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Section 8

She Works On Water Amy Lee Segami is the 20th century savior of an ancient Asian art form

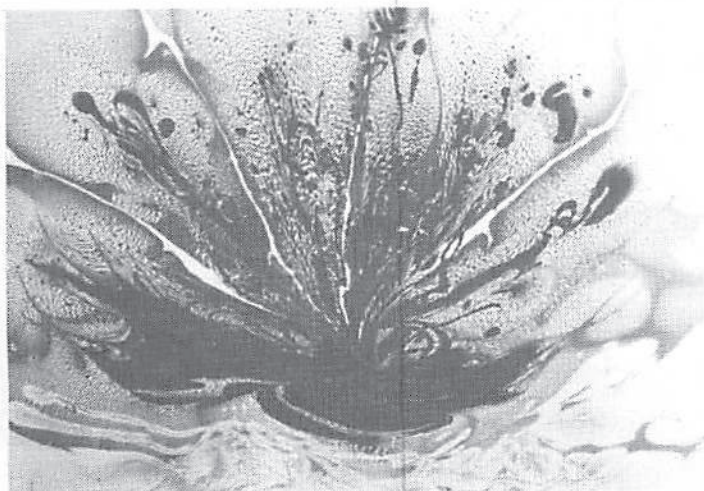
By Pat Gerlach
Daily Herald Home & Garden Editor

In the throes of an early mid-life crisis, Amy Lee Segami abandoned a promising mechanical engineering career for art. The Chicago artist has rediscovered an ancient Asian in which images are painted on water, then transferred to paper - section 8.



Photo by Jeffrey Gibson

Amy Lee Segami adjusts water designs with a brush, above, to achieve creations like her "Pink of Perfection." The images are then transferred to paper, below.



Segami, *Pink of Perfection*, 1992 Acrylic on paper 26 by 18.5 inches.

(Excerpts from article)

A tiny dark-haired woman bends over a boxlike table, adjusting a drop of red paint with a feather. Then she uses a chopstick to nudge a splotch of green. She's Amy Lee Segami and she's painting on water. . . .

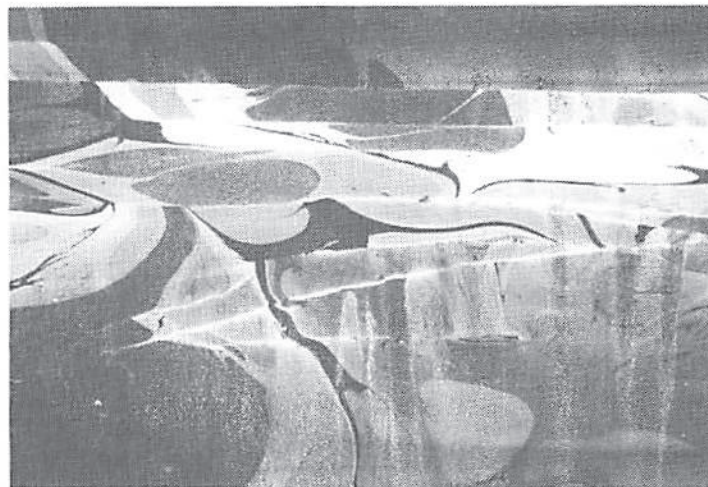
It's a process that appeals to Segami's scientific nature. She was trained as a specialist in fluid mechanics (in which she earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago).

But mastering the art form that captivated her was neither quick nor easy. For starter, she couldn't find a teacher. Then, as she faced the challenge alone, an exhaustive search unearthed only one book on suminagashi, forcing Segami to call on her own technical knowledge of fluid dynamics to unlock the mystery and then devise her own approach.

But that wasn't a cinch either. Paper wasn't a problem; neither was ink. But the special table that holds the water was something Segami couldn't purchase at a local art supplies shop.

"I built my own. I had to," matter-of-factly explains the tiny, energetic engineer-turned-artist.

And that's surely what suminagashi practitioners did when the art form originated more



Pond of Passion (close-up) is another example of Amy Lee Segami's 20th century adaptation of suminagashi, an ancient Asian art. Segami, 1991 Acrylic on paper 40 by 16 inches.

than 2,000 years ago in China. Though historians aren't certain how the practice reached Japan, by the 12th century, Shinto priests there had incorporated it into their ceremonies. Traditionally, the suminagashi artist would present his work to the priest who would inscribe a message on it and then burn the art, sending the work directly to heaven.

Today, Amy Lee Segami uses her own contemporary adaptation of suminagashi to express her desire to bridge the gap between East and West. And to demonstrate the relationship between art and science.

In just a few years, Segami's works have attracted attention. Her pieces are in a number of private collections as well as in the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe.

And through the auspices of the Northwest Cultural Council, her work has exhibited at Zurich-American Insurance Group, Schaumburg; Square D Co., Palatine; Friendship Village, Schaumburg; and NBD Bank, Arlington Heights. It also appears in many Chicago companies and hotels and has been included in group exhibits at AT&T Bell Laboratories,

Naperville; the State of Illinois Center; and Navy Pier. . . .

Chicago artist Ed Paschke calls Segami an artist of "extraordinary sensitivity and virtuosity," merging aspects of Eastern and Western culture.

"The experience of looking at her paintings is layered with references and associations that allow the viewer to be a genuine participant. Fluctuating between polarities of meaning, these paintings are about the essence of human experience and its relationship to our universe," says Paschke.

With both representational and abstract versions of her work, Segami encourages viewers to participate; she wants them to take their times — to spend time at each piece, seeing how it's formed and to allow it to grow on them.

For Segami, one of suminagashi's intense attractions is the beauty and peacefulness of the finished product. Its closeness with nature.

Limited editions are available. Please call (312) 738-1921 or write to Segami Studios at 235 North Ogden Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60607-1506, for further information.