, the unpainted white space or void, the energy and *chi* expressed through the quivering and hovering cliffs, the whole exuding an enigmatic atmosphere. The economy with which Senju has captured the forms, avoiding realistic representation, together with the previous mentioned characteristics, are reminiscent of a traditional Sumi-e painting. Subsequently, on finding the data of this artwork and reading press reports on his exhibitions, I realised that while Senju uses Sumi-e materials such as ink, *washi*, water and choryu brushes, he

also uses additional materials such as mineral pigments (ancient and modern), as a self-professed *Nihonga* artist.



**Figure 31. Hiroshi Senju, 2012. *Cliff #6*. Acrylic and natural pigments on Japanese mulberry paper. 2273mm x 1621mm. Hiroshi Senju Museum, Karuizawa, Japan.**  
Source: Photograph by courtesy of Hiroshi Senju Museum (2019)

In the painting of a waterfall below (Figure 32), the immense black void, or *ma*, creates a dramatic contrast and impetus for the falling white water. The water shows minimal gradations and mark making and yet captures the volume and power of the water. Delicate spray rises above the pool at the base, created by the use of a spray gun which Senju demonstrated in a film which I viewed at the Akita Senshu Museum of Art during my visit in 2018. The source of the waterfall and the surrounding backdrop is not evident, Senju has made a selection of what is most vital to the scene. Senju poured water, and then while it flowed down the surface of the screen, he sprinkled white pigment (*gofun*) over it, making the flow of the water visible (Akita Museum of Art; 2018).



**Figure 32. Hiroshi Senju, 1996. *Waterfall*. Ink and *gofun* on mulberry paper. 1600mm x 1065mm. Hiroshi Senju Museum, Karuizawa, Japan.**

Source: Photograph by courtesy of Hiroshi Senju Museum (2019)

The background merges from black *sumi* through charcoal to grey, achieved by the spray of white *gofun* rather than how a Sumi-e painter would use wash to create tonalities. The presence of *chi* may be discerned in the vitality and life-like effusion of the spray. The immense charcoal void which is “the power of emptiness” (Watts, 1975: 369), or *ma*, projects the water towards us. These characteristics may be identified in traditional Sumi-e as well as selected *Nihonga* artworks as mentioned above. The use of the spray gun is not part of traditional Sumi-e materials and is a contemporary appliance. This painting is displayed in the contemporary Hiroshi Senju Museum which I visited in October 2018 and October 2017. In this museum restrictions on the behaviour of the public are the same as in Japanese temples: no shoes are allowed, slippers are provided, there is observation of silence, no cell phones, no photography, and no eating or drinking, thereby creating a peaceful atmosphere, where spectators are able to contemplate the artworks without distraction.

This museum was specifically designed by Senju in collaboration with the architect Ryue Nishizawa. Natural light and the foliage change with the seasons, which in turn provides altered ambience and lighting for the artworks within. Senju said: “To create the museum with light was an important factor. I believe when there is light the *chi* flows well”. In the marketing material I received from the museum, he says: “I have always believed that

beauty can be created by the harmony of dissimilar things” (Senju, 2012). This beauty of dissimilar things is his combination of organic architecture which moulds the contours of the surrounding hillside, incorporating the gardens within and around the building, together with the curved glass, skylights, and the showing of his artworks.

Within this museum is a display of Senju’s materials and tools, including spray guns and airbrushes. Senju stated that when he started sketching waterfalls in the 1990s he found it “very difficult, because the water continuously falls.” But, he realised that “an air brush and spray would help ... to show the impact ... that he felt from seeing the waterfalls” (Hong Kong Tatler, 2013). It appears here that the waterfall as a subject for Senju necessitated a break with traditional materials. Water is vital as one of the traditional Sumi-e materials, where the ink stick is rubbed on the stone to create ink. However, in my viewing of Senju’s demonstrations on YouTube I have noted pots of viscous looking black ink being used, revealing that Senju is perhaps using commercially produced ink.

He uses water in a spray gun, dispersing the ink gathered in cracks for his cliff painting, as well as the waterfalls. This departure from paint and brushes perhaps expresses Senju’s idea of *shuhari*: “Learn the rules and break the rules” to be explained further in this chapter. I questioned Senju about the inspiration of waterfalls and water. He replied: “Water can directly represent everything. It can express hotness and coldness. When placed in circle bowl, it takes the shape of circle, and in square bowl, a square.” In the film I viewed at Akita Senshū Museum of Art, where commented that flowing water creates beauty in the formed shapes. My understanding of Senju’s interpretation of water is that the properties of water lend possibilities for form, rather than seeing water as having spiritual significance.

The following three artworks, Figures 33, 34 and 35, depicting waterfalls, seem to be monochromatic but these incorporate colour and fluorescent paint, as evident from the data, showing a departure from traditional *Nihonga* and Sumi-e materials.



**Figure 33. Hiroshi Senju, 2007. *Dayfall*. Lascaux, fluorescent paint on *torinokogami* paper. 2273mm x 7270mm. Hiroshi Senju Museum, Karuizawa, Japan.**

Source: Photograph by courtesy of Hiroshi Senju Museum (2019)



**Figure 34. Hiroshi Senju, 2007a. *Nightfall*. Lascaux, fluorescent paint on *torinokogami* paper. 2273 x 7270. Source and collection: Hiroshi Senju Museum, Karuizawa, Japan.**

Source: Photograph by courtesy of Hiroshi Senju Museum (2019)

*Dayfall* and *Nightfall* are hung in an oval gallery, where only a few persons are allowed to sit at one time, on a circular bench in silence, contemplating the ombré diffusion of colour as it changes. The curved shape of the walls and paintings surround the spectator in a cocoon of changing light and colour from darkness to light, white and pale grey, to vibrant blues, echoing the cycle of time through day and night. Within these cycles ultraviolet light



is projected onto the fluorescent paint culminating in intense, mesmerising and ethereal blue, the colour of the night sky in April, in Japan. At the same time classical music is played.



**Figure 35. Hiroshi Senju, 2007b. *Nightfall*. Lascaux, fluorescent paint on *torinokogami* paper. 2273mm x 7270mm. Hiroshi Senju Museum, Karuizawa, Japan.**  
Source: Hiroshi Senju Museum (2019)

Vibrant colour is employed by Senju in The *Falling Colour* series of waterfalls, again showing the cycle of time. “Red could be a sunset, Blue a midnight. Silver is in dim daylight; Grey is in a fog and Platinum in the rain.” Senju, in the accompanying text at the Akita Museum of Art (2018), said that “If a white waterfall represents the sacred, then perhaps one might add shiny waterfalls in seven colours to represent the world of human emotions” and that he, Senju, “would like to provoke the imagination of the audience.” Senju explained that he painted the waterfalls in colours with the hope that the colours would “set off different chemical reactions in the mind of the viewer.” (Ibid)

This idea of provoking the imagination of the audience may not be novel in traditional Sumi-e, nor in contemporary artmaking. In this exhibition there are direct quotes from Senju, as well as a film which reveals a number of his processes and thoughts behind his artworks.



**Figure 36. Hiroshi Senju, 2003. *Falling Colour*. 800mm x 80mm. Source and collection: Hiroshi Senju Museum, Karuizawa, Japan.**

Source: Photograph by courtesy of Hiroshi Senju Museum (2019).

In the Akita Senshū Museum of Art (2018) accompanying text to Figure 36, Senju goes on to say that by using colour he had “expanded the approach to nature that Basho called for”. I asked Senju to explain this and he responded thus: “Basho concept for 造花 *Zoka* means a respect for natural phenomenon. In *Falling Colour* series, I treated the colours equally and respected the harmony” (Appendix E: 192). My understanding of this is that Senju is referring to the theoretical idea of tonal values, which appear in the different colours of each artwork to be of equal intensity. Or, maybe it is the natural harmonies of colours found in nature, so that Senju would have chosen pigments that did not clash. Senju learned art at tertiary level, that “it was more about academics of drawing, composition, and the colour balance. Learning from the ‘Western’ way of thinking” (Appendix E: 189).

We can conclude that this series of coloured waterfalls feature elements of traditional Sumi-e in the monochromaticity, the simplicity, the *ma*, the *chi* and the subject matter. However, the pouring of the paint and the use of the spray gun for the rising spray shows a radical departure from traditional Sumi-e painting processes. There is no realistic perspective or a

feeling of space. The waterfalls form a direct confrontation with the viewers, with no attempt to create a distance. In traditional Japanese landscape painting, such as Sumi-e, in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, arrangement of space was arbitrary, and the artists did not use any linear perspective. Instead, three un-demarcated divisions were used: distance, middle ground, and foreground. An example of this type of approach is evident in Sesshū's *Splashed Ink Landscape*, Figure 1 in Chapter 1.<sup>20</sup>

As mentioned above, the pouring of paint for the waterfalls arose because Senju was not successful at sketching out and planning the waterfalls. The pouring of water and *gofun* may be said to be a mediated decision, but the varied outcomes are not entirely predictable, and this retains a characteristic similar to the unpredictability of Sumi-e ink washes. Senju's discovery of unpredictable outcomes unfolded as he continued to explore ways of painting cliffs.

In 2007, quite by accident he found “some discarded paper and was struck by the rock-like texture that formed in the creases” (Sundaram Tagore Gallery, 2017b). Senju continued to work with this process which first debuted “in a solo show at Sundaram Tagore, Hong Kong, *Out of Nature: Cliffs and Falling Water* in 2009” (Ibid). Senju has since utilised this method of first crushing the paper for his cliff paintings, which he then flattens out and mounts on boards. A film of this technique was shown at the Akita Senshū Museum of Art, which I viewed in October 2018. On a sloping table, the dried paper which had been crushed beforehand, was painted over with a mid-tone grey of Sumi ink over which he then sprayed water, followed by a darker tone of grey. Sprays of white *gofun*, powdered oyster shell, were used for the highlighted areas. Lastly using a dry brush loaded with dark sumi ink, Senju accented certain areas and details. Senju also uses *gofun* powder and platinum mineral pigment mixed with animal skin glue, *nikawa*, and water to make paint. *Gofun* and platinum are *Nihonga* materials, not traditional Sumi-e materials, nor is the process of spraying. The outcomes of this process varies as can be seen by the myriad of tones within the different cracks, crevasses and highlights of the following artworks.

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<sup>20</sup> Vague mountain peaks are shown at the top of the painting beneath the calligraphy. The middle section is the hill and trees, the foreground is the tiny fishermen in a boat. This differs to a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Eurocentric idea of space and distance, where the foreground shows enlargement, receding to smaller and smaller forms in the distance.

The crumpling of the paper for the start of the cliff paintings, as well as viewing this process technique on YouTube (Sundaram Tagore Gallery, 2017c), revealed that chance and unpredictable outcomes emerge. The intention to crumple the paper may be said to be pre-meditated but there is not a formula for squashing and crumpling, it is a spontaneous action.

The painting below, Figure 61 shows a cliff face which almost appears to be a floating abstraction, with no top and no base, but anchored on the right side by some receding conifers.



**Figure 37. Hiroshi Senju, 2017. *At Worlds End #23*. Acrylic and natural pigments on Japanese mulberry paper mounted on board. 1731mm x 900mm. Sundaram Tagore Gallery.**

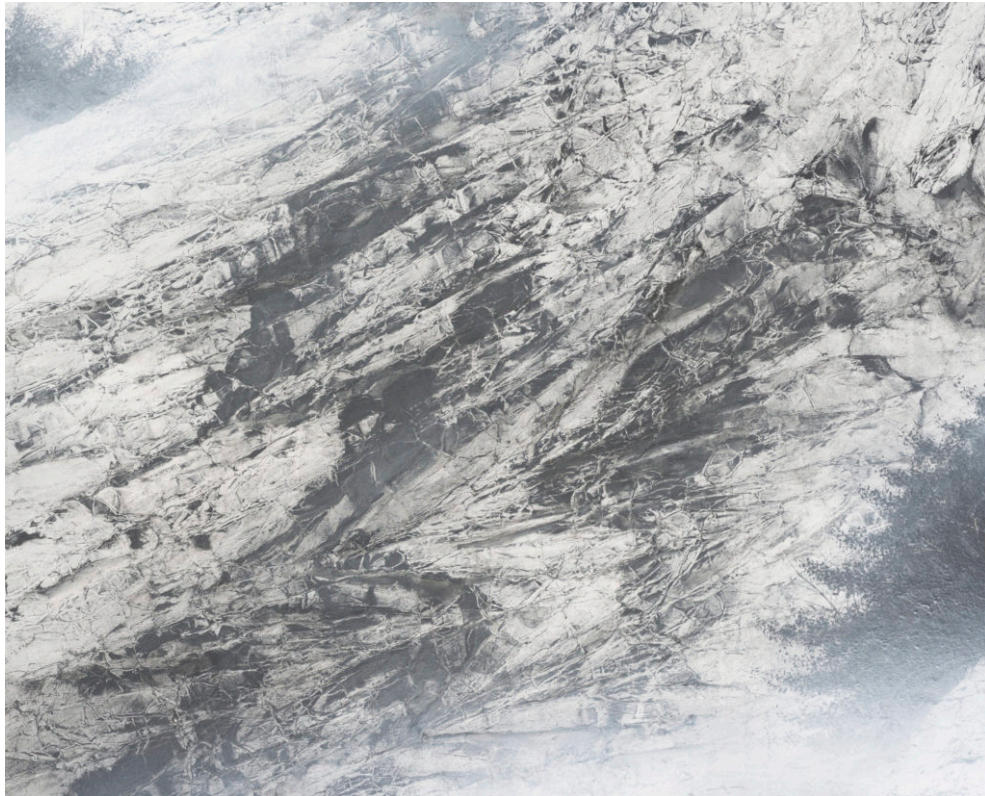
Source: Sundaram Tagore Gallery (2017b)

The mistiness is achieved with the *gofun* spray and the finer detailing of the crusty areas would have been achieved with dark Sumi ink and dry brush technique. This detailing may be said to recall the Sumi-e painting of rocks in Figure 1 by Sesshū's *Splashed Ink Landscape*, but as I have revealed previously, the process differs. The overall affect of this cliff scape is rather enigmatic and ethereal, where the rocky textures recede, hover and

shimmer, through the enveloping mistiness and unpainted white spaces. The delicate treatment of the conifers recalls to my mind the 16<sup>th</sup> century Sumi-e painting by Tohaku, *Pine Trees* (Figure 13). The difference herein is the sprayed *gofun* creating the mistiness of the above painting, compared to that of Tohaku where the diluted ink on wet paper would have been used to blur and therefore the pines recede.

The following artwork *At World's End #17*, Figure 38, could be said to be a number of subjects: bark, rocks, magnified bone tissue, decayed matter, but for a fragment of a conifer, faintly recognisable hovering in the lower righthand corner. The crushing of the paper beforehand has resulted in a tactility of the surface, with depressions, ridges, fine detailing and a diagonal thrust, creating a dynamic and enlivened textural slice of organic material or a rock face. Senju's technical virtuosity is shown by the subtle and intricate nuances of tonal variations juxtaposed against the raw, dark depths of the crevasses.

These paintings could be said to reveal *shibue*, accidental beauty, not only through the crushing of the paper but also through the way Senju splashes on the ink, as witnessed in his demonstrations in the film shown at the Akita Museum Museum of Art (2018). I questioned Senju about *shibue* and whether accidental beauty applied to his cliff paintings. He answered that he was not familiar with the term *shibue* but said that both his cliff paintings and waterfalls apply the process of accidental beauty (Appendix E: 188).



**Figure 38. Hiroshi Senju, 2017. *At World's End #17*. Acrylic and natural pigments on Japanese mulberry paper mounted on board. 655mm x 803mm. Sundaram Tagore Gallery.**

Source: Sundaram Tagore Gallery (2017b).

My learning and practice of Sumi-e through the teachings of, and the consequent discovery of cultural aspects pertaining to Sumi-e, such as tea ceremony, *chado*, has led me to use certain vocabulary pertinent to traditional Sumi-e, such as *Shibue*.<sup>21</sup> Senju's response that he did not know what *shibue* meant, made me realise that Senju is not deeply engaged with traditional Japanese culture, or that what I had been taught was not known in the field of traditional Japanese art as I had assumed. It is possible that the word is outdated and was used by Zen monk Sumi-e teachers in the 1960s when Van Loon was training as a Sumi-e painter in Japan.<sup>22</sup>

Senju informed me that his reason for painting cliffs is because of beauty and he aligns himself with Cristo: "When artist Cristo was asked how he picks the project, his answer was 'because of its beauty'. It's the only reason" (Appendix E; 191). Senju says accidental beauty is represented in "*Ichigo Ichie*" (Treasure every meeting, for it will never recur), or

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<sup>21</sup> The Sumi-e painting course that I teach with Van Loon, at the BRC, is named *Shibue, when accidental beauty happens*.

<sup>22</sup> Van Loon translates this as "accidental, subtle or unobtrusive beauty" (Adams, 2016)

“very special onetime performance. Beauty is a reality of life” (Ibid: 189). This, in my opinion, implies a concept of transitory beauty, observing moments during processes such as conducting a tea ceremony, as opposed to physical beauty of persons and objects. It is interesting to note Senju’s keen observation of Tea Ceremony, *chado*, and flower arranging, *Ikebana*. Both of these are recognised artforms in Japan, *chado* even forming part of learning Sumi-e with certain teachers, such as Van Loon. It is practised in traditional culture and started in Buddhist monasteries (Ludwig, 1981: 367).<sup>23</sup>

Senju appears to harbour this traditional Japanese concept of accidental beauty, as opposed to a global idea of beauty as defined by Collins dictionary (2019): “beauty is the state or quality of being beautiful.” The former idea of accidental beauty is intangible, expressed in Senju’s waterfalls, reflected in the action of the waterfall, the moving spray dispersing in pulsating clouds, captured through the pouring of the paint, the last of which is not altogether controllable. However, if we used the English definition of beauty, beauty as object, we could say that this waterfall, the physical, is beautiful. This seems somewhat superficial when one considers the subtle implications of accidental beauty and how accidental beauty is also part of ways of doing. Confusing the issue of beauty is another word in use in Japan: *Mono no aware*. This “transitory nature of beauty lies at the heart of Japanese culture. Accepting this impermanence can lead to a sense of joy in the present moment” (Tsugawa, 2016: 2). This echoes what Senju says is represented in *Ichigo Ichie*. These concepts of beauty are terms used in Sumi-e and are a part of traditional Japanese culture.

In the Hiroshi Senju Museum publication (Senju, 2012) Senju mentioned Ki no Tsurayuki (9<sup>th</sup> century Waka poet) who stated that “when ‘*expression*’ and ‘*content*’ coincide something exceptional is born.” Senju said that he realised this through the “technique and content” of his waterfalls which he realised as he painted by pouring “pigment on canvas, it is the painting of Waterfall at the same time waterfall created by the pigment” (Appendix E: 190). Senju says that he starts a waterfall first “by listening carefully” and spends “time engaged in this silent dialogue” (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2017). Senju’s silent

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<sup>23</sup> Tea ceremony, or *chado*, 'the way of tea', emerged as a synthesis of many Japanese aesthetic and religious traditions, and it continued to exercise an influential role in subsequent cultural activity. In the Muromachi period (15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) Senkei Ikenobo and Senno Ikenobo played active roles in the development of *ikebana*, establishing the position of the Headmaster of “*kado*” or *ikebana*.

dialogue, from my own experience, could be a form of meditation, he is painting from within himself instinctively, living in the moment of painting. He studies nature deeply but he does not say that this is a meditative process.

When working from nature as a reference. Senju uses photographs as well as video recordings “I explore every possibility to be informed and understand the nature. I touch it, even taste it, too” (Appendix E: 190). This comment endorses my idea of Senju feeling deeply for nature.

When questioned whether the role of nature was part of traditional Japanese culture and his source of inspiration, he answered: “It is not the ‘appreciation of nature’, but ‘to stand on the side of nature’”. This suggests to me that Senju believes that he is linked to nature and life: He says: “this runs through all things, such as flower arrangements and tea ceremony in Japan”. He concludes by saying that he does not “believe these concepts are special to Japanese” (Ibid). I find this opinion optimistic, as I think this is an unusual viewpoint, a concept common to Buddhism and traditional Japanese culture, indicating that Senju has innate feelings for nature, imprinted through his culture. Senju says in the text accompanying the exhibition at the Akita National Museum of Art: “artist’s practice that respects nature, has been the bedrock of Japanese culture since ancient times” (2018). Symbiosis of humans and nature may be synonymous with Zen Buddhism and therefore the Zen Buddhist Sumi-e artists, but nature as inspiration has inspired artists universally through the centuries.

I queried whether the traditional Japanese appreciation of nature is part of the culture or whether this reflects a traditional Zen Buddhist aesthetic. Senju answered: “It’s not just Zen Buddhist aesthetic or Japanese culture, I believe these ideas are shared in human beings around the world” (Appendix E: 191). However, he concedes that “in Japanese paintings, these aesthetic forms are left clearly so it is more apparent.” Here Senju acknowledges that because Japanese paintings clearly reflect nature and Japanese aesthetics, which I am presuming are beauty, *chi, ma*, I am misled into thinking this is because of traditional Zen Buddhism and culture. It appears that Senju does not consider nature as inspiration as being exclusive to traditional Sumi-e, but rather part of a universal attitude.



Senju does not appear to be familiar with the word cosmocentricism and Google translate does not offer an equivalent word in Japanese. When I explained that anthropocentricism and cosmocentricism are polarised views and that I wondered whether Japan had been affected by this attitude of anthropocentricism, that nature is for humans to exploit, he replied: “In Japan, we may be also experiencing that. However, as an artist I do not believe it” (Ibid: 193). It appears that Senju’s commitment to painting the natural world is inherent in all of his artmaking and that he considers nature to be a universal inspiration for artists, although he is not familiar with the word cosmocentricism, but as an artist he agrees with the concept.

Senju is open-minded about the display of his artworks which vary considerably in format size. He states that National Museums, an atmosphere of either light or shadow as well as displaying “the work in diverse and multiple ways, explores the possibility of the painting to people. I’m not influenced”. Senju believes that: “Like water, the painting can fit in every kind of place” (Ibid: 192). We will see how meanings in this section may be altered in different contexts and which may provoke varied responses from the spectators.

A shadowed display of *fusuma* screens of waterfalls, shown in Figure 28, *Shrine of the Watergod*, when compared to mounting of the artwork Figure 38, *At World’s End #17*, on a white wall in Sundaram Tagore Gallery, project different ambiances. Additionally, Senju’s enormous scale of artworks, such as 2273 x 7270,<sup>24</sup> *Nightfall* (Figure 34) creates another context where the spectator is enveloped with surrounding water. It seems that Senju’s flexibility about contexts of display offers viewers opportunities to assimilate different meanings. The envelopment of large artworks in a space is not historically traditional in a temple. Historical scroll paintings, such as the *Tales of Genji*<sup>25</sup> and *Anthology of Cranes*,<sup>26</sup> were kept rolled up, and unrolled slowly, for a viewer. The combined format of the large artworks, Figures 33, 34 and 35, present a formidable presence and impact on the viewers and require a large area for display thereby enveloping viewers within the power of waterfalls.

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<sup>24</sup> This size is unusual for traditional Japanese painting, one exception being the scroll artwork of Sōtatsu, titled *Anthology of Cranes*, 17<sup>th</sup> century, where the dimensions are 340mm x 13560mm.

<sup>25</sup> Artist unknown, C12, the original was 137160mm long, Togugawa Art Museum (2018).

<sup>26</sup> Sōsatsu, calligraphy by Koetsu. C17, 341mm x 13560mm. Kyoto National Museum (2015), Japan.

Waterfalls are also featured in the Hiroshi Senju Museum, an innovative context for the display of Senju's artworks over three decades. Senju, when talking about this museum said that he hoped visitors would "experience the feelings of beauty, courage and power of life, and make new discoveries for themselves" (Hiroshi Senju Museum, n.d.). In this same literature Senju presents information on the "colour leaf garden ... around ... and inside ... more than 150 varieties" (Ibid). In traditional Japanese temples, gardens are enclosed in places by the wooden structure and artworks, many of which are traditional Sumi-e, and form integral parts of each complex. It is my belief that Senju may have been inspired by this traditional melange of garden and art, linking the interior and exterior. Below (Figures 65 and 66) are two photographs of Kenninji temple in Kyoto, showing gardens within the temple complex, linking architecture, artworks and garden.



**Figure 39. Kenninji temple gardens, Kyoto, 2018.**  
Source: Photograph Ingrid Adams, personal collection.



**Figure 40. Kenninji temple gardens, Kyoto, 2018.**  
Source: Photograph Ingrid Adams, personal collection.

The combination of artworks within the Hiroshi Senju museum mainly featuring waterfalls and cliffs, displayed at various angles and on different slopes of the floor together with the emerging colours of *Dayfall* and *Nightfall*, and the unravelling of the changing seasons within the film, all together creates an enticing experience. Added to this, the sun light dancing through the leaves in the breeze, called *komorebi*, within the glass insertions and along the walls, the darkness and shadows in the passages and theatres, the surrounding foliage of the trees, shrubs and plants, which change through the temperate seasons, compound to generate reactions and feelings in the viewers and which continued within me long after I had left the museum.

Geometric ‘regular’ design of the two exhibitions of Senju’s artworks at the Akita Senshū Museum of Art, and the Akita Museum of Art are the sites for Senju’s commission by the Japanese government, for final installation at the Kongobuji temple, in Koyasan, which I viewed in October 2018. In both museums a series of waterfalls and cliffs are mounted on black walls. These monolithic structures are a complete contrast to the organic creation of the Hiroshi Senju Museum, but it struck me that the latter ambience created more of a temple atmosphere, although bound by regular painted walls, because elements of temple interiors have been appropriated. Tatami mats line the floor perimeter enabling an opportunity for spectators to sit in contemplation within the shadowy atmosphere with minimal lighting. Sensitive use of shadow and light creating ‘beauty’ is common in Zen

temples where there is a distinct absence of bright light “We find beauty not in the thing itself but in the patterns of shadows, the light and the Darkness ... Were it not for shadows, there would be no beauty” (Tanizaki, 1933: 10). Added to this temple atmosphere, the prevailing stillness, conducive to contemplation and meditation, is enhanced by the restrictions, mentioned earlier, on visitors’ behaviour.

Senju has also used his waterfalls to create room divisions, *fusuma*, a traditional Buddhist temple feature, showing the influence and recognition of his Japanese culture recalling one of the traditional means of displaying traditional Sumi-e. We may say that these elements of traditional Japanese Buddhist temple display also influenced Senju in the following installation, Figure 68, *Shofuso*.



**Figure 41. Hiroshi Senju, 2007. *Shofuso*. Sliding screens. Ink and *gofun* on paper. Shofuso Museum, Massachusetts.**

Source: Jamieson (2018)

Again, we observe both light and shadow within *Shofuso*, bathing the painted screens as well as the shimmering presence of the spray infused with *chi*. My question 8 to Senju where I expressed the belief that traditional Sumi-e/Suiboku-ga incorporates many elements in art making including the capture of Chi, creating an ‘holistic’ art form., he agreed (Appendix E: 190).

The writings of Senju are not peppered with Zen philosophical terms and ideas. He does use *chi*, but not *shibue* or *wabi-sabi*, the latter is another term used for the “imperfect,

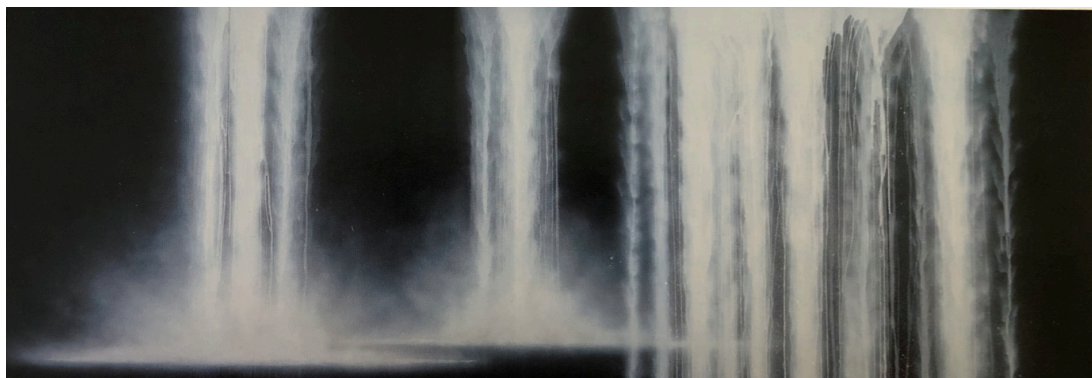
incomplete, and transient nature of beauty ... a Japanese aesthetic rooted in Buddhist teachings” (Tsugawa, 2016: 3). Another Zen influence could be Senju’s fascination with the universe,-the cycle of time and “the impermanence of life” (Stanley-Baker, 2014: 225). Another Zen concept used by Senju is *ma*. The monumental cliff titled *At World’s End #19*, shows the top and side of a cliff with a dark void or *ma* above, stretching to infinity (Figure 42).



**Figure 42. Hiroshi Senju, 2017. *At World’s End #19*. Acrylic and natural pigments on Japanese mulberry paper mounted on board. 1310mm x 1620mm. Sundaram Tagore Gallery.**  
Source: Sundaram Tagore Gallery (2017b)

Below the void we see a faint sliver of quivering mistiness between the mass of rock and the void. This void links the dramatic hulk of jagged textures and the flat smooth darkness stretching beyond to unfathomable distance. The enigmatic darkness beyond may prompt the viewers imagination; this is what creative emptiness could be, or *ma*. The monumental mass creates a sense of awe at the power of nature, in direct confrontation with the viewer. *Chi* may be discerned within the smoulder of the mist above the rock, suggesting that heat and energy are percolating below the surface.

Viewers may well interpret the paintings of waterfalls to reveal ethereal, spiritual elements when confronted by the enormous vistas, extending upwards with no starting point and no ending. In Japanese culture water has spiritual significance: waterfalls are revered as being sacred, water is used for purification of the person when standing below a waterfall and used in ritual washing when entering a temple. Senju believes that the properties of water lend possibilities for form, rather than seeing water as having any spiritual meaning. Intense focus on the water with no distracting elements such as rocks, contemplated in complete silence, kneeling on a tatami mat, may be said to exude a spiritual atmosphere enhanced by the surrounding mode of display. This may be experienced in the 360° encompassment of four immense artworks, *Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter*, on four walls, the first of which is shown below, Figure 43. Presenting the cycle of time in the universe is a concept which has occupied Senju since the 1990s, evident (Senju, 2012: 65).



**Figure 43. Hiroshi Senju, 1999. *Waterfall, Spring*. Sumi and gofun on Japanese mulberry paper. 1820mm x 4250mm. Hiroshi Senju Museum, Karuizawa, Japan.**  
Source: Hiroshi Senju Museum (2019)

The black painted walls create a darkened atmosphere with minimal lighting, similar to the shadowy interiors of temples. The waterfalls however shimmer and although there is absolute silence, one can almost hear the gush of the waterfall through the sensory overload of water flowing all around the four walls of the room creating an overwhelming spiritual experience.

Senju has ventured well beyond his early *Nihonga* paintings and his traditional training, to create monumental artworks some of which are displayed together in dynamic contexts. Senju says: “To break the rule, I’ve learned after I’ve graduated. This is same with the

school of Tea and the school of Flower Arrangements. It is represented in the concept of ‘*shuhari to*’ (three stages of learning mastery). First 10 years or so, we spend on creating the foundation, then break with tradition and lastly transcend” (Appendix E: 188). Senju abandoned his initial sketching out of waterfalls which he found difficult and resorted to an “air brush and spray ... to show the impact ... that he felt from seeing the waterfalls” (Hong Kong Tatler, 2013). This departure from paint and brushes expresses Senju’s idea of *Shuhari*. Senju has elevated his genre of waterfalls to monumental dimensions, devoid of all detailing except for the flowing and gushing water. Innovatively grouping large paintings of waterfalls in one room (Figures 43), or as sliding fusuma (Figure 41) and as a pair in an oval room (Figures 33, 34 and 35) with the waterfalls painted in fluorescent paint and a changing projection of ultraviolet light. All of these paintings mentioned are beyond realistic representation. These paintings show how Senju has broken his own rules when compared to his early realistic *Nihonga* paintings, such as Figure 46. His additional innovative display of cliffs, waterfalls, and earlier artworks, within his own inspired museum, all add up to an artist who has developed a distinctive and unique handwriting through his ventures beyond traditional painting methods, resulting in an amalgamation of personal culture and contemporary innovation. Although this concept is part of the outcome after learning Sumi-e, we can also say this is a freedom to be taken by students universally when they launch themselves as artists.

Senju appears to encompass a number of elements within his painting practice, such as the use of all-natural materials together with contemporary chemicals and devices, the inspiration of nature, a lifestyle incorporating *chi*, belief in accidental beauty, and the incorporation of certain Japanese aesthetic concepts such as *chi*, *ma*, *ichigo ichi* and aspects of Japanese culture such as *chado* and *ikebana*.

By incorporating these elements and aesthetic concepts into his life, as well as the idea of an ‘holistic’ art practice I questioned whether these rather applied to the old ways of Zen Buddhist monks and are no longer relevant today, he responded: “Relationship between Sumi and artist, brush and artist, have not changed over time. I don’t think it is particularly Buddhist way of thinking either. In the process of making art, it is the same, even French impressionist artists” (Appendix E: 190). Maybe the relationship between an artist and his materials is not novel and part of a universal attitude. The idea of Sumi-e being unique and

‘holistic’ and applied to Senju’s art practice could not be said to be correct

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that while Senju’s work originated in Japan, he has transcended categorisation as a ‘Japanese’ artist. His background and nationality is evident in his stated appreciation of his own culture, which appears to have come about later in his life when he “started to pay attention to Japan and its culture subjectively” (Ibid: 189). Senju claims that he paints “as a human being ... not as a Japanese” (Hong Kong Tatler, 2013). The *Cliff* series outwardly suggest that they could be Sumi-e paintings and the following paragraphs offer an assessment using the characteristics listed in the framework of reference.

It is apparent that Senju uses both Sumi-e materials, ink and Japanese papers, as well as *Nihonga* materials, such as coloured mineral pigments (Foxwell, 2015: 28, Stanley-Baker, 2014: 195). The use of colour in traditional Sumi-e is not forbidden as I incorrectly assumed<sup>27</sup> and apart from the fluorescent paint, Senju has used colour sparingly. In addition, Senju uses commercial chemical materials, spray guns and airbrushes.

Intuitive art processes are part of the Sumi-e tradition of painting and Senju embraces this practice, evident in his pouring of paint and the crumpling of his paper. However, the dark inked backgrounds of his waterfalls show forward planning. Accidental beauty is a term he believes applies to the painting of his waterfalls, arising from his processes, painting instinctively. Although Senju does not consider his processes to be meditative he becomes very involved with nature when creating his artworks. His reverence for nature and as a source of inspiration correlates with the same ideals of a traditional Sumi-e painter, and although he is not familiar with the word cosmocentricism, his concerns may be considered closely aligned with the concept.

Senju appears to be open-minded and not tied to any cultural tradition when considering display of his artworks. This varies from his own innovative and organically structured museum in Japan, the Hiroshi Senju Museum, to regular commercial gallery space, such as Sundaram Tagore Gallery, the monolithic structures of National Museums as well as traditional display within temples such as Kongobu-ji. His use of cultural terms and

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<sup>27</sup> Colour is used sparingly in the form of natural pigments (Sze, 1956:34) Siudzinski suggests “only touches of colour” (1978: 106-107). Out of the four Sumi-e teachers who responded to my questionnaires, three taught with colour as well as Sumi ink (Adams, 2016: 41)



vocabulary is limited, indicating a few influences of Japanese culture. Senju does not profess to any affiliation with spiritual beliefs, such as Zen Buddhism. His paintings of waterfalls and the display of these exude spirituality particularly in temple settings.

Senju endorses the idea of “learn the rules and break the rules” but this idea is not confined to the practice of Sumi-e.

Finally, Senju agreed with my idea of traditional Sumi-e being an “holistic” art practice, but he believes this is not unique and confined to Zen Buddhist artists, but universal. From the above summary it should be apparent that although Senju shows certain elements within his artworks and his thinking, as well as a few characteristics of traditional Sumi-e, he is a contemporary artist, as well as a *Nihonga* artist and shows influences of ink painting.

This indicates to me that Senju as an artist is not tied to Japan and tradition. Senju has been interviewed in Japan, Hong Kong, Venice and the United States of America and some of these interviews are translated, thereby intentionally sharing his processes of artmaking beyond Japan. He has performed several demonstrations on YouTube (for example, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, 2017c), he teaches in the United States and Japan, and we could say that he is part of a global artist arena. In addition to Senju’s modern approach to marketing his art internationally, he is also open to collaboration with young digital artists, as evident in the teamLab Osaka project (2018) “I’ve created the wide band fabric with Waterfall image and hanged loosely in the middle of teamLab digital image. They move organically”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This exhibition may be viewed online: <https://www.teamlab.art/e/waterness/>



**Figure 44. Hiroshi Senju. 2017. Live demonstration at the exhibition: *At Worlds End*. Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York: Chelsea, 2017.**  
Source: Sundaram Tagore Gallery (2017b)

Senju suggests that a number of ideas are common universally, rather than exclusively Zen Buddhist, or part of Japanese culture, or as distinctive elements of Sumi-e. Stanley-Baker talks of “in the best of Japanese arts, that very deep clarity of vision and extreme sensitivity to feelings” (2014: 225). This distinctive Japanese aesthetic I believe fits Senju. Senju shows appreciation of the tea ceremony, flower arranging and calligraphy, all three of which are sensitive processes requiring delicacy in handling the materials as well as his sensitive handling of the waterfalls and spray. He acknowledges “all the Japanese culture that courses in my blood,” and acknowledges his Japanese-ness as a *Nihonga* artist; his artworks do show aspects of his birth culture (Appendix E: 190). Through his own explorations beyond *shuhari*, he has created a distinctive contemporary genre, for which he has received international recognition and acclaim beyond Japan, asserting his position as a contemporary international artist.

## CHAPTER 6: MY ART PRACTICE

### 6.1 Introduction

*Yūgen*; "a profound awareness of the universe that evokes feelings that are inexplicably deep and too mysterious for words (Apple, 2017: 3).

In 6.1 I present how I learnt Sumi-e, transplanted from the 1960s in Japan, and how this together with my previous art training and experiences in my professional life continue to influence my artmaking. Thereafter, a section on the process and materials of traditional Sumi-e is revealed. Unpacking my processes through retrospection, facilitation through my workbooks and my plan of action follows in 6.2. My expanded notion of mark making, use of alternative materials, culminating in materiality, is presented in 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 respectively. Formats and contexts of display are discussed in 6.6 and 6.7. Braiding of writing and practice is followed by a section on the inspiration of other artists, in 6.8 and 6.9. An overall reflection on the evolution of my art practice into an art form steeped in materiality, concludes this chapter.

The intention from the onset of this research was never to make my own art practice the focus, but rather to document the art practice of Sumi-e. I wanted to explore through a historical and cultural context how this traditional art form evolved, which in turn may have influenced the contemporary art practice of the two selected Japanese artists, Senju and Ikezaki, as well as my own art practice. When I was informed at the presentation of my proposal in October 2018 that this research should be practice-led (PLR) or practice-based (PBR), this presented a conundrum – which was appropriate? How could I now achieve this when the body of my artmaking was largely completed? My recordings in my workbooks, one for each semester, could offer a partial solution, but my creative practice would then mostly precede my research. How I could assess these processes retrospectively with objectivity and rationality? Skains states that with “reflective analysis” dependence on memory can be a “fallible method” (2018: 3), and “inherently biased” (Bochner cited in Skains, 2018: 5).

Although Skains presents a valid point, I would not be relying entirely on my memory, but also on my recordings. This prompted me to relook at my completed workbooks and consider what had happened in my processes before. This ‘looking back’ has now inadvertently become an ongoing and effective part of my interlinked art practice and research. I add collage, resulting in layers, building deeper meaning behind the artworks. On occasion, when I page through these recordings, new ideas pop into my head, as well as questions as to why I might have abandoned one direction, when there are always opportunities for further explorations, in literature, artworks and processes, and which did not appear before. This process of recall provides further opportunities for “insight and nuance into the creative practice through a necessarily subjective record” (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2008 cited in Skains, 2018: 5). My final choice of a practice-related research (PRR) methodological approach is fully explained in Chapter 3.

My subsequent investigations led me to establish what I believe is appropriate for the aims of this research: an interpretivist case study, as a response to the lack of specific current literature in English on traditional and contemporary Sumi-e, and to gain a better understanding of my artistic focus on the practice, teaching and experience of the art form. The very nature of the materials have led me along a path of discovery. My current artworks are beyond what I would call traditional Sumi-e, and tangential to any artmaking that I practised before I learnt Sumi-e. My “braiding” of tangential ideas leads to explorations and diversions, through collage, layering artworks together, building and intensifying meaning (Sullivan, 2010: 114).

My focus even predating this Master’s study has been on nature: organic forms, the capture of *chi* and a move towards abstraction. Latterly my content has moved towards creating metaphors for disintegration and regeneration in nature and geology. The use of non-toxic all-natural traditional Sumi-e materials and processes have catalysed my practice, enabling me to enrich my own processes, but with Sumi-e remaining the crux of my artmaking and my on-going teaching. In addition, correlating ideas gleaned from other contemporary artists “and possibly shared themes explored elsewhere in other practices” (Ibid: 8), have contributed to my experiments.

Additional influences have been incubating through my lifetime, including my collections of shells, rocks, skeletons, organic forms, my ongoing interest in geology, ornithology and dendrology as well as holidays spent in game reserves and national parks. I completed a paper making course in 1986 which led to experiments with natural plant fibres and added to this was the discovery of unusual papers in China, India and Japan, during business travel. My passion for natural fibres was expressed in my work by developing chemical look-a-likes of silk, cotton organdy, canvas, hopsack and slubby weaves. All of the above mentioned are continued influences in my life and how these influences impact on my artmaking will be explained further in this chapter.

In Chapter 3, I mentioned my choice of an interpretivist case study for this research, due to the lack of specific current literature on traditional and contemporary Sumi-e and because of my artistic focus on the practice, teaching and experience of the art form. I initially set out with a framework of reference for the characteristics of Sumi-e, around which to build literature on my art practice, but what has emerged has led to additional sections, as my artmaking has evolved, echoing Green's opinion of emergence and inventive research as practice (2015). Art practice as research is the way forward and this has provided impetus in my experiments leading to innovations and new ways of thinking about the resulting physicality and materiality within my artworks.

## **6.2 Artistic transplant**

Van Loon taught me the 'correct' version of traditional Sumi-e, according to the training he received in the 1960s from a Zen Buddhist monk in a temple situation, together with Zen aspects of Japanese culture, which influenced my approach as a South African practising the art form outside of Japan. Working in isolation in the South African context could be seen to be similar to *sakoku*, where the form was now not subject to the changing nature of Japanese culture and society. The practice had been transplanted into our setting and remained untouched by developments in Japan. This has become apparent in my research where the effects of outside influences on Japanese culture have impacted in particular relation to this research, on contemporary artmaking and Sumi-e.

My practice of the art form as a teacher seeks to preserve the original context, but I realise now that culture is living and dynamic with inevitable changes. “Culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is around them”, according to Hall (1997: 2 cited in Rose, 2007: 6). This has made my investigation, or audit, all the more interesting and useful to contextualise my journey of discovery. Haseman says that an “artistic audit” is where one ventures beyond the “parameters of one’s practice to provide a historical or conceptual context” (cited in McNamara, 2012: 5, 6). Further learning about this specific art form embedded in history and culture has presented me with constant challenges, many of which I cannot claim to have overcome. These challenges have stretched my mental capacities, in viewing my artmaking from different perspectives through discovering more about the history of Japan, Zen Buddhism and what I interpret as spirituality, as well as the meanings of certain words and concepts not clearly translatable into English.

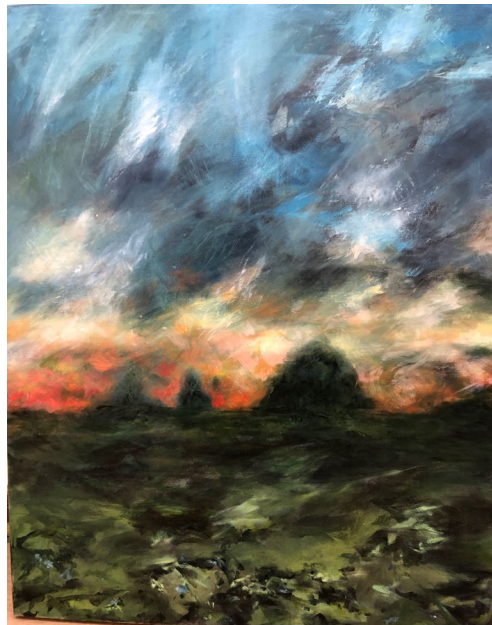
### **6.3 Previous art training**

My education and career in fashion and textiles involved slick sketching and dramatic presentations which heavily impacted on my later fine art training through the University of South Africa, where I battled to break out of stylised design drawing with repeated parallels, such as 90, 180 and 45 degree lines. My final practical was a series of miniature furniture pieces for opera scenes with anthropomorphic qualities, as well as a few stage sets, created out of organic debris found in nature. After graduation my professional life enabled little spare time, apart from attending occasional figure drawing classes. About ten years ago I started painting with acrylics and oils, with nature as my main choice of subject matter. My discovery of Sumi-e followed. More recently, my Honours study and practical was focused on Sumi-e and the teaching practice of this, titled: *The teaching of Sumi-e at the Buddhist Retreat Centre in relation to Japanese tradition and contemporary practices internationally* (Adams, 2016).

However, I continued with oil painting, acrylics, canvas and traditional oil painting brushes, with a group that met once a week, to keep my hand in the practice. My reference material was photographs I had taken, and which I used as a point of departure. Below are two examples: Figures 45 and 46.



**Figure 45. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 42*. Oil and acrylic on canvas. 700x400mm**  
Source: Personal collection



**Figure 46. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 4*. Acrylic and oil on canvas. 800mm x 1000mm**  
Source: Personal collection

At the start of this Master's study I decided to abandon specific or literal reference material, oils and traditional oil painting brushes and used my Sumi-e brushes, inks and acrylics on canvas. Working from a photographic source, or in situ, is not done in traditional Sumi-e, where impressions through experiences and feelings for the subject are captured away from the scene. This is because one aims to present only a part of essential reality with economy and as few brushstrokes as possible. The painting below, Figure 47, is non-representational,

and has been executed not with economy, but with excessive mark making and use of colour, and thus these characteristics are contrary to those of traditional Sumi-e.



**Figure 47. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 44*. Ink and acrylic on canvas. 800 x 500mm**  
Source: Personal collection

Shortly thereafter I attended a landscape painting course with Dee Donaldson, where we had to use our own photographs as source material for the oil painting combined with preparatory sketching in charcoal. My intention was to see how Sumi-e had affected the way I painted in oils. My painting was a disaster, I could not find a connection between the brush and the paint, the tool and the medium behaved as separate entities, I felt clumsy and there was little possibility of my achieving spontaneity and unexpected results. The paint remained exactly where I put the brush, unlike in Sumi-e, where it bleeds and moves, merges and creates unexpected forms. My formal training using the Sumi-e canons provided a foundation for my developing art practice, different to what I had previously learnt in fine arts, the latter now proving to be a handicap. Similarly, Bolt experienced the same problems: “the principles foundational to my art education were no longer of much use to me” (2007: 32). I abandoned this painting as a failure and went back to the process of Sumi-e, but using one of my photographs. The outcome was not successful, it was stiff, realistic and laboured, as shown below, in Figure 48.





**Figure 48. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 45*. Sumi-e on Japanese paper. 900mm x 450mm**  
Source: Personal collection

Subsequently I put the photograph away, I did no pre-sketching and I worked intuitively, capturing forms through stored impressions and feelings of the scene, as shown below, Figure 79.



**Figure 49. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 46*. Sumi-e on Japanese paper. 900mm x 450mm**  
Source: Personal collection

My reaction to this artwork was more positive, I realised that painting from a photographic reference was no longer viable, and rational thought a hindrance. Sumi-e brushes and sumi (ink) were essential, as well as various papers, together with fabrics, or whatever materials seemed exciting. My creative impulses trigger experimentation through my playing and handling of my materials, not through preplanning and expectations of a certain outcome. Bolt states that for her, “Handling revealed the limits of conceptual thinking” (2007: 32). In the following section I describe the processes of Sumi-e for the reader to understand how

Sumi-e materials continued to facilitate experiments, resulting in the evolution of materiality within my artmaking.

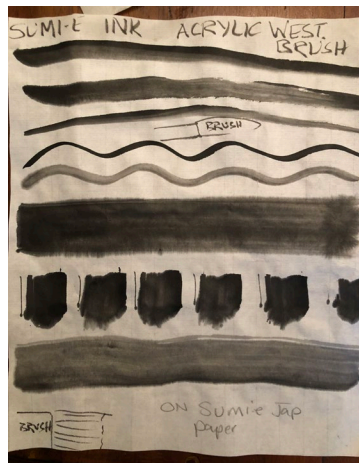
### **6.3.1 The processes and materials of traditional Sumi-e**

The traditional materials present many challenges to overcome. The slow mixing of the ink to an acceptable intensity in small batches is governed by the size of the inkstick, *suzuri* (the maximum size sold is 12cm x 3cm) and ink stone the (maximum size is 20cm x 18cm). This differs from oil paints, watercolours and acrylics, which come in various colours and sizes of tubes. One has to learn how to create “colour” out of many tones of black ink, 72 tones is the goal for an aspirant Sumi-e painter.

The absorbent paper results in bleeding and blotches, if one does not work quickly enough, or load the brush correctly. First the brush needs to be moistened, then a mid-tone of ink is drawn, and the brush wiped, followed by a tip of intense black ink. There is a unique way of how to control the brush: one holds it vertically, with the forearm horizontal to the body. One should be able to balance a saucer of water on the forearm, revealing the desired position. The table is positioned four fingers below the navel, the paper lies flat on the table. One stands up using the whole body, rather than sitting on a stool or standing at an easel painting vertically. Pressure yielded on the brush sideways creates a shaded band, darkness along one edge lightening towards the other edge. This is evident in Figure 50 where you can observe on the top righthand side a dark edge fading to nothing. In Figure 51, where I used commercial acrylic ink, you can see hardly any tonal variation in one stroke, even though I attempted to load the brush in the same manner.



**Figure 50. Ingrid Adams, 2017 *Sumi-e brushstrokes with Sumi-e brush, choryu*. 2017. Sumi-e on Japanese paper. 300mm x 220mm.**  
Source: Personal collection



**Figure 51. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Brushstrokes with a Winsdor and Newton acrylic brush*. Sumi-e on Japanese paper. 300mm x 220mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

The structure of the Japanese brush, with two types of hair tapering to a point enables variations of tone in one stroke, with correct loading. One Sumi-e brush performs in different ways by allowing broad sweeps when held sideways, fine lines using the tip vertically, and the rendering of scattered markings using dry loadings, as opposed to using various brushes for different mark making and sizes of stroke. No alterations can be made as in oil painting, because in Sumi-e strokes reflecting freshness and spontaneity are killed by repainting which creates unsightly big splodges.

My constant use of the Four Treasures: ink stick, ink stone, paper and many different sizes of the brushes, together with water, continues. However, I also incorporate other materials,

which are mentioned where applicable, to certain artworks. My research into natural materials extends to papermaking and the making of my own brushes. The brushes are shown below in Figure 52.

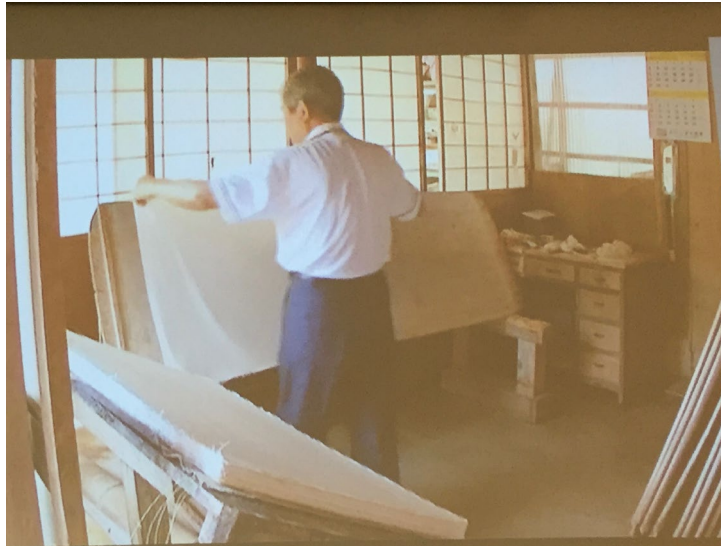


**Figure 52. Ingrid Adams, 2017. Homemade brushes. Sacred Ibis and fork-tailed drongo feathers and straw from a traditional Japanese house broom. 1000mm x 35mm x 120mm, 100mm x 50mm x 120mm.**

Source: Personal collection

In addition to the regular *choryu* brushes, the Japanese make small brushes with feathers 200mm long with 10mm base and large brushes 450mm long with up to 50mm diameter base of hair using horse tail hair. I decided to make much bigger brushes for the large formats I had been using.

Hand crafted Japanese paper is made from plants such as *Kozo*, *Mitsumata*, and *Ganpi*. At Ozu Washi, Tokyo, in October 2017, I saw a film on making *kozo* paper and attended a paper making course, as well as sourced various types of paper for my artmaking, shown below in Figures 53.



**Figure 53. Kozo paper making. Ozu Washi, Tokyo, 2017c. Personal photograph taken of a film made by Ozu Washi.**

Source: Personal collection

Experiments with paper making ensued and evidence of this is presented further on in this chapter.

Struggles to capture *chi* and *ma* through allowing unpainted white space, and the ability to create an artwork leaving white space, remains another obstacle to overcome. Use of Japanese cultural terms such as these, continue to extend my perspectives, opening my mind to viewing paintings in new ways. Finding inspiration in nature, capturing this spirit or energy, as well as expressing one's own responses and feelings, away from the scene, and with economy, is another difficulty. Creating a spiritual atmosphere in an artwork is not easily achieved through logical and conscious attempts, but I believe that the context of displaying my artworks in a forest suggests a spirituality. My dealings with space do not follow the Sumi-e tradition of indicating three levels of space as shown in Figure 1, *Splashed Ink Landscape*. Intense focus on Sumi-e processes is required to achieve satisfying results and this complete absorption in my practice leaves no room for outside thoughts, facilitating meditation through process.

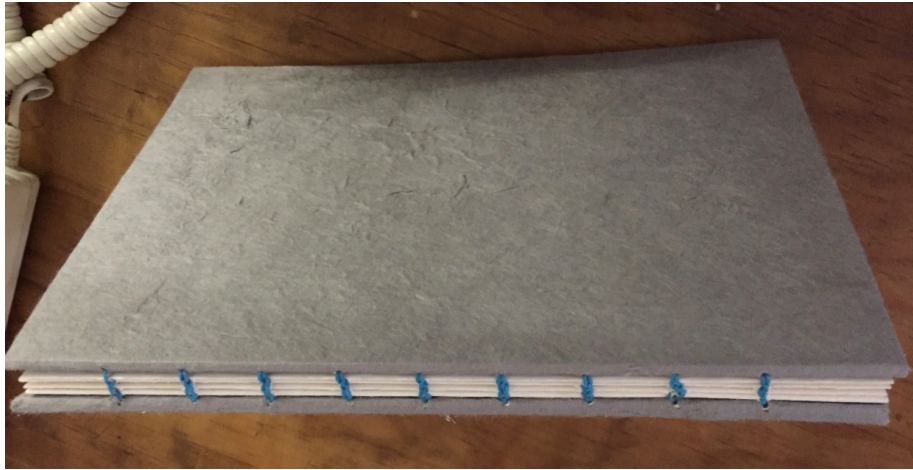
Planning my practice ahead of time is mediated by my choice of traditional Sumi-e materials which form the core of my art practice. However, I also intuitively divert and add additional materials from my collections, such as fabrics, sand, feathers or organic matter. The processes of traditional Sumi-e have been fundamental to my continued way of

painting, recognising my failure to create a painting using my former methods and materials. My source of nature as inspiration has never faltered and continues to be my focus, and geology has become a more recent source.

#### **6.4 Unpacking my processes**

My workbooks provide a comprehensive overview of my artmaking, where I constantly note my experiments, dead ends and outcomes, as well as photographs of my works in progress, offering “opportunity for insight and nuance into the creative practice through a necessarily subjective record” (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2008 cited in Skains, 2018: 5). Richardson and St Pierre suggest that “the creative process and products” are deeply intertwined with “creative analytical processes” (Ibid: 5). Analysing my processes is not easy, I have difficulty verbalising why I am doing something because my actions are intuitive. I refer to past artworks in my workbooks and attempt to analyse these in section 6.2.2.

Through my involvement with drawing, oil painting, acrylics and finally Sumi-e, I have come to the realisation that Sumi-e is an extremely satisfying mode of artmaking. My experiences in industry and with the various mediums I have employed in the past continue to exert influences on my practice and materials. Inspiring ideas gleaned from exhibitions on my travels and photographs that I take in nature are recorded in separate workbooks. I attended a book-binding course, in order to develop the necessary skills to bind my workbooks. One of my journals is shown below in Figure 54.



**Figure 54. Ingrid Adams, 2017. Bound Journal. Japanese paper, watercolour paper, Fabriano, thread. 320mm x 220mm. Photograph by Ingrid Adams.**  
Source: Personal collection

Through my workbooks I continue to roam, sometimes successfully analysing how I arrive at the final artwork and what it means to me. My processes throughout Master's have zig-zagged back and forth, sometimes going off at tangents, some resulting in disasters, as well as gratifying outcomes at other times. Adjusting my research to a PRR approach caused me to reconsider in retrospect my earlier artworks, including some I had discarded.

#### **6.4.1 Retrospection**

In the two artworks below (Figures 55 and 56) I show how I used the shadows of a *Strelitzia* and *Podocarpus latifolius* (yellowwood), to capture forms with diluted white acrylic on unfinished seed cloth. I did this by pouring diluted sumi ink onto untreated seed cloth and allowing it to merge in places with wet white acrylic, and blocking the sumi where the acrylic had dried. When the fabric was completely dry I added a mixture of teas, namely, Rooibos, Japanese green tea, and Indian black tea. The sumi seeped into the weft threads, creating a subtle linear element *in situ*.



**Figure 55. Ingrid Adams, 2017a. Work in progress, for *Untitled 29*. Unfinished seed cloth, sumi ink, white acrylic and tea. 3200mm x 1500mm**  
Source: Personal collection



**Figure 56. Ingrid Adams, 2017b. Work in progress, for *Untitled 29*. Unfinished seed cloth, sumi ink, white acrylic and tea. 3200mm x 1500mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

The idea of painting shadows *in situ*, using acrylic and teas, is a major departure from traditional Sumi-e practices. What arrested my interest was how the three liquids interacted; the dry white acrylic blocked the flow of sumi and the teas changed the colour of the white and the sumi. The grass below the fabric caused the sumi to pool in areas suggesting that uneven ground might be an avenue to explore. In addition, the weft threads of the fabric took up the sumi, making short parallel lines which created a tension between these and the organic forms. From these first experiments I then tried out various fabrics from my professional life, such as unfinished cotton hopsack, reject fabric where the faulty weaving slubs and bale marks (permanent creases) caused the sumi to collect and darken.

Below in Figure 57 is a portion of the final artwork, which comprised seven screens. The weft 'lines' of sumi can be seen in the second panel, middle left side and top righthand side. The red oil pastel line I introduced as a disruptive element amongst the organic forms, an analogy for human and industrial intervention in nature.

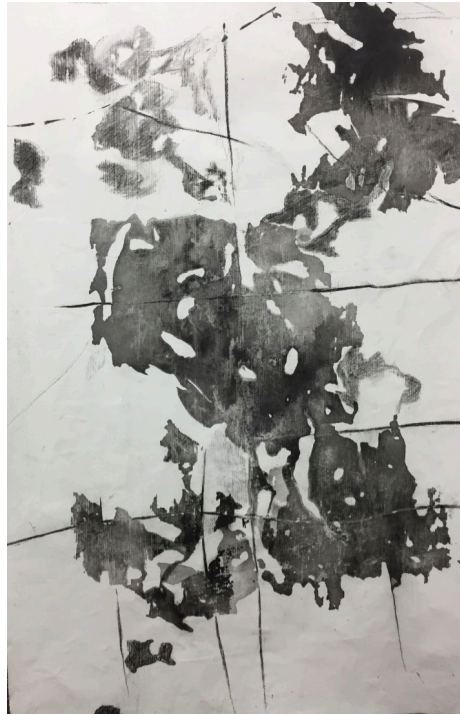




**Figure 57. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 29*. Portion of seven screens. Sumi-e on unfinished seeded cotton, acrylic and red oil pastel, mounted on board. 3000mm x 1480mm.**

Source: Personal collection

In Figure 58 below I used a piece of fabric which collected ink from another painting placed above. the random ink forms I found inspiring, so to this painting I added emphasis with charcoal, where the bale marks intersected.



**Figure 58. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 32*. Sumi-e on unfinished seeded cotton, acrylic and charcoal. 2200mm x 150mm.**

Source: Personal collection

‘Playing around’ with various fabrics, I found a heavy piece of cotton canvas which I knew could take the added weight of sand. In this instance, I poured sumi onto damp white acrylic. In places where the dampness collected the two liquids merged and diffused the sumi creating soft edges. The drier parts retained the blackness of the sumi. Subsequently I used wood glue and painted marks as I would have done with sumi, then covered these with sand until the glue dried. Throwing off the sand, the mark making became evident, shown below in Figure 59.



**Figure 59. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 33*. Sumi-e on cotton canvas, sand, wood glue, acrylic.  
1480mm x 1450mm.  
Source: Personal collection**

However, I felt that in this artwork the black sumi was overbearing with few tonal variations, so I attempted again to create an artwork on fabric with sumi to show more variation in tone, as shown below, Figure 60. In addition, the bale marks were used to add bold linear marks dissecting the organic matter.



**Figure 60. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 21*. Sumi-e, sand, charcoal and acrylic on unfinished seeded cotton. 1480mm x 1800mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

I concluded, after completion of several other artworks, that I would never achieve the subtleties of tone using fabrics, or the liveliness of the sumi, because of the ‘flatness’ of sumi on fabric bases. Tiring of these limitations I decided to revive my Sumi-e practice using Japanese paper as a base. In Figure 61 below, I continued with the pouring process, repeatedly layering the ink. Layering of ink is frowned upon in traditional Sumi-e because of the tendency to lose freshness and spontaneity of mark making. (Ikezaki amplified this very technique, seen in Figure 25 of Chapter 4). I also crushed and crinkled the paper when wet, causing the sumi to seep into the cracks and folds. I found the withered and aged appearance enticing. Thinking of how to introduce a harder linear element, because charcoal did not work, I unpacked my threads from industry. With black silk embroidery thread I emphasised the holes and trailed the threads beyond the edges. The resulting physicality of this artwork enhances the content offering unpredictable interpretations. Mills says that “an aesthetic experience ensues once art materials are transformed, via an artist’s imagination, into thoughts and feelings that are, first, expressed by the artist and, then, received by the viewer” (2009: 2). Thinking about my feelings for my materials, how

these very materials and tools propel me to express my feelings and responses to nature and organic forms reminds me of how I was trained in Sumi-e, but the outcome of this artwork cannot be considered traditional Sumi-e.



**Figure 61. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 11*. Sumi-e, Japanese paper, thread. 1350mm x 370mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

My questioning of why I did something, and what it led to, made me wonder why in some instances I had not continued along the same vein of exploration, where with one sheet of paper I succeeded in creating what appear to be layers of paper, with an archaic appearance. Below is the start of an artwork (Figure 62), where I laid a piece of textured Japanese craft paper over a sheer layer of *ganpishi*. I recall that when this dried, the black was no longer black, but grey. I then turned the work over and began reworking the *ganpishi*, which was not at all successful. My regret now is that I should have inked this side as shown in the photograph with a stronger solution of sumi to capture these strong forms, which had faded into grey. This is one of the handicaps with using sumi – that it is not easy to go back and correct ‘mistakes’, and thus unpredictability is a double-edged sword.



**Figure 62. Ingrid Adams, 2017. Work in Progress. Sumi-e, on Japanese craft paper and *Ganpishi*.  
1500mm x1200mm.**

Source: Personal collection

Looking back at these six artworks I realise that the “need to rethink established canons”, such as the Sumi-e traditions of artmaking, are not always fitting for my explorations (Sullivan, 2010: 115). However, capturing feelings and sensations in nature together with the physical employment of Sumi-e materials remain fundamental to my art practice. Reconsidering the various processes described above convinces me that retrospection using my workbooks enables reflexivity and facilitates analysis which I describe in the next section.

#### **6.4.2 Facilitation through my workbooks**

Figures 55, 56 and 57 offer the idea that shadows of trees can be used as a source of inspiration for organic forms but not as a stencil of the exact shape cast by the trees. Rather, I am experiencing the surrounding ambience, the movements and flickering of the light and shadows through the leaves and branches, called *kumorebi*. This relates in a way to the traditional practice of Sumi-e, where one captures memories and sensations away from the scene. In addition, using uneven ground when painting, to pool the sumi in places, and the melding of disparate liquids, such as sumi, acrylic and teas made from plants. The large format 3000mm x 1500mm I find comfortable to work with, using my pouring process and the homemade big brushes, when needed.

Figure 58 is useful in that the unexpected forms which grow underneath another painting offer accidental opportunities to develop further. The bale marks, considered a cause for rejection in industry, I used inadvertently to incorporate linear elements.

With Figure 59 comes the realisation that additional elements using wood glue and sand is surprisingly effective, but that there is not sufficient tonal variation within the sumi.

Figure 60 shows lighter areas of sumi and darker areas of Sumi, both with a flat appearance, but no subtle or lively tones. This artwork makes me realise the limitations of using textiles and sumi together.

Figure 61 resonates strongly with my passion for texture, with the transformation of the smooth single sheet of paper giving the appearance of several layers and a suggestion of an archaic physicality. The incorporation of thread adds an autobiographical element and therefore meaning which I feel is appropriate considering how my previous professional life to do with clothing in the fashion industry continues to be a part of my psyche.

The last figure, Figure 62, has provided me with a constant reminder to mix the sumi darker than I want it to be, knowing how much lighter it appears when dry.

Through the above conclusions, I realise that my knowledge indeed “arises from our handling of materials and processes”, as examined by Heidegger, and through this knowledge I fertilise my artmaking and writing (cited in Bolt, 2006: 6). Thinking in materials, rather than consciously and cognitively, applies to the way I work with my materials and this is apparent in the previous section 6.3, where I explain how rational thinking handicapped my painting. Bolt reveals a similar experience where “a movement from logical rational thought to material thinking” was the result of the very failure of her landscape paintings when she moved to the desert and was confronted by altered perceptions of space, light and form (2007: 32). However, in order to put this research together by writing, cognitive and logical thought processes are also necessary.

Gray and Malins discuss ‘reflection-in-action’, thinking about “what we are doing and reshaping action while we are doing it”, as being “improvisational” and reliant “on feeling,

response and adjustment” (2004: 22). When I am actively engaged in a process that expands intuitively, and with chance, writing as I do so is distracting and imposes cognitive thinking on the very process that I wish to remain spontaneous. Sullivan states that Brown and Jones “unravelling the principles of action research which sometimes result in a new type of control and orthodoxy ... similar to that of a curator or art writer who presents a retrospective or text ... and exercises revisionist control” (Sullivan, 2010: 47). Practising revisionist control is not the way in which I work, which is guided by instinct as a form of meditation. Hoover’s opinion is that in Zen Culture “the awakening of the anti-irrational counter mind” (1977: 4) is a means of generating a singular focused engagement, which resonates with my way of practice. Therefore, for this research, my analyses and deductive thinking are best done retrospectively through my workbooks, rather than a “reflective conversation with the materials of a situation” (Schon, 1983: 78, in Gray and Malins, 2004: 22).

### **6.4.3 Plan of action**

My retrospective reflection and analysis through my workbooks proved to me that this was a worthwhile exercise to expand on and a more suitable way of working, for my ways of art practice. However, my note taking in my workbooks up to this point were not comprehensive enough to contribute to this research. I thereafter compiled a plan of action based on the findings of the six artworks mentioned above (section 6.4.1). This plan included the following principles/guidelines:

- Make notes on reflection immediately after a process
- Consider shadows and the movement of these artworks in a breeze
- Experiment further with uneven ground as an underlying working surface, allowing the sumi to pool in places
- Find additional liquids to perhaps incorporate subtle colour
- Use different size formats
- Add linear elements, with thread and charcoal
- Persevere with tonal variations
- Investigate other ways of creating texture



- Mix the sumi darker and consider using the commercially produced, ready mixed sumi for the large works, where the process of grinding the ink stick would take too long.
- Experiment with the various Japanese papers
- Keep a notebook at hand when in natural surroundings and jot down thoughts, reactions, feelings, as well as arresting forms and textures, persisting with mindfulness when there is an opportunity to practice.
- Continue to sketch, to keep the mind attuned to forms, especially in nature
- Continue with photography, at different times of day, to record how light changes atmosphere
- Persist with mindfulness when suitable, outside of my actual processes
- Constantly source additional artworks and literature on the internet, on ink painting, Sumi-e, as well as contemporary art practice
- Jot down any pertinent information found on other artists, in literature in the workbooks, to create an ongoing narrative
- Collaborate with fellow students conducting artistic research, and lecturers, make notes of feedback
- Create links with literature sourced pertinent to my artmaking and beyond what I might have envisaged before, at the start
- Constantly remind myself that this is both research as practice and practice as research

Experiments ensued because I was not satisfied with the final outcomes of anything I had done so far, apart from a few processes as mentioned above. Thrift says that “changes in practice nearly always come about through involved experimentation rather than deliberative thinking” (2008: 123). This resonated with my way of thinking that I should be open to change; I also realised that I would not be successful with everything I tried, dead ends can also provide inklings of new directions just as insights can result in later disappointments. Contemplating how I could further my explorations at the same time informing my research, I came to the conclusion that mark making appeared to be one of the most important elements of my processes together with the traditional materials of Sumi-e.

## 6.5 Mark making

The technical virtuosity displayed in *Splashed Ink Landscape* (Figure 1) continues to inspire my mark making. Such spontaneity and economy is achieved with a variety of tones – splashes skilfully capture the trees and hill in the middle ground, a few delicate wisps of light grey describe the background, and the use of fine line in the foreground indicates the tiny boatmen.

The way sumi behaves on Japanese paper always creates unexpected outcomes, and the unpredictability is exciting. The behaviour of the different Japanese papers with sumi and water varies considerably with the result that the mark making also changes. The tones of sumi are much darker when wet, they fade with drying and continue to bleed before drying, so that when dry, the mark making has a different appearance. When I place two different pieces of paper, or a layer of organdy on paper, and paint them together, the ink pools in ways which, when dry, are different to when wet. In Figure 63, the sumi I have used is commercially mixed, which is easier for the large format, and the paper is mulberry. This artwork is a continuation of the process I started in 2017 such as Figure 62. The thin white spaces between the dry brush marks on the top right-hand side recall a traditional Sumi-e technique, called “flying white”, illustrated in the Sumi-e workbook compiled for Honours (Adams, 2016)).



**Figure 63. Ingrid Adams, 2018. Work in Progress. Commercially mixed sumi on mulberry paper. 1500mm x 1800mm.**

Source: Personal collection

The harsh solid areas of this artwork sent me in another direction, away from using the premixed sumi. I realise in retrospect that I did not load the brush with care, hence the lack of tonal variety. In the following artwork, Figure 63, I used Japanese unsized paper on which I painted sumi of different concentrations to create more variation in tones, and then added marks using charcoal.



**Figure 64. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 45*. Sumi-e on Japanese calligraphy paper with charcoal, mounted. 1460mm x 440mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

The finer marks of the charcoal set up a tension where they create a link between the two sides. The difference in mark making between this artwork and the previous artwork, Figure 69, prompted me to look at other bases for mark making.

In the following artworks, I selected *ganpishi*, a traditional Japanese archival material, not used for Sumi-e. The appeal of this paper is in the transparency and delicacy which results in very different types of mark making to a paper like Fabriano, heavy mulberry, Japanese calligraphy paper, or fabric.

Layering two different sheets of paper together results in further changes, showing amoeba-like shapes underneath where the liquid pools. Figure 65 shows the start of the painting using two layers of *ganpishi*, which I crumpled together, moving the ink into creases to create variations of tone and mark. Figure 66 shows the finished artwork suspended in Virginia forest, where the play of light emphasises the light areas and mutes the darker areas. The shadows darken both the light and dark areas. Random holes in the top layer of *ganpishi* intensify the contrast of light and dark. The darkened creases are hard edged

compared to the soft gradations of tones. This artwork ventures beyond an abstracted artwork, with the mark making becoming more than the marks, with shadows, light, movement and holes all together creating changes in the outward appearance. Layers of meaning have developed into a physicality out of my processes, my mark making and the display, embedding materiality within the whole.



**Figure 65. Ingrid Adams, 2018a. *Untitled 27*, close up view. Sumi-e on *ganpishi*. 2000mm x 1200mm.**  
Source: Personal collection



**Figure 66. Ingrid Adams, 2018b. *Untitled 27*. Sumi-e on *ganpishi*. 2000mm x 1200mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

Figures 67 and 68 show where I used a layer of Japanese craft paper, which is fibrous and randomly perforated, laid over a longer layer of *ganpishi*. In order to accentuate the darkness which seeped through to the *ganpishi*, I took small pieces of *ganpishi*, over which I had inked, and squashed these down onto the craft paper and allowed the layers to dry. The delicate mark making in this artwork on the *ganpishi* side is realised through the sumi which seeped through the perforations creating a dappled surface of light and dark areas, surrounded by random areas of soft wash. By contrast, the craft paper side is coarsely textured and the marks are obliterated by the texture and the darkness showing through the perforations, uniting the dark inked areas, on the *ganpishi* side. The artwork is intended to be viewed from both sides, two distinctly different artworks and yet part of each other, an analogy for the fragility and the power inherent in nature.



**Figure 67. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 25. Sumi-e, ganpishi* and craft paper. 1370mm x1000mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

The following artworks (Figures 68 and 69) show three layers of *ganpishi*. The first inking of this was done with a strong solution of sumi over creases and brushmarks of water, causing bleeding. Wanting gentle diffusions of sumi, I brushed in more water and added diluted sumi. Finally, for the orb I used very concentrated sumi, emphasising the edge of the top layer and fraying the edge of the orb with a pin. My results from these processes encouraged me to experiment further with subtle mark making and layering which adds strength in places to the darkness, such as the lefthand side of the orb of Figure 69.



**Figure 68. Ingrid Adams, 2018. Work in progress, the start of the Sumi-e. Sumi-e on three layers of *ganpishi*. 630mm x 940mm.**  
Source: Personal collection



**Figure 69. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 5*. Sumi-e on *ganpishi*. 630mm x 940 mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

The shadows in the forest shown in Figure 70 add depth to the mark making, enhancing the physicality of the artwork and adding more dimension to the whole.

Crushing the heavier paper, like mulberry, when wet, adding sumi, allowing it to dry, then separating the paper, creates a rock-like structure, and is how Senju begins his cliff paintings, as discussed in Chapter 5. Adding dark sumi when dry, without smoothing out the paper, introduces a linear element.



**Figure 70. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 12*. Sumi-e on old mulberry paper. 1000mm x 710mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

Although the textured physicality of this artwork above, Figure 70, is appealing, the layering of transparencies in the previous artworks shown presented more challenges and opportunities to extend my practice. What is clear now is how seminal these experiments were and how my later artworks have stepped beyond mark making, through the very processes of expanding my mark making, into creating textures with a haptic effect, through collaging and multiple layers. This will become apparent in the next section.

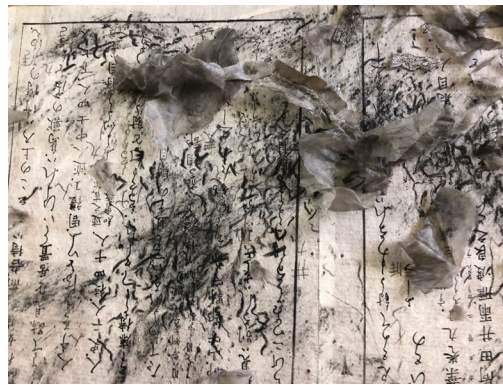
### **6.5 Alternative materials**

Bolt says, “the new can be seen to emerge in the involvement with materials, methods, tools and ideas of practice” (2006: 6).

Collaging and multiple layering are influences from my professional life, where I spent a large portion of my workday making presentations with textured and surface interest fabrics contrasting with sheer, matt, dry handle, shiny fabrics, hopsacks, square weaves, flowing and structured fabrics together with sketches and trims.



My first attempts at layering were using the mulberry paper out of old Japanese books written in the ancient calligraphic style and collaging on top of a double page, with a piece of *ganpishi*, which had been painted with sumi, together with charcoal. I thought that creating something new out of something old would create interesting content. This was not successful, because I did not understand the content of the Japanese calligraphy, and the outcome seemed insincere and contrived, so I abandoned this experiment, shown below, Figure 72.



**Figure 71. Ingrid Adams, 2017. Experiment using mulberry paper printed with calligraphy, *ganpishi*, sumi and charcoal. 250mm x 400mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

Thereafter I tried painting cotton organdy, one of several fabrics which form part of my personal history. I ran it in volume while manufacturing pretty curtains in pastel colours for which I designed new embroideries every season. What I have done with it as part of my art practice, is the antithesis of how I used it previously to generate sales and a profit. The artworks partly composed of this fabric are painted in tones from silver to dark charcoal, in watery forms emanating expressive moodiness, such as Figure 104. I dyed this with tea, which resulted in a sand colour. My choice of this fabric was because it is a natural fibre, as well as sheer, and I wanted to see how it would behave compared to *ganpishi*. The results were disappointing, as the sumi went straight through the square weave.

Determined to overcome this, I used some inked pieces of paper in organic shapes and built up a separate layer of backing. The inked paper intensified the upper areas of darkness on the organdy and a few pieces of dark inked paper were added to the organdy on the front side. A horizontal division on the under layer is linked by herringbone stitching, the intention here being to incorporate a linear element. The whiteness of the wall behind the

artwork shows through the division adding another dimension, emphasising the intrusion of a regimented horizontal element within the mass of organic forms. A physicality and materiality is realised through the smouldering layers of forms, the mark making on the upper layer interacting with the collaged pieces below, Figure 72.



**Figure 72. Ingrid Adams, 2017. *Untitled 36*. Sumi-e on organdy and backed with collage. 1080mm x 1940mm.**

Source: Personal collection

Thereafter, I inked another piece of tea coloured organdy but this time I used pieces of white and black paper, as well as butcher paper, torn into organic shapes, mounted on net backing. The fragmented white shards in this composition, evident on the lower right, provide more contrast and agitate as the artwork moves in the breeze. Hung in the forest with the shadows and light filtering through the trees and the holes in the backing, creates

another layer of shifting highlights, intensifying the depth of the overlapping forms and adding more potential for individual interpretation, shown below, Figure 73.



**Figure 73. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 34*. Organdy, Sumi-e, white, black and butcher paper, on net backing. 1080mm x 1020mm.**  
Source: Personal collection

Searching for additional materials to incorporate, I recalled that in 2017 I joined a glass firing group at the Centre for Visual Arts and made various pieces using sand, gravel, seeds and wire. My interest in glass making arose through geology, and the cycle of the elements: fire, earth, metal, water, and wood. Visits to Namibia and Iceland, as recorded in my workbooks with photographs and sketches, enabled further expansion of my collections of rocks and sands. I decided to make a transverse ‘slice’ of earth by crushing mulberry paper, using sumi and natural colours such as red oxide and yellow ochre, and incorporating pieces of my glass making which I attached on mounting behind the paper, shown below in Figure 74.



**Figure 74. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 46*. Sumi-e on mulberry paper, acrylic, self-made glass. 800mm x 540mm.**

Source: Personal collection

The finished piece looks contrived and although the textures are appealing, the glass looks stuck on. The artwork is literal, it looks like a slice of rock. Enigma and the opportunity for personal interpretation is what I wish to achieve in my artworks. This artwork is not enticing, and my planned conception was where I deviated from my usual spontaneous and intuitive practice. Lange-Berndt says that “a bad idea ... with so little substance can be taken no further” (2015: 177), which resonates with this particular experience. This experience reconfirmed that working spontaneously and intuitively with my materials and tools, rather than forward planning, better suited my processes of artmaking.



**Figure 75. Ingrid Adams, 2018. Work in Progress. Handmade fragment of recycled paper. 220mm x 350mm.**

Source: Personal collection

Experimenting with recycling by shredding some of my old Sumi-e paintings and my archives of company records into paper, provided a means of imbuing my work with personal history, shown above in Figure 75. Destroying my company records was a way of tying up loose ends and venturing forth into the next cycle of my life whereas destroying earlier Sumi-e paintings was more difficult, even though most were shoddy executions. The different types of paper resulted in grey and natural pulp respectively. I varied the thickness of the pulp with water and threw some of this onto the grass and allowed it to dry with blades of grass embedded within the paper. To some of the pulp I added charcoal dust to intensify the textured effect. Above and below, Figures 76 and 77 are examples of this process.



**Figure 76. Ingrid Adams, 2017. Work in Progress. Self-made recycled paper with charcoal dust. 350mm x 460mm.**

Source: Personal collection

The paper that I pressed with weights, as is the custom in natural paper making, was devoid of texture and had no appeal. I then took pieces of this recycled paper and mixed them with *ganpishi* and mulberry paper, the latter inked in various tones of grey and charcoal, as well as white. The whole created a compounded melding of materials imparting a physicality and haptic effect, shown below in Figure 77.

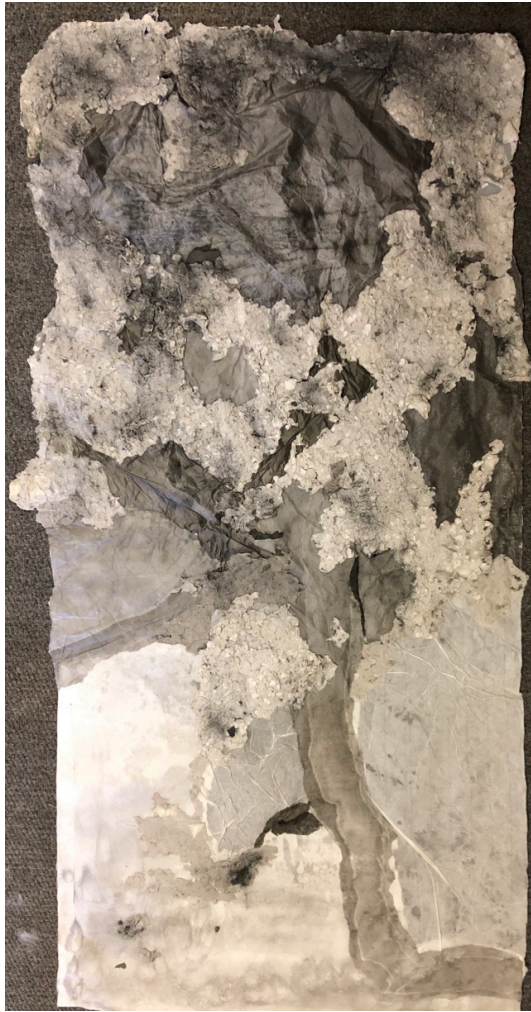


Figure 77. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 48*. Sumi-e, handmade paper, *ganpishi*, mulberry paper, charcoal. 1430mm x 740mm.  
Source: Personal collection

The discovery that the materiality inherent in this artwork evolved out of my transformations of my materials, suggested a fertile area for further investigation. This prompted searchings for ways of combining and/or transforming materials that could possibly contribute to my processes. Lange-Berndt says that “one might discover something that is a good idea ... fertile and open to suggest possibilities” (2015: 177). Around this time a colleague questioned my artmaking and said: “It is not possible to identify the gender of the maker of these artworks” (personal Workbook 2: 2018). This got me thinking, it was true, I ought to add more personal material elements. I had largely been using traditional materials but over decades I had accumulated stores of various other fabrics such as old saris, parachute silk, silk dupion, raw silk, different Japanese papers, various sands and feathers, threads and trims from industry, vintage clothing, antique embroideries and hand tatting. All of these materials carry evidence of my history,

memories of my work in industry and personal life. Lange-Berndt states that “creative practices are not representation but production: art produces the subject, gives him, her identity” (Lange-Berndt, 2015: 78).

I resolved to create artworks with more deliberate intended meaning and subjectivity, by building artworks with materials imbued with memories, personal history and related to my own history. The combined effects would offer the viewer more identifiable forms to personally interpret create deeper meaning.

## **6.6. Materiality**

In Chapter 2 I introduced theories of materiality. In this section I am applying what materiality means to my artmaking. Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2019) offers synonyms for materiality: “actuality, case, fact, reality”, and antonyms: “fantasy, fiction, illusion”, the definition of materiality as being “The quality of being composed of matter.” These generalised definitions help to initially frame the theoretical concept of materiality in art. Applying these to my practice, “actuality” and “matter” seem the most appropriate.

Further, Rose considers the inextricable link between visuality and materiality: “...with a situated eye, an attunement to the collective, multiple and embodied textures, sensibilities and productive meanings of the visual through material, and vice versa”( 2016: 6). This opinion broadened my view on materiality and how multiple meanings, “nuanced connections and ways of encountering the agency of matter” (Wolodźko, 2015: 1) and associations could be perceived.

Mills offers an opinion directed specifically within the context of art: “Just as art forms a nexus between imagination and reality, the current notion about materiality in art is that materiality is how art’s material qualities are sensed, interpreted and understood” (2009: 2). This opinion makes sense but it does not appear to be a commonly held view, as Bolt posits: “positivist scientific thinking has demanded observable, measureable and repeated processes and methodologies, and Visual culture, driven by a cultural studies agenda, has emphasised the social production and reception of art over material production” (2006: 13).

Possibly, since 2006, accepted methodologies of formal analysis are seen to be restrictive for art interpretation.

Earlier than 2006 Grosz appears to have realised the rigidity of dominant methodologies: “if dominant modes of knowledge ... are incapable of envisioning the absolutely new, maybe other modes of knowing, other forms of thinking need to be proposed” (1999: 21 cited in Green, 2015: 9).

These differences of opinion indicate that established modes of thinking about investigating the meaning of art which may have seemed entrenched around 2006, may indeed have shifted by 2019.

My decision to create more personally meaningful artworks, and recollection of the statement by Mills above, prompted me to think intently about each fabric, or piece of paper, why they were meaningful to me and my artmaking and what the juxtaposition of various papers and fabrics would lead to. When I added one piece of collage, my imagination prompted a recollection of another type, and so the process grew.

The following artwork (Figure 78) provides an example of the process and the resulting depth of the meanings of the material. When I had completed an entire collage and assessed it as objectively as I could, I realised that it was overbearing in boldness because of the dramatic combinations, leaving no void or quiet areas. I then took a piece of organdy, laid it over the collage and inked in areas to link up with the collaged underlay and handstitched an outline of a mass on the underlay. The altered context of the collage introduced an enigmatic element where the forms receded and hovered under the semi-transparent organdy overlay. By adding the organdy overlay I created a new layer of meanings within the artwork, together with the added elements of my professional life and history (the organdy, hand stitching, cutting and assembling), and my Sumi-e materials, all of which display as a ‘curtain,’ but the last mentioned being a parody of what I used to manufacture with minimal labour content. Materiality is reflected through the transformations and combinations of cloth, paper and thread together with the light permeating the torn holes in the underlay, offering a sensory experience open to personal interpretations.





**Figure 78. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 22*. Top layer, sumi-e on organdy. Lower layer, collage of various fabrics. 1430mm x 1890mm.**

Source: Personal collection

The pleasurable feel of the all-natural materials, the potential of these when manipulated, seem so unrestrictive compared to the rigid canvas and the chemicals of oil painting. Japanese paper such as *kozo*, has ‘life’ or ‘spirit’, the latter spoken of by Ikezaki in Chapter 4. Spirit as an element within material is also mentioned by Atsuko Tanaka (Lange-Berndt, 2015: 34). The fibre has a history, memories of growing in the soil, being threshed in the river, macerated into pulp and finally creating a sheet of paper. The character of the paper determines its behaviour when wet, inked, squashed or pummelled. The long fibres of *kozo* are strong and pliable and when sumi is painted on this paper, subtle nuances of tone appear, because of the inherent variations of density within the fibres.

As stated by Bolt: “the materials and process of production have their own intelligence that come into play in interaction with the artists creative intelligence” (2006: 5). To this I add ‘experience’ – experience and knowledge of Sumi-e materials and my work experience involving fabrics and fashion. The latter contributes to my playing with materials, such as pleating, crinkling, layering and juxtaposing different textures. “Material thinking involves a particular responsiveness to, or conjunction with, the intelligence of materials and processes in practice” (Ibid: 5). In addition, my personal history has largely impacted on the materiality evident in my artworks, through my collections of materials and tools, my technical skills learnt in fashion, and my formal training, such as various forms of hand stitching, measuring and cutting, all contributing to my processes of transformation.

Below are two variations of the same artwork, where I painted both layers at the same time. In Figure 79, below, I show the mulberry underlay, displayed horizontally.



**Figure 79. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 4*, close up of the backing of Figure 115. Sumi-e on mulberry paper.**

Source: Personal collection

Figure 80, below, shows the original assemblage with the top overlay extending beyond the underlay, and it is displayed hanging vertically. A few scattered black ‘knobs’ of silk thread which add tiny shimmers across the dry surface compound the sense of materiality through contrast of materials. When displayed out of doors, in nature, with the movement of vegetation and the inked forms extending across the transparent sides, visual sensations are enhanced by the lightest movement of air, shifting the delicate overlay and the sheer *ganpishi* extending beyond the underlay, jostling the forms.

My installation in the forest and the further transformations experienced with the effects of the wind, the sounds of the birds and rustling of the leaves, simmered in my subconscious. I had taken 10 to 30 second clips, and considered holding my Master’s exhibition as an installation in the forest, but decided that this was not practical. The weather, wind, security and encroachment of many viewers in the pristine environment hampered the idea. My solution was to create a short film to show in the gallery at my exhibition. My supervisors, Dr Kathy Arbuckle and Dr Louise Hall encouraged me to proceed with the film, having viewed the clips and agreeing that the materiality and content of my works were enhanced when shown in a forest setting. Additionally, I felt that spirituality and *chi*, two elements I had been striving for from the onset of Sumi-e training, somehow were enlivened by the setting.



**Figure 80. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 4*. Sumi-e on mulberry paper, (backing) and *ganpishi* (front layer). 970mm x 2000mm.  
Source: Personal collection**

Several artworks shown previously have been photographed in the forest, such as Figures 73, 74 and 79 and these also have taken on more dimensions and materiality when viewed in this natural environment.

Peter de Bolla talks of the experience that results from encounters with artworks; since “this experience is the only material of aesthetic judgement; it is its materiality” (2002: 32). I find de Bolla’s interpretation of materiality vague. Materiality evolves out of the physicality, the transformations of the material through the various processes behind the artwork, and in my case, my artworks are also subjectively imbued with personal history. Mills states that the “physical existence [of the work] ... production date and provenance, its history and condition, the artists personal history as it pertains to the origin of the work ... are all relevant to the aesthetic experience” (2009: 1). The experience of the forest

environment combined with suspension of my artworks fluttering in the breeze with dancing shadows, offers an enhanced aesthetic of materiality.

Figure 1, *Splashed Ink Landscape*, by Sesshū, 15<sup>th</sup> Century, is lauded by Lippit for providing a predecessor and “an instructive example of how the materiality of the ink painting medium itself could determine the interpretative potentiality of a given work” (2012: 72). Materiality mentioned within this context indicates the close communion of the artist with his/her materials and tools, which is part of the nature of traditional Sumi-e. In the same way, both Ikezaki and Senju verbalise their affinity with their materials, as is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. My praxical knowledge of my Sumi-e equipment affords many opportunities when collaborating with my extended range of materials and tools. “Don Ihde” talks of “a praxical engagement with tools, materials and ideas” becoming “primary over the assumed theoretical – cognitive engagement” (Bolt, 2006: 7).

One wonders whether the traditional Sumi-e painters of the past recognised or explored the potential of their materials, or were they bound by tradition? Explorations using one’s materials and tools to stretch one’s parameters beyond traditional Sumi-e are evident in my own art developments and in the paper and bronze sculptures of Ikezaki. Ikezaki’s passion for his papermaking and the way in which he transforms flat sheets of paper into evocative three dimensional forms, with the spirit and history inherent in the fibre, and the history of the bronze as it evolved over centuries, makes me realise how in a similar way my personal history is embedded in my fabrics, hand-made paper and threads. Senju evidently collaborates closely with his materials and tools, stretching his *Nihonga* training beyond that tradition. Senju’s influence on my practice is in the resulting physicality of his cliff paintings, through his transformations by crumpling, inking, flattening and spraying of his paper. My grounding in Sumi-e created a threshold but through my altered perceptions, playing with my materials and tools, and the influences of these two artists, further paths of discovery unravelled.

Bolt states that “material thinking” is realised through the employment of tools and materials and the “handling of ideas, rather than a self-conscious attempt at transgression” (Ibid: 7). To strive for newness and originality is an automatic reflex in my artmaking, it is part of the way I work, because that is how I earned a living, using my imagination and

dedicated hard work. Constant experimenting with both traditional and alternative materials, the performative processes of my artmaking, breaking the rules of traditional Sumi-e painting methods, and my experiences in industry, together have compounded, resulting in an understanding of materiality and material thinking.

## **6.6 Formats**

At the start of this Master's research, my artworks were no bigger than 800mm x 1000mm. My inspiration for using larger formats emanated from viewing the artworks of Senju at the Hiroshi Senju Museum and the Kongobu-ji temple, the traditional Japanese screens and scrolls, the temple installations of Ikezaki and the looped digital installation of teamLab Borderless in Odaiba, Tokyo. Working with my processes in a way led to larger artworks, exacerbated by several influences: traditional Sumi-e painting requires upper-body participation, as explained previously in Chapter 2. Painting on uneven ground, such as grass, facilitated the spread of sumi in various ways, as explained previously in this chapter. Having rolls of cloth in my collection, enabled larger formats with which to experiment. I made long brushes to cope with bigger formats and I revelled in the physical involvement of my whole body, my emotions and my mind. To exhibit work of these large formats required alternative considerations of display.

### **6.6.1 Off the wall**

Ikezaki prompted me with ideas of off the wall display, with his free-standing screen painting and paper sculpture in a temple setting. The digital virtual reality installation (teamLab Borderless, 2018), which I viewed in Tokyo in 2018, offered interaction with projections of three-dimensional creatures, water and flowers flowing in, around and through the viewers. The installation, *No Man's Land Where Beauty Alone Reigns*, in Reykjavik, Iceland, viewed in June 2018, showed angled screens of juxtaposed landscapes, expressing "feelings about the landscape more than landscape itself". These are positioned away from the walls, encouraging the viewers to meander in and around the exhibition contemplating dramatic Icelandic landscapes (Magnason, Ingolfsson and Vihjeldsdottir, 2018).

These varied displays provide inspiration for my forest display and the final exhibition of artwork created as part of this research, which will be discussed further on in this chapter.

### 6.6.2 Beyond two dimensions

I regularly hang up my collages on a line to assess the balance and distribution of textures. Taking a piece of silk paper which I had squashed into small folds when wet, I pegged it up to see whatever else I could add to the collage. The form looked like a bodice and out of this hanging my three-dimensional forms emerged. At the same time my colleague's comment had been simmering in my brain (that no gender of the artist was apparent in my artworks) and I applied myself to this form using my assumed 'feminine' skills of various kinds of stitching, embellishing and applique<sup>29</sup>. This grew out of collaged pieces of paper, some pieces stained with tea, insertions of tiny pin tucks, silk ribbon and net, the last three elements synonymous with christening robes and bridal wear (fabric taken from my own wedding dress). The addition of fledgling feathers and the lightness of the delicate and fragile assemblage, weighing less than three hundred grams, compounds to form an ethereal spiritual form fluttering in the breeze, shown below in Figures 81 and 82. My idea of using natural coloured materials as opposed to the greys black and white of my usual materials, was because I decided to create an



**Figure 81. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 8*, showing the form, work in progress. Silk, parachute silk, tea stained organdy, feathers, stitching, fragments silk ribbon and pintucks, Japanese paper, *ganpishi*. 1800mm variable.**  
Source: Personal collection

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<sup>29</sup> Although stitching and sewing may invite feminist interpretations of my work, I have not pursued this line of investigation, as this would be tangential to the focus of my research which is on Sumi-e.

analogy for regeneration and hope through the incorporation of fledgling feathers which are symbolic of flight, freedom and spirituality, with the forest atmosphere conjuring visions of forest spirits.



**Figure 82. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 8*. Silk, parachute silk, tea stained organdy, feathers, stitching, fragments silk ribbon and pintucks, Japanese paper, *ganpishi*. 1800mm variable.**  
Source: Personal collection

## 6.7 Contexts of display

“From one position ... the artwork’s materiality is defined and fixed, from another position, that of the viewer and the object’s location in the environment of the physical world, materiality will continue to shift, altering how the work is perceived, thus informing content” (Mills, 2009: 5).

My artworks show varied degrees/aspects of materiality when viewed in altered contexts, such as the forest installation. Figures 83 and 84 show the play of light, movement and surrounding vegetation which adds another dimension, “giving passing form to the material” (Morris cited in Lange-Berndt, 2015: 93) shifting meanings and interpretations

for the viewers. My final showing was confined to the KZNSA gallery where limitations on display posed a problem. Marcel Duchamp exposed the effect of context on art with his installation of *1200 Bags of Coal*, 1938, suggesting that the idea of a gallery space could be manipulated “as an aesthetic encounter” (O’Doherty, 1986: 69). My ideas of display and context are discussed further in this chapter. I used these ideas to reshape the context and the functioning of the gallery, to fit the ambience I needed to create.

### **6.7.1 Forest display**

In previous sections, the display of my artworks in the forest have been presented and discussed. Installation in a forest is my preferred choice for display of this body of work. However, limitations of weather, and the short time frame this would allow, prevented this from being used as a venue, but I made a film of the installation within the forest which was then shown at the KZNSA, continuously looped. I projected the same film over and through the suspended artworks, with minimal lighting and this added to the movement of the forms within the artworks, further aided by fans.

The form shown below (Figure 83) is created out of sumi painted Japanese papers, *ganpishi*, silk, parachute silk, organdy, feathers, stitching, net, fragments of silk ribbon and handstitched pintucks, as well as black, grey, white and red threads. Through the aged appearance of the crushed and creviced paper, the creased and dishevelled silk, and the torn net, the form collapsing in a heap indicates degeneration and decay, with a sliver of hope conveyed by pristine white insertions. This form, and that in Figure 82, can be viewed as analogies of the cycle of life and time, in nature, humanity and geology.





**Figure 83. Ingrid Adams, 2018. *Untitled 7*. Silk, parachute silk, sumi painted organdy, Japanese papers, feathers, stitching, fragments of silk ribbon and pintucks. 1800mm variable. Personal photograph, Virginia Forest, Durban North.  
Source: Personal collection**

### **6.7.2 Light and shadow**

“Black is as much about absorption as it is about absence that allows the vague to become vivid in the way that shadows profile things” (Sullivan, 2010: 142).

As explained in Chapter 2, shadowed interiors are customary for temple display of Sumi-e artworks. Senju’s display of his artworks in the light-filled Hiroshi Senju Museum fluctuates with the seasonal foliage within and around the museum and the changing weather, which in winter creates more shadows. My views on displaying my own artworks are polarised. Certain artworks need light to allow the forms on the backing to meld with the overlay, such as 84 and 85 below. My three-dimensional forms need both light and shadows, e.g. Figures 82 and 83. The wall mounted artworks, such as Figures 64 and 70, need good lighting.

The artworks below, Figures 84 and 85, comprise two layers of organdy, painted with sumi. The under layer (Figure 85), has appliqued Japanese paper stitched on by hand which has been crumpled into an organic form. A smaller form hovers in Figure 120. Viewing this artwork out of the shadows of the forest deprives it of the lively moving shadows, the filtering light and the tinges of green peeping through.



Figure 84. Ingrid Adams, 2018a. *Untitled 23*. Sumi-e, organdy, Japanese paper, thread. 2270mm x 1450mm.  
Source: Personal collection



Figure 85. Ingrid Adams, 2018b. *Untitled 23*. Sumi-e, organdy, Japanese paper, thread. 2270mm x 1450mm.  
Source: Personal collection

## 6.8 Braiding of writing and practice

Sullivan uses the word “braiding” as a metaphor for visual arts research as being “both a complex and a simple practice” (2010: 14). This verb appropriately describes my intended

linking of research and art practice and art practice with research. “Where content and form are sometimes intertwined, nested, connected” and through unravelling, “form and content become disconnected” suggests that the same artwork “can mean different things” (Dubuffet cited in Ibid). This idea of unravelling and disconnecting form and thereby creating altered meanings hold true in altering contexts of display, as discussed previously. Viewing braiding of art practice and writing, sometimes “indescribable” processes, handicaps one’s intent to link these verbally, where “one knows how rather than knowing what” (Gray and Malins, 2004: 22). Using knowledge I have gained is not always mentally accessible, some “is understood non-verbally” (Edwards, 1999: 44).

Within my workbooks, visual images provide evidence of my processes and outcomes which I believe are more effective than my verbalisations. A rethinking of the traditional Sumi-e canons, the foundation of my art practice, offers insights into my processes which are explained in the previous sections such as mark making, painting instinctively. My core themes are expressions of nature, the cycle of life showing degeneration and regeneration, and materiality. Changing contexts, exploring layering and collage, adds, detracts and sometimes intensifies meaning within my artworks.

## **6.9 Inspiration from other artists**

Senju’s processes for his cliff paintings are similar to the way I have crushed my paper, but his processes beyond the crushing and inking are tangential to mine, where he uses a spray gun and *gofun*. His modes of display I have found useful, especially the darkened walls at the two Akita museums mentioned in Chapter 5. Ikezaki’s display within a temple setting, mentioned in Chapter 4, his skillful bleeding of sumi in Figure 22, and his layering of paper to create forms as in Figure 23, have all influenced my artmaking. The philosophies of both of these artists I find inspiring.

I have not included international artists or South African artists in this research, because my focus on Sumi-e and the influences on my artmaking as well as other inspirational artists and exhibitions visited, are mentioned in my workbooks. The processes of these artists and display of these exhibitions suggest ideas for my future artmaking, where I will continue to explore and extend my investigations of materiality.

## 6.10 Beyond Sumi-e and conclusion

Autoethnography applies in some ways to my art practice as well as this research, where I have described my “personal experience in order to understand the culture” embedded in traditional Sumi-e and what it has meant to me in my experience as an artist (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011, cited in Skains, 2018: 6). My personal experience of Sumi-e has led me on a constant path of discovery, allowing the materials to exist and speak for themselves in some ways, according to how I have transformed them. How Sumi-e has catalysed my work lies in the materiality, where I have encouraged my materials through ‘playing’ with them and this experience, which has been about “breaking the rules”.

Sumi-e has played a seminal role in my artmaking, and through this, materiality has become an identifying characteristic of my artworks. Deeply embedded in my artmaking processes is the continued employment of Sumi-e materials and tools. My constant striving to discover and extend myself has over the years become part of my character and work ethic, impacting on experiments in my processes. Breaking the rules of Sumi-e was inevitable, compounded with the fact that the very materials lend themselves to change.

My passion for all-natural materials extends to my incorporation of fabrics, threads, personal items, vintage clothing and embroideries. My personal history and professional life have continued to wield influences in my use of collage, applique, various types of recognised styles of stitching and my own arbitrary stitching. The influences of Ikezaki, Senju, and in a lesser way the other artists I have included in this chapter, as well as feedback from colleagues and supervisors, have further contributed to my evolvment and personal heuristic.

Weaving the theory of materiality through describing and reflecting what has been happening in my art practice, has been relevant to this study. Departing from the canons of traditional Sumi-e and yet retaining vestiges of the practice, presents a second theoretical observation. The element of hanging, suspending my artworks in a more organic manner, by using cotton thread as opposed to fishing line, linking the artworks together, contributes to the materiality of these within the gallery space. Transforming the space with walls

painted black, sounds of the forest and projections of the film over and through the suspended artworks, creates a fitting ambience to complement my artworks.

Concluding this chapter on my own art practice, the reader must be wondering ‘where to’ from here. My past explorations have directed me to project a personal theory of materiality and inspirations of other artists offer me further opportunities to explore. Out of these explorations, compounded with my constant inventiveness and desire to discover newness, I have no prescription for the outcomes that will result. But, I believe that the core and foundation of my practice is Sumi-e and will remain so.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Overview of this study

I started this research to explore and record the practice of Sumi-e which I had discovered and which became the focus of my own art practice, and as I believed it to be practised in Japan. My final realisation is that Sumi-e taught at the Buddhist Retreat Centre and as I had learned, has been caught in a time – warp. My original motivation was to preserve and share the values of this unique and holistic art form because I believed its mindful processes to be of great benefit to individuals and that it would be an excellent practice to promote in education in South Africa. Through Sumi-e I particularly hoped to promote the appreciation and awareness of nature. This was a worthy and grand hope, and it soon became clear that for research purposes, a more focused and modest goal was necessary. I was encouraged to reflect on the changes that had come about in my own artistic practice, and how Sumi-e seemed to have catalysed my art, breaking the boundaries of traditional Sumi-e to progress beyond modernist style paintings. Similarly, I had turned Sumi-e materials and practices into a vehicle for personal expression. I made links between my work and that of Ikezaki and Senju, as well as the influences of my personal history. In this dissertation I have explored these connections at length, and in this final chapter, I summarise and present my conclusions.

The main research question explored is, ‘How has my art practice been enabled by breaking the boundaries of traditional Sumi-e?’ In the rest of this chapter I summarise what I have learned about the role of breaking these rules. By identifying the elements, characteristics and philosophy which express or resonate with Sumi-e principles, I have also become aware of how the artworks of Ikezaki and Senju extend or diverge from these principles, maintaining the use of the all-natural materials and frequently retaining the purity or spiritual expression of *chi*, through the inspiration of nature. In the rest of this chapter I summarise what I have learned about the role of breaking these rules.

## **7.2 Traditional Sumi-e framework of reference**

### **7.2.1 The use of all-natural materials**

These materials have remained intrinsic to my art practice, as well as the respective practices of Ikezaki and Senju. Deviating from these materials, Senju incorporates *gofun*, fluorescent paint, uses spray guns and airbrushes. Ikezaki coats his paper sculptures with copper and bronze as well as colour and plastic dots in the *Dot* series.

### **7.2.2 Shibue or accidental beauty**

Accidental beauty as a result of spontaneous processes can be said to be evident in my successful mark making. Accidental beauty is acknowledged by both Ikezaki and Senju, and is apparent in their artworks. Ikezaki is familiar with the term *shibue*. Senju does not express familiarity with this word but believes that accidental beauty applies to his waterfall paintings.

### **7.2.3 Painting instinctively as a form of meditation**

My intuitive processes and total immersion in my processes I interpret as being akin to meditation. I understand that I can't force my own understandings onto the artmaking processes of Ikezaki and Senju, even though the nature of their works relates to what I am able to create while in this state. Neither of them acknowledges the practice of meditation, even though they both paint instinctively.

### **7.2.4 Nature as a source of inspiration, *chi* and cosmocentricism**

My inspiration from nature continues to endure, but my beliefs in the idea of cosmocentricism I realise are idealistic. The capture of *chi* has been a struggle to come to terms within my art practice. Both Ikezaki and Senju have used nature as an inspiration throughout their artistic practice. They use the terms *ki* and *chi* respectively which is inherent in their artmaking, such as how Senju used light as a way of flowing the *chi*

through his museum. The term ‘cosmocentricism’ is not familiar to Ikezaki or Senju but the concept resonated with both of them, when I explained the term.

### **7.2.5 Contexts of display**

The contexts in which I choose to display my work have been influenced in the course of this research by exhibitions I have viewed and through literature accessed. My forest installation was not a traditional Sumi-e temple context, being out of doors, however my gallery installation aimed to create elements of a darkened temple ambience through the use of limited lighting. Ikezaki’s use of a temple context mirrors a traditional Sumi-e installation, but his exhibitions in galleries are contemporary displays. Senju has used both contexts, traditional darkened temples as well as his own museum, which is exposed to good natural lighting especially through summer and a more shadowed ambience during the cold winters.

### **7.2.6 Japanese cultural terms and vocabulary**

My appropriation of Japanese words such as *shibue* and *yūgen* and *chi* are only used when discussing Sumi-e with Van Loon and in a teaching situation. Ikezaki makes frequent use of *ki*, *yūgen* and *myō* whereas Senju uses *chi*, *ma*, *ichigo ichie*, *gofun* and *Zoka*. The study brought a new awareness to me that these terms (and related practices) which I had associated with Japanese art and culture were not necessarily widely known among arts practitioners today, and my understanding of the contemporary Japanese context has been expanded.

### **7.2.7 Spirituality**

My display of artworks within the forest in a way alleviated my struggle to render a spiritual reality. The artworks themselves and the overall installation created an ambience which for me was redolent of spirituality. Ikezaki refers to the presence of spirituality in his artworks through the expression of *chi* and his feelings of *yugen* and *myo*. Senju also talks of the spirituality residing in his waterfalls’ expression through *chi* and *ma*.



### **7.2.8 Learn the rules, break the rules**

My foundation of traditional Sumi-e canons continue to influence me, but my art processes and additional materials have led me in various directions, breaking the rules which I had learnt from Van Loon. My initial approach to my artmaking was almost as an anthropologist, immersing myself in a different culture, resulting in self-conscious attempts to respect the canons and principles. Having achieved significant ventures beyond the tradition I have been able to be reflexive and adaptive, broadening my knowledge through literature and observation of the respective art processes of Senju and Ikezaki. In some ways I have broken the bonds from the restraints of my perceptions of the rules. Ikezaki ventures beyond traditional Sumi-e with his paper sculptures coated in bronze as well as the *Dot* series. Senju was not trained in traditional Sumi-e, but explains the Japanese concept of *shuhari*, and appears to embrace the idea, evident in his pouring and crushing processes. His venture into film and digital reality shows a break with *Nihonga* painting traditions. In section 7.3 below I reflect on this in greater depth.

### **7.2.9 Mark making: intuition, economy and capturing of the essence**

My mark making practice varies but mostly I use the traditional modes of creating a variety of marks using one brush to create fine lines and broad washes. My artmaking is not deliberate in approach, I seldom plan anything apart from end touches, such as stitching. Economy is an element of Sumi-e that I initially aimed for, but my abstractions have increasingly evolved into a profusion of mark making in places. In these, capturing an essence of reality, rather than a literal representation, is a matter of personal interpretation by the viewer.

In his Sumi-e paintings Ikezaki uses the same brushes and paints freely in an intuitive way, showing technical virtuosity and economy of mark making, capturing the essence of an imaginary landscape, evident from the demonstrations viewed on YouTube (Ikezaki, 2016). His use of paper sculpture and his *Dot* series cannot be said to evidence these Sumi-e characteristics.

The *Cliff* series paintings by Senju show evidence of the above listed characteristics. The waterfall series of paintings do not show mark making. The pouring of water and *gofun* may be said to be a deliberate decision, but the varied outcomes are not entirely predictable, and this retains a characteristic similar to the unpredictability of Sumi-e ink washes.

#### **7.2.10 Zen Buddhism**

The influence of Zen Buddhism when learning Sumi-e was inevitable, because my teacher, Van Loon, learnt the practice from Zen Buddhist monks and has been a teacher of both subjects for more than forty years. Neither Ikezaki nor Senju follow the path of Zen but both are familiar with traditions appropriate to the display of artworks within a temple. Senju considers *chado*, *ikebana* and the process of *ichigo itchie* within these practices to be part of his life. These practices are linked with Zen traditions.

#### **7.2.11 Holistic art practice**

My idea of Sumi-e being a unique and holistic art practice, linked to one's beliefs, artmaking and approach to daily life, I now realise is an idealistic notion, and although it might have been applicable to Zen Buddhist monk painters in previous centuries, it is not relevant today. In my own life, it is something I aspire to, but I cannot say that my art practice is fully holistic. I originally included the practice of martial arts within my subjective concept of holism, as this appears to have been part of the daily routine in Buddhist monasteries, "but more so outside of Zen" (Dumoulin cited in O'Brian, 2019: 2) and not necessarily combined with Sumi-e. I find it conducive to practice Qigong before painting. Both Ikezaki and Senju appeared to appreciate the idea of an holistic art form, but neither of them could say that it applies to their way of living.

#### **7.2.12 Colour**

Colour was not included in my original framework of reference because of the way I was taught by Van Loon, who believes that "colour bewitches the senses" (cited in Adams, 2016). From the evidence of colour as presented in Chapter 5, it appears that colour used sparingly is indeed part of traditional Sumi-e. My artworks mainly remain monochromatic,

and I do not use colour except where I include sand, touches of red or blue stitching and gold leaf. In other words, additional colours are mainly determined by the materials themselves. Ikezaki uses colour only in his *Dot* series and Senju used colour in his waterfalls, as well as fluorescent paint.

### **7.2.13 Content**

My original framework of reference did not include content which appears to be a consideration in traditional Sumi-e where it was evoked in covert ways, sometimes in a subtle didactic manner as in Figure 10, *Catching a Catfish with a Gourd*. After my trip to Iceland in June 2018, I became increasingly interested in portraying cycles of life and time, through disintegration and regeneration revealed in my transformations of materials. Ikezaki and Senju have expressed the same concerns and it is possible that they have influenced me.

The results of breaking the rules in my practice of traditional Sumi-e through transformations of my materials lie in the outcomes of a physicality and materiality. Similarly, Ikezaki and Senju engage with their materials in particular ways. Handling of materials and the resulting characteristics of materiality are assessed in the section below.

### **7.3 Assessment of Ikezaki and Senju**

I was trained by Van Loon according to the elements, characteristics and philosophy listed above, 7.2.1 to 7.2.13. What has become apparent to me during this research is that my knowledge of the artform, based on how it was taught to Van Loon in the 1960s, within a strict Zen Buddhist context, no longer applies to the Sumi-e practised by Ikezaki.

My deduction from this is that my training is caught in a time warp, influenced by Zen Buddhism, but not contemporary Japanese culture. Ikezaki's training appears to have been traditional, in that it included calligraphy, and he extended his training after graduating in Fine arts in Florida, USA, to six years of paper making in the traditional Japanese methods, as mentioned earlier in this research. We can say that Ikezaki received an upbringing versed in Japanese culture but his tertiary art education was a combination of two worlds, USA

and Japan. Ikezaki has been influenced by contemporary art trends, which he acknowledges, as evidenced in Chapter 4. Ikezaki may still be considered a Sumi-e painter, when one considers his Sumi-e paintings, personal philosophies and aspects of Japanese culture pertaining to traditional Sumi-e. But he has broken the rules of Sumi-e and extended his artmaking to paper sculptures and his *Dot* series of artworks, thereby showing he is also a contemporary artist.

Senju claims to be a *Nihonga* painter, as explained previously, but his *Cliff* series of paintings suggest to me that he was a Sumi-e painter and which prompted me to include him in this research. I believe that the *Cliff* series may indeed be considered a version of Sumi-e because of the outward appearance of these as explained in Chapter 5, as well as his personal philosophies and the aspects of Japanese culture which he embraces. Senju uses Sumi-e materials, also considered to be part of *Nihonga* materials, as well as non-traditional chemical materials and devices. He has ventured beyond *Nihonga* tradition into contemporary Japanese culture with his films and digital art, becoming part of an arena of global artists. At the same time Senju is also recognised as a traditional Japanese artist as evidenced by the awards he has received from the Japanese government and the honour of his commission to create waterfall paintings for the Kongbuji temple in Koyasan.

From the above we deduce that both Ikezaki and Senju are also contemporary artists. Their individual philosophies and their involvement with their materials differ. Ikezaki follows many Sumi-e traditions, making his own paper and teaching paper making, Sumi-e and Japanese philosophy. Senju does not claim to be a Sumi-e painter, he uses traditional *Nihonga* materials and his personal philosophy may be said to be an appreciation of Japanese culture, both past and present.

The following section lists the identifying processes leading to detection of reflections of materiality within the artworks of Ikezaki, Senju as well as my own art practice.

## **7.4 Theoretical framework of materiality**

### **7.4.1 Processes**

Describing my processes, and those of Ikezaki and Senju in their respective chapters, using the all-natural materials and transforming these, have led us to breaking the rules.

#### **7.4.2 Intelligence of the materials**

The paper that we use, mulberry, *kozo*, *ganpishi*, and the calligraphy paper I also use, has an inherent intelligence, offering opportunities to enrich and extend our processes through the very malleable nature and inherent life within the paper.

#### **7.4.3 Intimate connection with tools and materials**

The traditional bamboo brushes constructed in a distinctive way enable technical competence in ways that Western brushes are not able to offer. The subtle nuances of tone possible with the sumi, and the rich potential of the paper endears the tools and materials to practitioners of Sumi-e. This applies to myself, Ikezaki and Senju, evident in the latter two through their continued employment of these tools for decades.

#### **7.4.4 Life within the materials**

Both Ikezaki and Senju refer to the spirit residing in their handmade unsized paper. This spirit or life emanates from the life of the fibre growing in earth, combined with spring water, passed on to the paper, retaining its purity, untarnished by chemicals. It seems that mechanised paper making, sizing and hot pressing, diminishes the life or spirit within the paper, evident in the comparative behaviour of ink on the former and the latter. My inclusion of silk in the three-dimensional forms conveys spirit from the leaf of the mulberry tree, to the silkworm, cocoon and silk thread, again not contaminated with any chemicals. Van Loon talks of the all-natural materials facilitating transference of energy from the artist, through his/her body, arm, hand, brush, ink and onto the paper (Adams, 2016).

#### **7.4.5 Chance, experiments, intuition and spontaneous processes**

The risks I take in my experiments facilitate developments into altered physicalities. My processes are constantly spontaneous, the only exception being when I make a conscious choice to include new materials, which I then incorporate through feeling and chance juxtapositions. Similarly, Ikezaki creates aged ‘books’ and shrivelled sculptures, his paintings are not sketched out beforehand, evident from the YouTube clips (Ikezaki, 2016), indicating spontaneous handling. Senju first paints the background to his waterfalls which is a planned process, but he takes chances with his crushing processes for his *Cliff* series of paintings and the pouring of *gofun* for his waterfalls. He does not appear to be experimenting in new ways since his discovery of these two processes.

#### **7.4.6 Intuitive handling**

Intuitive handling of my materials is constant, my materials lead me in various directions. Ikezaki’s paper sculptures are created intuitively through his intimate connection with his paper which he has made himself. His paintings are painted intuitively, through bleeding and with washes, which do not permit prescriptive outcomes. Senju pours his *gofun* intuitively. His crumpling, inking and spraying of his *Cliff* series are handled intuitively.

#### **7.4.7 Material thinking**

My thoughts about my artmaking are not about composition, content or any formal element, rather I am thinking about, and thinking in, my materials – how they feel, behave and transform. Material thinking was not something I questioned Ikezaki and Senju about, because at that stage I did not know that my artmaking was evolving in the direction of material thinking. However, Ikezaki thinks in paper and water, from the start of working with the yarn to the finish of the sculpture. Senju thinks in *gofun* and fluorescent paint, how these materials embody his waterfalls through his pouring. In the *Cliff* series Senju is thinking in paper, ink and the use of his spray gun, transforming his paper into a texture of rocks.

#### **7.4.8 Generative potentials**

Ikezaki, Senju and myself have used all-natural materials, which have the potential to generate changes. The common denominator is the natural paper, sumi and water.

#### **7.4.9 Physicality**

Altered states due to the processes and experiments described above result in the physicality of the artworks, leading to a reflection of materiality.

I can conclude that a reflection of materiality can be detected in our respective artworks, emanating from the handling of our natural materials and processes. In each of our individual practices contemporary art influences have contributed to our evolution. The processes and handling outlined are strongly associated with certain contemporary art practices.

Ikezaki aptly summed up a view which has similarly been expressed by Hall (1968: 9) as well as Senju. The Japanese “adopt Western culture” and mix it with their own culture thereby creating new art forms while keeping the “core of tradition”.

#### **7.5 How learning the rules and principles of Sumi-e and thereafter “breaking the rules” has catalysed my artmaking**

My learning of traditional Sumi-e, as explained previously, was within a strict Zen Buddhist framework transplanted to the BRC by Van Loon. For the Sumi-e course conducted at the BRC, the morning begins with Qigong and sometimes yoga, followed by meditation. This routine is in order to prepare the mind and body for Sumi-e practice. Forty years of daily yoga practice and meditation equips me well for the meditative process of grinding the ink and the processes which follow. These processes involving meditation and the use of traditional materials open up opportunities that I did not initially envisage, so different to my previous Eurocentric methods of planned artmaking.

The brushes offer scope for a greater variety of mark making and the inherent qualities within the handmade Japanese papers present opportunities for experimentation. The start of this was due to my passion for textures, those observed in organic forms and rock faces,

as well as influences from my work in industry where various treatments of fabrics enhanced surface interest, such as broomstick pleating and bubble ruching. The pliable nature of the fibres and the bulk within mulberry paper enable strong creasing and pleating. The ink is absorbed in different amounts between the creases, creating subtle nuances of tone. The fine sheer *ganpishi* absorbs washes with the ink creating darker edges in places, squeezing and crushing works particularly well, leaving delicate marks. The calligraphy paper, *washi*, enables intense crushing, and the softness holds the crushed edges together, giving an aged appearance. These three examples of Japanese paper offer a means of extending my processes, which I find appealing.

The physical process engaging the whole upper body, as opposed to painting with one arm, has led me to larger and larger formats, with the movements of qigong assisting me in painting these formats, with my handmade long brushes. As explained in Chapter 6, my involvement of processes leads to the use of collage and double layers. Although I venture beyond the confines and canons of traditional Sumi-e, painting on a flat surface, my artmaking still lies at the heart of Sumi-e. My Sumi-e materials, the inkstick, inkstone, paper and brushes are constantly employed, my meditative processes and nature as inspiration are constant. My intuitive mark making and some results of accidental beauty are representative of traditional Sumi-e process.

I have also broken the rules in my contexts of display, such as in a forest and recorded on a film, and my free suspended hanging in the gallery. Further explorations beyond traditional Sumi-e include stitching, three dimensional forms and additional materials, such as fabric, threads and feathers. These provide a means of expressing my personal history. My concerns with the cycle of life (the Buddhist concept of *samsara*), degeneration and decay, regeneration and rebirthing, are unifying themes in my artworks. These are not typically traditional Sumi-e content, but do relate to Zen philosophy.

From the above it is evident how my artmaking has been catalysed through traditional Sumi-e materials and the very processes of the art form.

## **7.6 A nexus of influences**



The dominant influence of traditional Sumi-e I believe is now firmly entrenched in my artmaking, as discussed above. Expert and economical execution of ink, evident in the landscape by Sesshū Toyo's *Splashed Ink Landscape* (Figure 1) continues to inspire my handling of ink to this day. Added to this the bleeding and wash techniques of Ikezaki and the processes behind the *Cliff* series by Senju have contributed to extending my ink painting processes beyond traditional Sumi-e.

A range of artists mentioned in my workbooks, have also inspired my painting processes and some may continue to do so in further explorations.. Each artist might in the future lead my artmaking in different directions beyond my current practices.

Present and future influences on my exhibition context and display, that show a departure from traditional Sumi-e settings within shadowed temples, include the Hiroshi Senju Museum (Figure 2), with light and seasonal foliage within and around the structure, and the installation of Ikezaki (Figure 36), showing the use of sand as a base, within a temple setting.

Combinations of fabrics of different textures have always inspired me in my business of manufacturing fashion wear as well as in home décor products. This influence seems to have entered my processes of artmaking in degrees, transforming my materials, creating a physicality and a resulting materiality, through:

- Transformations of paper by crushing, squashing, crinkling and pleating
- Layering paper and organdy and making holes, allowing the two different textures of fabrics and light to interact
- Distressing the soft calligraphy paper creating an archaic quality
- Adding threads and arbitrary stitching creating a textured surface
- The addition of sand on glue which has been 'drawn' across the surface
- My own recycling of paper, creating lumpy and undulating surfaces
- Mixing different papers together – sheer thin *ganpishi*, heavy mulberry with embedded fibres, soft calligraphy paper with a dry handle, crisp silk paper that has been sized

The above transformations of my materials led to collage and collage inadvertently led to three-dimensional forms. Hanging up my collages seemed to offer ways of enhancing the surface through twisting and layering, and out of this ‘playing’ the materiality within my forms evolved and dimension extended. In a way these forms unfold in a similar way to when draping a piece of cloth on a dummy, which culminates in a three-dimensional garment. This realisation popped into my head now, trying to verbalise how my career in fashion and home décor products have influenced my artmaking. My work ethic has also impacted on my art practice which is evident in my dedication and conscientiousness. It appears that all my years of experience and knowledge are ingrained in my psyche and possibly continuing to exert other influences not yet realised.

My verbalisations on the influences on my artmaking have yielded surprises. At the start of this research I had no idea that I would be finding links between my art practice and my professional life. Initially I was happily consumed by the practice of traditional Sumi-e, but, as in my work practice, forever striving for new and different ways to produce products, my urges to experiment broke through. Sumi-e has been a vehicle for transformation and growth through the use of the traditional materials and processes. The risks involved in the processes and the unexpected outcomes have fuelled my courage, and in turn my experiments. My fortuitous discovery of Sumi-e has enabled my art practice to grow in two years from producing representational, two dimensional paintings, hung on walls, into three-dimensional forms displaying materiality and enigma, offering viewers opportunities for individual interpretations.

This PRR has developed into a “double articulation” (Bolt, 2006: 4) through my physical processes feeding my writing and in turn the literature informing my processes. My identity as a Sumi-e artist, previous experiences in my Eurocentric artmaking and professional life, combined experiences of my own culture and influences of Japanese art and culture, as well as influences of other artists and my colleagues within the Centre for Visual Arts at UKZN, formed a context for my research questions. These aspects of my life are “inseparable” from my research questions, correlating with the opinion of Skains (2018: 37) mentioned in Chapter 3. My own frame of reference formed the base facilitating an “interpretive flexibility” of my interpretations (Alvesson and Sköldberg cited in Sullivan, 2012: 103). Sumi-e is, and has become, the crux of my own artmaking and investigating

the influences of Sumi-e on my work and how I see this in the work of others, it is inevitable that some subjective bias will influence my interpretations.

The significance of this research lies in the additional knowledge I have provided through identifying literature on Sumi-e listed in Chapter 2, transforming this, and applying a framework based on my interpretation of the history of this type of ink painting to new ways of understanding. As a catalyst for artmaking, Sumi-e has provided a foundation, and this has resulted for my own artmaking taking on a greater sense of materiality, something which is a phenomenon strongly associated with contemporary art practices.

### **7.7 Where to from here?**

The influences that I have listed, present and future, will continue to propel me forwards in my artmaking. Aspects of Japan have continued to intrigue me, and I aim to continue with my investigations which could lead in a number of directions.

I close this dissertation with a quote from Alexandra Munroe (cited in Pangburn 2016), academic, scholar and curator of Asian Art, whose publication *Japanese art after 1945, scream against the sky* (1994) informed me of reactionary art developments in Japan (mentioned in Chapter 1). My continued fascination with the art and culture of this country, the principles and elements of which have inspired and enabled the development of my own work are expressed: “There is no place like Japan. There is a cultural inheritance of exquisite sensibility, an intuition for the most extreme psychological states of mind, and an oppressive social order that inspires fitful rebellion.”

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL APPROVAL NOTIFICATION, UKZN



25 March 2019

Mrs Denise Ingrid Adams (216076239)  
School of Arts  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Adams,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0183/019M

Project title: Beyond Sumi o: A practice-led investigation into the influences of an ancient art form on contemporary artists, with reference to the artworks of Hiroshi Senju and Yoshio Ikezaki

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 20 January 2019, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully,

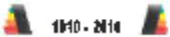
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Kathy Airbuckle and Dr Louise Hall  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Sandra Pfitcher  
cc School Administrator: Ms Debbie Bowen-Blythe

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 280 3587/03604657 / Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4003 Email: [sibanda@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sibanda@ukzn.ac.za) / [rosemary@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:rosemary@ukzn.ac.za) / [rsibanda@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:rsibanda@ukzn.ac.za)  
Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

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## APPENDIX B: INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building.  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary and you may end the discussion at any point, and you may refuse to answer any questions that offend you or your institution.

The information will be referred to in my research paper, which will be for academic purposes only, the research not be published.

---

### CONSENT

I ..... have been informed about the study entitled ***Beyond Sumi-e: a practice-led investigation into the influences of an ancient art form on contemporary artists, with reference to the artworks of Hiroshi Senju and Yoshio Ikezaki.***

By Ingrid Adams.

I understand the purpose of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher Ingrid Adams at [ingrida@adept.co.za](mailto:ingrida@adept.co.za).

Supervisors:

Dr. Arbuckle, Kathy 0721258370 [arbucklek@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:arbucklek@ukzn.ac.za)

Dr. Hall, Louise 0829228881 [HALLL1@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HALLL1@ukzn.ac.za)

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Use of my photographs for research purposes                      YES / NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Witness**  
**(Where applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Translator**  
**(Where applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## APPENDIX C: INVITATION TO EXHIBITION KZNSA 2 JULY 2019

KZNSA INVITATION

<http://kznsa.cmail20.com/t/ViewEmail/r/0D9BAF81E22F90E42540E...>



INVITATION: EXHIBITION OPENING

### BEYOND by Ingrid Adams

The KZNSA Gallery

Tuesday 02 July 2019 - 17h30

Join us for the exhibition opening of 'Beyond' by Ingrid Adams on Tuesday 2 July 2019 at 17h30 for 18h00.

This exhibition is part of the research conducted for Ingrid Adams' Masters in Fine Arts. The study is titled Beyond Sumi-e: a practice-led investigation into the influences of an ancient art form on contemporary artists, with reference to the artworks of Hiroshi Senjju and Yoshio Ikezaki.

*The Arts Cafe and Bar will be open for you to make an evening of it.*



"My art practice is rooted in the tradition of Sumi-e, dating back more than two thousand years. My focus is on nature, degeneration, and regeneration and these themes are expressed in organic forms created intuitively in layers, collages, and transparencies. My professional life continues to impact on my art making and this is seen in my three-dimensional forms, which are stitched, draped, painted and textured, incorporating elements of personal history."

Ingrid Adams has participated in group exhibitions. BEYOND will be her first solo exhibition. Read more about Adams and the exhibition [ONLINE HERE](#).

---

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**APPENDIX D. QUESTIONNAIRE: YOSHIO IKEZAKI , 5 JANUARY, 2019.**

1 You completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Masters degree in Fine Arts at Florida State University in the United States of America. On a video clip I heard you say that you started Sumi-e at the age of 10. Did you continue with Sumi-e at the university, or did you take this up after you completed your training?

I had studied sumi ink from 10-14 years old. I had studied Western art styles like oil and acrylic during my first 2 years and started sumi ink painting again since I was a junior year to present.

2 What prompted your focus on ink painting over the last decades?

Its simplicity and the depth as an art medium.

3 You later trained in traditional paper making in Japan. What inspired you to do this for six years?

Understand the characters of paper would be important for my study of sumi ink painting. The relationship between paper and sumi ink is essential. You can not separate those two. If you understand both, you can control your painting much better.

4 You teach paper making, brush painting, Japanese aesthetics and philosophy in The United States of America and Japan. These four subjects indicate that you are teaching traditional Japanese painting, Sumi-e, and Japanese culture. Is this correct?

It is correct. But I did not limit my intention of teaching students for traditional Japanese painting style and the history. I teach student sumi ink as an art medium. There are unlimited possibilities using Sumi ink for a variety of art making.

5 In our previous correspondence you mentioned that Japanese “art has been more influenced and practiced in Western ideas”. I believe that your paintings show strong evidence of Sumi-e tradition, such as *Timeless Auras 617*. Do you agree with this or do you think that you were influenced by Western painting here?

My artwork is surely influence of Western. I live in USA for long time and Western contemporary art is always next me. When I make sumi-e, I follow what I learned in traditional way but I am not conscious about that much in my actual art making. Timeless Auras 617 is result of the combination of traditional materials, traditional brush stroke with abstract idea of Western and influence. If you see the typical traditional Chinese or Japanese sumi ink paintings, you find the format, space awareness, techniques they use differ from my sumi-e. I invented and discover my own way of sumi painting method. I don't consider myself as a traditional sumi ink as often.

6 “Having mastered his own “chi”, Ikezaki uses that energy to move the ink across the paper” (Artweek.LA, 2011). Do you always feel that your painting comes from the energy within which moves your brush, rather than your brain moving your brush?

I control my ink movement by the brush stroke and many other materials and elements. Ki is my owned power to control the most sensitive movement of sumi ink when the ink wants to settle the final destination place on the paper.

7.1 Your exhibition *Poetry of Paper* where you exhibited paper sculptures the author stated: “Ikezaki joins East and West, Modern and Traditional in a completely unique fashion” (Artweek.LA, 2011). Do you agree that this comment is a correct interpretation of this exhibition?

Whatever I attempt to paint or sculpt, my intention of style become fusion of East and West or the mix. because I aware of Western culture on my shoulder, living in US on an off for 40 years. I do not aware how much I mix or how they were looked by others. It is up to them. Sometimes They see it more clear than myself. I don't often think where my art should belong to. it is not important for me.

7.2 The article titled *Yoshio Ikezaki: Poetry of Paper*, (Artweek La-Art Here Now). The author stated that you include “mineral particles that give the painting a slight iridescence”. Is this *gofun*? What mounting is used here? Thank you.

It is UNMO (mica), not GOFUN.

8.1 In your collage series, *Gathered Dreams 416, 2006*, please advise what inspired you to use collage?

I taught Japanese aesthetics and philosophies for a long time. My collages are an answer or formula of visual expressions related the aesthetics. Wabi Saibi, Yuzen, Tohaku, Mononoaware, and others are my motivations depicted and gathered in one frame.

8.2 *Gathered Dreams 412, 2006*. Please advise what additional materials, if any, are incorporated. The inserted panels on the left and right look like corrugated cardboard? Is this correct? The top left and the top right are coloured, is this acrylic paint on paper?

I could not find the image in my computer, so I can not answer it. Send it to me.

9.1 *Dot Connection 94, 2012*, shows the incorporation of colour with painted and plastic dots. What was the inspiration for these dots? What mounting is used here?

Dots indicate “warning about our nature and global weather change”. I used designer’s dot you can buy at store. It has adhesive on the back. I used then on purpose to indicate the recent convenience of human life associated with plastic and manmade products which have no strength against natural disaster such as earth quake or Tsunami.

9.2 Jacky Apple quotes the word “yugen” in conjunction with your exhibition meaning inexplicable feelings evoked within one by nature. This divine inspiration of nature, does it apply to all of your artwork, including the *Dot Connection* series?

Yes and no. I can say most of my sumi ink paintings and sculptures are yes. Dots series were no. I had a strong influence of Tohoku Earthquake happened in 2011. My artworks during and after 2011 to 2022, I did dots series and metal sculptures and others based on what I felt about nature surround human and human life. I still kept the Yugen feeling with my dots and others but it was hidden in deep of my heart at that time.

10 Your artworks show a choice of traditional Sumi-e materials such as Japanese paper, and your own handmade paper, ink, natural brushes, and water. Do you use any Western art materials apart from the colours used in the *Dot Connection* series?

*I mainly used acrylic for the dots series. I used Japanese mineral powder pigment with nikawa glue sometimes but not often.*

11 What, if any, are the principles reflected in use of water as an inspiration for *Reflection of Stormy Sky 667* – are there any analogies or relationships to Buddhist or Taoist principles? Please advise the mounting here and where the art work is held, private, personal or gallery? Thank you.

Air , cloud ,rain , fog ,ocean, are all same source come from water. Water is the essential to our lives and nature. It only transforms in different shape and looks. This is related to the thought of Buddhism that It repeat a cycle including all nature and human existed in the earth. The work is privately collected.

12.1 *The Earth Breathes Yasumu*, 1994. It is stated that the materials used here are mulberry “fiber with Sumi-e ink”. Did you add the fiber after the painting was completed? What mounting is used here? Please advise present collection, personal, private or gallery? Thank you.

I did not paint anything on the sculpture. It is sumi ink dyed fiber sloshed them with white mulberry fiber when you formed paper with Nahashizuki technique. It can be called “ fiber painting” This technique was often seen in making Japanese sliding door called “ fusuma” which has design to decorate on the top of fusuma paper. I used “ Neri “ glue using to bind fiber durang papermaking. Kylin Gallery in Beverly Hills USA has the work.

12.2 *The Earth Breathes 2604*, 2004. Is the calligraphy on this artwork your calligraphy? If so, when did you learn calligraphy?

Send image to me.



12.3 *The Earth Breathes*. Paper and Sumi-e ink. Exhibited in 2008 at Shokoku-ji Temple Exhibition, Kyoto, Japan. Please advise the dimensions of these two artworks and the present collection, personal, private or gallery? Thank you.

I exhibited several of the earth breathes series at the temple. Most of those sizes are 18 x 14 inches and different thickness. they are 6 inches thick and others are arrownd 3 inches. Most of them are in the gallery in Beverly Hills USA.

12.4 *Earth breathes- Mind Landscape #10*, 2011. Exhibition at PYO gallery, 2011. Please advise present collection, personal, private or gallery? Thank you.

personal.

13 *Timeless Auras 617*. 2010. Ink on Paper. Please advise the dimensions of this art work and the present collection, personal, private or gallery? Thank you.

40 x 70 x 1/2 inches, personal

14 Your artworks were displayed in temple Shokoku-ji in Kyoto, in 2008. Do you consider that a temple, which is a traditional context for Sumi-e, displays your work appropriately?

They don't have any walls to hung paintings as we normally have in galleries. Instead, they provided wooden easels for paintings to stand on the Tatami. I also designed to fit the size same as their sliding doors. It is common to use the method on Tokonoma or in front of traditional house gate for large paintings. So I am comfortable using the system they provided. The temple is the most famous and the head temple of Zen (Rinzai sect) in Kyoto Japan.

I was a first person to have an exhibit in the Daihojo hall of the temple in the history because of my study and practice of Hannya Shingyo sutra in my artworks.

15 Do you think that the National Museums and art galleries can display your artworks as effectively?

It is a good question. Depends on what kinds of space they have, I need to think and advise them what my artwork need for the display. But I often find difficulties matching my work with space. but it is the reality. We always do our best with my suggestions etc for a good display.

My recent show at Kylin Gallery in Beverly Hills CA 2018 , I made Zen garden in the space so that it create a dialogue between artwork and space.

Lastly there are a few words in English, which I have found that I believe apply to Sumi-e, which is my research topic. Could you kindly consider the following words.

16 The words cosmocentricism and Wu Wei appear to express the idea that man and nature live in an harmonious relationship together. Do you believe it is the correct way to live today, or is it outmoded?

I think so. Western way to think nature belong to them and they conquer it for their own benefit.

But You can't own them, It does not belong to human. Nature has an enormous power itself.

We don't against them but harmoniously live with it. That's only you can do. You must give a great respect and appreciation to nature. Our biggest mistake we found in our recent global change of weather and environmental hazards. We human create problems. and give unforgivable damages the earth. It is not right.

17 The word anthropocentricism expresses the opposite, meaning that humans are more important than our environment, which is provided for our use. Anthropocentricism is said to reflect a 'Western' attitude. Do you consider that this word may apply to Japanese persons today?

I answered a little about it at your question above. As a Japanese person ,or an individual human being, We dowel in the nature with many others lives including animals and plants. I basically think the earth belong to every lives existed in this earth ,not just for human. You might study that Christian Bible says "the nature exists for human". Buddhism never mentioned. They are strongly against the idea. Japanese younger generation is starting to be influenced by Western idea regarding nature and environment. Unfortunately you can

not do too much to change the awareness of world globalism. But we should try our best to maintain the planet beautiful and livable.

18 I believe that traditional Sumi-e/Suiboku-ga incorporates many elements in artmaking such as: meditation, practice of martial arts, Zen mindful living, appreciation of nature, capture of Chi, use of all natural materials creating an 'holistic' art form. Do you agree or disagree with this? Or, do you think this applies to the old ways of Zen Buddhist monks who practiced Sumie?

I agree with that. For me, it is best material to meditate myself and focus my thought. Sumi-e started as a daily communication tool as monks and philosophers exchanged painting among each other to pass their ideas and conditions. Without words, the painting speaks itself.

The typical one is the study of "Shikunshi", four important subject matters which are, bamboo, orchid, chrysanthemum, and plum. The traditional way to learn sumi ink is to study bamboo first to understand all basic straight line brush stroke, move to orchid for curved and elegant line, chrysanthemum is to learn more complex structures and the organization and plum is to complete a whole elements of sumi-e in complexity. I did it as I was studying bamboo when I was 10 years to 14 years old.

19 Your three dimensional forms exhibited in 2017 at Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Kindly advise what prompted you to move into sculpture?

I have studied paper and paper making as a part of my life. The idea of making sculpture came very naturally. I made paper sheet by sheet and dry them. One day, I started piling up sheets 20,30,40 sheets together and dry them. I discovered an idea to make them into sculpture forms.

20 Lastly are there any artists whose artworks you admire, or whose artmaking may have inspired your artmaking?

SESSUE, sumi-e painter in Muromachi period in Japan.



## APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE: HIROSHI SENJU, 22 FEBRUARY 2019.

Dear Ms.Ingrid Adams

Thank you so much for questionnaires. Hiroshi tried to answer all of your questions. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

1 Your bibliography states that you were trained in Nihonga, and you also say that you are a Nihonga artist. For your cliff paintings, I read that you crumple the paper first and allow the ink to enter the cracks in the paper, creating the texture of rocks. In your Nihonga training were you encouraged to experiment like this?

Mainly art history and the techniques of Nihonga were taught in our University. I've learned by myself to be creative and experimental.

I believe there are many possibilities in mulberry paper.

2 In Sumi-e training one is encouraged to "learn the rules and break the rules". Was this practice endorsed in your post-graduate study?

In my time at postgraduate study, it was mostly academic; about protecting and learning the techniques and history of Nihonga. To break the rule, I've learned after I've graduated. This is same with the school of Tea and the school of Flower Arrangements. It is represented in concept of "Shuhari". First 10 years or so, we spend on creating the foundation, then break with tradition and lastly transcend.

3 *Shibue*, or accidental beauty. Do you think that this applies to your cliff painting process?

I'm not sure what *Shibue* is. Yes. Both waterfall and cliff paintings apply the process of the accidental beauty. This concept runs the same with Japanese Calligraphy, Suibokuga, and Tea Ceremony. In Tea Ceremony, the concept is represented in "Ichigo Ichie" (Treasure every meeting, for it will never recur), or very special one time performance.

4 In the artwork *Cliff*, 2018, you state that you have used platinum. Is this material in its natural state, or is it a simulated chemical paint?

Platinum was used since Egyptian civilization. They are natural pigment.

5 Your focus in your artworks of the last 10 years are of nature, water and cliffs, and before that you painted mainly landscapes and portraits. “Follow nature, return to nature” (Matsuo Basho), is quoted in your accompanying text at the Akita Senshu Museum of Art.

Were the writings of Basho studied during your Nihonga training?

When I started to live in US in early 90s, I started to pay attention to Japan and its culture subjectively. I realized its wonderful concept, and resonated with me very much.

6 During your Nihonga training were you encouraged to use nature as your source of inspiration in all the different art styles such as Kano-ha, Rinpa, Maruyama Okyo, and Sumi-e/ Suiboku-ga?

Not at all. Nihonga study after the WWII was all about finding something new. It was not about appreciating old Japanese style.

7 During your training can you recall how much time was spent on learning Sumi-e/Suboku-ga?

Unfortunately, we did not study Sumi-e/Suiboku-ga in school. Like in American Art School, it was more about academics of drawing, composition, and the color balance. Learning from the “western” way of thinking.

8 I believe that traditional Sumi-e/Suiboku-ga incorporates many elements in art making such as: meditation, practice of martial arts, Zen mindful living, appreciation of nature,

capture of Chi, use of all natural materials creating an ‘holistic’ art form. Do you agree or disagree with this?

I do agree.

Or, do you think this applies to the old ways of Zen Buddhist monks who practised Sumi-e and is no longer relevant today?

I believe it is the same with past and present. Relationship between Sumi and artist, brush and artist, have not changed over time. I don’t think it is particularly Buddhist way of thinking either. In the process of making art, it is the same, even French impressionist artists.

9 Do you take photographs and, or video recordings to work from nature as a reference?

Yes. I explore every possibility to be informed and understand the nature. I touch it, even taste it ,too.

10 In the Hiroshi Senju Museum publication you mentioned “Ki no Tsurayuki. (9<sup>th</sup> century Waka poet) who stated that “when “*expression*” and “*content*” coincide something exceptional is born” and that you realized this through your “technique and content” of your waterfalls. Please further explain here.

I’ve realized this concept as I paint. When I pour pigment on canvas, it is the painting of Waterfall at the same time waterfall created by the pigment.

11 In the above text you further attributed “all the Japanese culture that courses in my blood” as what gives rise to your genre of waterfalls.

Would you be referring to the traditional Japanese appreciation of nature as being part of Japanese culture?

It is not the “appreciation of nature”, but “to stand on the side of nature”. This runs through all things, such as flower arrangements and tea ceremony in Japan. However, I don’t necessarily think these concepts are special to Japanese.

12 Or, do you think that this reflects a traditional Zen Buddhist aesthetic?

It’s not just Zen Buddhist aesthetic or Japanese culture, I believe these ideas are shared in human beings around the world. It is common aesthetic of human beings. I believe in Japanese paintings, these aesthetic forms are left clearly so it is more apparent.

13 What, if any, are the principles reflected in use of water as an inspiration for your waterfalls?

Water can directly represents everything. It can express hotness and coldness, When placed in circle bowl, it takes the shape of circle, and in square bowl, a square.

14 Please advise what the reason is for your subject matter of mountains and cliffs.

Beauty. Beauty is a reality of life.

When artist Cristo was asked how he picks the project, his answer was “because of its beauty. It’s the only reason.”

15 Do you think that the National Museums where art works are hung on the walls in regular square, or rectangular rooms, can display your artworks effectively?

Yes.

16 Your exhibition in the Senshu Museum of Art, Akita, was mounted on black walls, which is a direct contrast to the Hiroshi Senju Museum, the latter filled with light, white walls, inclusion of the surrounding colour leaf garden, the changing weather and the sky. Were the walls painted black to reproduce the shadowed atmosphere of a temple?



Like water, the painting can fit in every kind of places.

17 Do you think the outcome of these diverse contexts for your artworks will influence your exhibiting in the future?

To display the work in diverse and multiple ways, explores the possibility of the painting to people. I'm not influenced.

18 For (*Falling Colour*, 2003), your accompanying text at the Akita Museum of Art, said that "the colours represent the world of human emotions", You consider the emotional effect of these colours, but what about the silver and grey tones of the waterfalls? What effect do you intend these tones to have on the viewers?

I've tried combination of brilliant colors in *Faling Colour* series, to show any kind of color combination could create a harmony. Also would like to provoke the imagination of the audience. Red could be a sunset, Blue a midnight. Silver is in dim daylight; Grey is in a fog and Platinum in the rain.

19 Further, in the above text you say that by using colour you have "expanded the approach to nature that Basho called for". Please explain what you mean by this.

Basho concept for 造花Zoka means a respect for natural phenomenon.

In *Falling Colour* series, I treated the colors equally and respected the harmony.

20 The words cosmocentricism and Wu Wei appear to express the idea that man and nature live in an harmonious relationship together.

Does this apply to you? Or you believe this idea is outmoded?

I do like "do nothing". I believe it is still avant-garde idea.

21 The word anthropocentricism expresses the opposite, meaning that humans are more important than our environment which is provided for our use. Anthropocentricism is said

to reflect a 'Western' attitude. Do you consider that this word may apply to Japanese persons today?

In Japan, we may be also experiencing that. However, as an artist I do not believe it.

22 You collaborated with digital artists for the new exhibition: *Teamlab Borderless*, Mori Building Digital Art Museum, Tokyo, which opened in June 2018 and which I viewed in October. Your waterfalls flow in conjunction with the movement of the flowers and trees, creating an exciting virtual reality in nature. Has this experience been a positive development for your art making?

22 Has this collaboration prompted future ideas about working together with digital artists?

Both questions in regards to Teamlab; the work you saw in Mori building digital art museum is not my work. The work I've collaborated with Teamlab was a project in Osaka during last summer. You can take a look at the project at You Tube. I've created the wide band fabric with Waterfall image and hanged loosely in the middle of Teamlabo digital image. They move organically.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=3&v=f3qo2s-Zoy0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=f3qo2s-Zoy0)

23 Are there any contemporary artists whose work you find inspiring? Or, do you feel that you work in a solitary way without outside influences?

I like Christo. Their concepts of discover nature, history and culture.

I am quite critical of many Japanese contemporary artists.