



Spraygraphic Interview with Hiroyuki Hamada

December 1, 2008

SG: Please tell us about yourself?

HH: Hi. I'm Hiroyuki Hamada. I'm 40 Years old with a wife and two kids.

SG: Where do you currently live and work?

HH: I live at the tip of Long Island, NY USA. My studio is right next to our house.

SG: What mediums do you work with?

HH: I've been working with plaster for the last 13 years or so. Initially I used it to mix with my paintings. As my paintings got thicker and more object-like, I started stretching burlap on wood panels and wood boxes to coat them with plaster before I painted on them. After a while, they started to take irregular shapes and they became more like sculptures on the wall. Lately, some of my pieces include free standing ones. But I still spend most of the time working on the surfaces. I either stain the plaster directly or coat it with enamel before doing the details with oil, more enamel and etc.

SG: Describe your working process when creating a new work.

HH: I keep sketch books everywhere I go (well, actually I don't really go anywhere lately...) to brain storm ideas or just to remember them. After a while some of the ideas just start to haunt me. And once they are solid enough in my head, I get to work on them. The exact shapes and the scale are decided. Then I work on building the actual object. After that, I go into the long process of working with the surface (mostly painting on the surface but this also includes digging, drilling, and etc. See the last picture below for some drilling scene). I usually spend a few year trying to get to the impact that gets me started at the beginning. The process isn't straight forward at all and there usually are no surprises. The process comes close to an end when I achieve a meaningful, cohesive presence within the framework of the piece. Then I usually just observe the piece for a few months to see if it really has the strength of it's own. This is a typical making process, but like I said, it's not straight forward! Basically, any way that works is the way to go for me.

SG: What kinds of things do you do when you get blocked or find it hard to create something?

HH: Making is...hard. Actually, I generally feel blocked. And the process is so slow that I can barely see it. It's like trying to see plants grow. But in a way, this might be helping my brain stick with the really important stuffs, the kind of things that actually seep out of my brain and slowly drip onto the piece without myself knowing about it, or something like that...

There are quite a few things that I do when I get really desperate (which seems to happen quite a lot...). They sort of help me to see the work more objectively. I use a mirror to see it flipped upside down. I take pictures of it and see them on a screen or/and open them with Photoshop to see them differently. I would put away the piece for a while. I would try different lighting. And what else... One thing that I don't do anymore and I don't want to see others do is getting drunk or taking drugs. I guess some people can do it in moderation, but for me, it really turned out to be a total waste of time. It's such a tempting thing to trip away and come back with a refreshed brain but I think that's a refreshed brain with fewer brain cells. It certainly seems to work for a while, but in a long run, I just don't think it's effective. But anyway, I just can't get overwhelmed with the flaws of the piece or the ecstatic details of it in order to catch the consistent flow of the piece that somehow completes its presence. Seeing it with fresh eyes sometimes triggers a nice flow in decision making capability, I guess.

SG: Where are you currently finding your inspiration?

HH: I don't know.. So many things I guess, if you are talking about outside of my work. But things often grow out of existing pieces, that's for sure. You work with a bunch of possibilities in your work, and some will be implemented, some just become sort of like seeds for other pieces and so on. I mean, it's pretty exciting to come up with ideas and see them develop in front of your eyes with every detail you didn't even imagine at first, you know? That certainly gets me going.

SG: Where has your work been seen?

HH: Right now, I have a show of my 9 new pieces, which you see above, at the List Gallery of Swarthmore College, PA> I'm very excited to have them out after struggling with them for a few years.

SG: Where will it be seen next?

HH: I don't have any plans yet.

SG: What is your dream art assignment?

HH: I never thought of that... That's a tough one. I will think of that.

SG: What is your favorite color?

HH: I guess I'm not much of a color person as you can see in my work. But I tend to get drawn to black, sort of light, warm, brownish hue, red, orange... But I guess the choice of color is all relative. It depends on the circumstances a lot. In my work. I've been enjoying variations in black and white and the contrast between them. Colors would be fun though.

SG: Who is your favorite artist? And why?

HH: I love music and naturally my favorite artists are musicians and composers which are too many to name...

SG: What book/magazine are you reading this week?

HH: I have "Musicophilia" by Oliver Sacks and "Puranaria" by Fumio Yamamoto around right now. Sort of random, I guess. I've been spending too much time watching DVDs lately...

SG: Ever do a self portrait? Where is it now?

HH: I can't remember doing one. But I must have done it... I just remembered that when I was in grad. school someone told me that the colors I used in my work were exactly the colors I picked for my clothing. And at that time, that was true and I was sort of surprised. And I wondered that some of my pieces were sort of like self portraits in abstract ways. A lot of writers write about themselves when they are starting out and it might have been the case with my early paintings also.

SG: Where is your favorite place to hang out?

HH: My studio!

SG: And final words of advice?

HH: Check out the TV show, "Battlestar Galactica" (not the older one). It's an awesome show.