

## Hiroshi Senju



© [Hiroshi Senju](#), Waterfall, 2014

The modern nihonga painter, Hiroshi Senju, **exclusively depicts waterfalls** in his work. “When I am in the middle of painting a piece, that art belongs to me...” he said in an interview for his Beginnings exhibition in 2020. “...but once I feel they are complete, they leave my hand.” Senju’s work is usually large in scale, appealing to our visual sense and yet notably invigorating the memory of other senses such as sound, smell and the experience of visiting a waterfall. Senju expresses that it’s the role of the artist to fill in the blanks of those human senses, especially when technology fails to replicate them, art steps in. Find out more in [Hiroshi Senju: The Art of Waterfall Interiors](#).

## Takashi Tomo-oka



Japanese photographer **Takashi Tomo-oka** is a traditionalist at heart. Embracing his early education in **Nihon-ga**, traditional Japanese painting, Tomo-oka's floral photography presents a refreshing vision of the impermanence of nature.

## The Form of Japanese Art



Tomo-oka photographs the same way as an artist grounded in the canon of **Japanese art**. He creates a strictly two-dimensional space devoid of perspective. This distinctly Japanese aesthetic was popularized in woodblock prints as early as the 18th century, and has become an iconic feature in contemporary manga and anime movies.



“I wish to express the beauty of '**kaboku**', which is to say, flowers and trees, using photographic techniques to create an image resembling a painting. I want to be able to feel the unadorned beauty of the plants, using a composition consisting solely of the plant and empty space, making the picture as simple as possible,” says Tomo-oka.

## The Striking Beauty of Impermanence



The emphasis of **space** and **emptiness** in Tomo-oka's photography highlights the blossoming flowers in their most intimate stages of growth. He begins the creative process by closely examine how the plants mature. He looks for a specific moment beyond the flowers' full bloom, as the first signs of **decay** start to emerge. Tomo-oka explains that his focus "is not just their beauty but also their dark side—dying leaves or ones eaten by bugs, rotting berries, even

poisonous weeds that people usually avoid because they give off a bad smell."

## The Essence of Nature



Tomo-oka's intention is to minimize the artist's interference between **subject** and **viewer**. We so often create extensive webs of meaning around flowers, but these deceptively simple photography allow the natural forms of the plant to speak to us as directly as possible.

## Space



© Shoen Uemura, Feathered Snow, 1944, [Yamatane Museum of Art](#)

One of the most distinctive characteristics of Japanese painting when contrasted with its European counterpart is the use of **empty space**. And of course, this distinction was carried into the twentieth century in the realm of nihonga art. In **Shoen Uemura**'s feathered snow, the great blankness of the paper successful conveys the sensation of inclement weather, where the horizon reduces to edge of your umbrella as you try to shelter from the cold

## Brush Strokes



Gaho Hashimoto, Moonlit Landscape, 1889

While *yōga* shies away from strong outlines, Nihonga does not have the same naturalistic intent. Art in the Japanese tradition is understood as a creative representation of reality, not an attempt to recreate the world on paper.

In **Gaho Hashimoto**'s moonlit valley, the rocks are clearly outlined, even through the mist. Nevertheless this vision is as real as any dream could be.