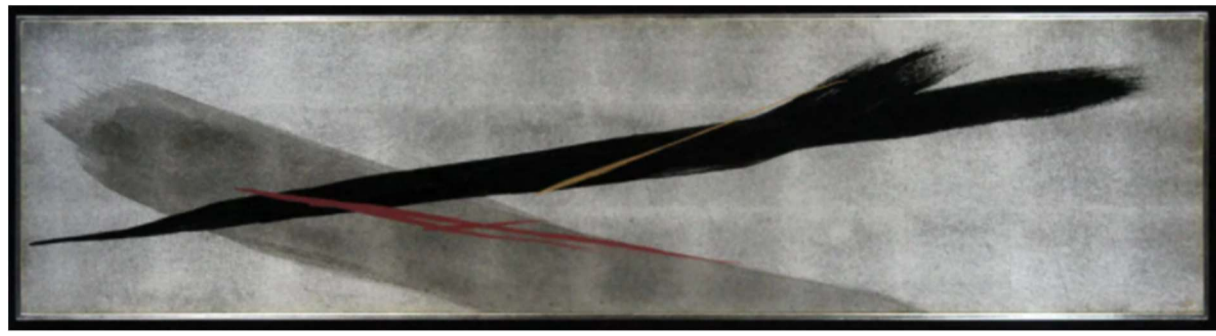


Harmony

In Memoriam: Tōkō Shinoda
(March 28, 1913–March 1, 2021)

That which is old but strong will never wither. *I linyenwa i tulca nauw' u'iquela.*
—J.R.R. Tolkien; translated into Quenya by the poet.



Toko Shinoda, *Determination* (2013). ©Toko Shinoda



Snow would have been a **Blessing** for my eyes,
For now my heart is **Rippling** in its **Nexus**—
Torn from its **Native place** of **Solitude**;
The ancient **Maiden's** death a dark mistral,
A **Wildfire** stoked and **Fêted** by the **Wind**
from the sea, beneath the blazing **East moon flame**,
A **Reminiscence** bringing with it **Hope**.
At **Dawn** like **Rain** did **Relativity** fall,
A **Statement** of **Integrity**, **Limité**
By the **Arrived wind** **Cherishing** the **Breeze**
For thee, a **Sprout** **Releasing** **Efflorescence**
In **Quietude** that goes **Beyond** **Quiescence**,
Elation in the **Shadow of the wind**
A **Genji tune** found in the **Sound of the wind**,
Eminence, like the leap of a solar prominence
Or **Remembering** the **Light shadow** of a **Glacier**,
Like a **Faded memory** of **Mystic texts**
Found on an **Ancient journey** **From the past**,
A **Flight** of **Rouge et Noir** within a **Nocturne**,
A **Dream** of **History** upon the **Shore**,
A **Fuga** with a **Longing** for a **Quest**
In the twilight, an **Overlay** from **Michinoku**,
Velocity is a **Stance** upon the **Road**,
Leading to **Encounters** there that **Climax**
In an **Ancient poem**, a **Liric Tale** **From yore**—
After the rain evening, **Morning** saw willows **Shading**
The Voice of the mist; and in **Deep winter's** **Prelude**,
A **Fleeting passage** sings with the **Sound of the sea**,
A pilgrim on a **Pilgrimage** in **Rapture**,
A **Legacy** that comes in **Intervals**,
Penetrating to the **Origin**
Of a **Romance** with the **Voice of the moon**
Chanting To green in **An expanse** of **Spring**
Like Lorca, lullabied by **Wind from the sea**,
Followed by **Sabi**, with its **Silent space**,
A **Song** of **Sonority** woven by **Wood Sprites**,
A **Spring murmur** that comes as a **Revelation**:
Stepping into a **Stream** brings **Happiness**
Incarnate with the **Impulse** of the **Light**,
Soaring with the **Caprice** of the **Waning moon**,
Shady-Sunny, like some distant **Nebula**,
Festive with **Tranquility** **After rain**,
Visual poetry, **Drama** in a **Daydream**
Seen to bring **Esteem** and great **Abundance**,
Boundless in an unknown **New dimension**—

She found a *métier* of her own device
That lead her finally into Paradise.

5 March 2021
Kujukuri
Stephen Comee

Tōkō Shinoda (1913–2021)

A Japanese artist known for sumi ink paintings and prints that blend traditional calligraphy with modern abstraction. Her work beautifully fused the ancient serenity of calligraphy with the modern urgency of Abstract Expressionists such as Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell. Influenced by them and others during a five-year stay in New York, her work is characterized as an elegant and relaxed, gestural style that features abstract images inspired by the natural world, and yet is minimal and extremely composed. When asked why she did not copy nature, she replied, “A stand of bamboo is more beautiful than a painting could be. Mount Fuji is more striking than any possible imitation.” In the 1960s she turned to lithographs, which remained her preferred medium until her death. When she turned 100 in 2013, she declared herself married to her work and continued producing art until 2019. Shinoda had been born in Japanese-controlled Manchuria and was brought to Japan at the age of two. She was taught calligraphy by her father, and she had her first exhibition at the age of 20; since then, her work has been shown in the Hague National Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Cincinnati Art Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and several other leading institutions around the world.

Poet's Note

At the end of March 2021, the month of peach blossoms and the Dolls' Festival, Tōkō Shinoda, whose given name means (crimson peach blossoms), would have been 108 years old. In Japan, that number is significant for being the number of sins one can commit according to Buddhist teachings. At the end of each year, the temple bells are rung 108 times in order to help us purify ourselves of those 108 transgressions and enter the new year afresh. There are also thought to be 108 energy lines that converge at the Heart Chakra, 108 different feelings humans can experience, and 108 paths to God. Thus, I have taken the titles of 108 of Shinoda's powerful works and woven them into this tapestry in her honor. Titles are given in **bold** type, and a capital letter indicates the start of a new title, so that “**Visual poetry, Drama in a Daydream / Seen**” incorporates four separate titles. I have also translated four of her Japanese titles into English: **History** (*Rekishishi*), **Overlay** (*Kasanari*), **Happiness** (*Yorokobi*), **Dream Seen** (*Yumemishi*). (The list follows, and I have for the most part followed the same order.)

About the Poet

Stephen Comee was born in Massachusetts in 1950. He attended Bates College (where studied under the modern poet John Tagliabue, himself a student of Mark Van Doren) and the University of Oxford (where he was friends with poets Elizabeth Jennings and John Wain, met W.H. Auden, and studied under J.R.R. Tolkien's son, Christopher.) He came to Japan in 1974, and continues to write poetry while serving as a Shingon-sect *ajari* (a Buddhist priest empowered to teach), a semi-professional Noh actor, and an instructor of Chinese martial arts. He currently works as an editor and translator and lives on the Kujukuri coast of Chiba.

These are the titles of the 108 works that I chose at random to incorporate into the text of my poetic memorial to this incredibly powerful and totally unforgettable artist. There are actually 111 works listed, but some were similar or wanted to go together, so considered the total as 108 references to her greatness.

<i>Snow</i>	<i>Mystic Texts</i>	<i>Interval</i>
<i>Blessing</i>	<i>Ancient Journey</i>	<i>Penetrate</i>
<i>Rippling</i>	<i>Rouge et Noir</i>	<i>Origin</i>
<i>Nexus</i>	<i>Flight</i>	<i>Romance</i>
<i>One's Native</i>	<i>Nocturne</i>	<i>Voice of the Moon</i>
<i>Maiden</i>	<i>Daydream</i>	<i>An Expanse</i>
<i>Wildfire</i>	<i>Rekishishi (History)</i>	<i>To Green</i>
<i>Fête</i>	<i>Shore</i>	<i>Chant</i>
<i>Light Shadow</i>	<i>Fuga</i>	<i>Spring</i>
<i>Arrived Wind</i>	<i>Quest</i>	<i>Wind from the Sea</i>
<i>Reminiscence</i>	<i>Longing</i>	<i>Sabi / Silent Space</i>
<i>Hope</i>	<i>Remembering</i>	<i>A Leap</i>
<i>Relativity</i>	<i>In the Twilight</i>	<i>Spring Murmur</i>
<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Kasanari (Overlay)</i>	<i>A Song / Sonority</i>
<i>Rain</i>	<i>Michinoku</i>	<i>Wood Sprite</i>
<i>East Moon Flame</i>	<i>Velocity</i>	<i>Revelation</i>
<i>Limité</i>	<i>Stance</i>	<i>Step into [Snow] / Stream</i>
<i>Statement</i>	<i>Road</i>	<i>Yorokobi (Happiness)</i>
<i>Cherishing</i>	<i>Encounter</i>	<i>Incarnate</i>
<i>Dawn</i>	<i>A Climax</i>	<i>Impulse</i>
<i>Breeze</i>	<i>From Yore / From the Past</i>	<i>Waning Moon</i>
<i>For Thee</i>	<i>Ancient Poem</i>	<i>Caprice</i>
<i>Sprout</i>	<i>A Tale</i>	<i>Light</i>
<i>Release</i>	<i>After the Rain Evening</i>	<i>Soaring</i>
<i>Efflorescent</i>	<i>Morning</i>	<i>Shady-Sunny</i>
<i>Quietude</i>	<i>Liric</i>	<i>Nebula</i>
<i>Calm</i>	<i>Shading</i>	<i>Festive</i>
<i>Shadow of the Wind</i>	<i>Voice of the Mist</i>	<i>Tranquility</i>
<i>Sound of the Wind</i>	<i>Deep Winter</i>	<i>After Rain</i>
<i>Genji Tune</i>	<i>Fleeting Passage</i>	<i>Visual Poetry</i>
<i>Beyond</i>	<i>Prelude</i>	<i>Drama</i>
<i>From the Past</i>	<i>Sound of the Sea</i>	<i>Yumemishi / Dream Seen</i>
<i>Quiescence</i>	<i>Pilgrimage</i>	<i>Esteem</i>
<i>Elation</i>	<i>Rapture</i>	<i>Abundance</i>
<i>Eminence</i>	<i>Legacy</i>	<i>Distance</i>
<i>Glacier</i>	<i>Faded Memories</i>	<i>New Dimension</i>