

Rock-a-bye: "Spring Lullaby" is a lilting sumi-nagashi by Amy Lee Segami.

## Omigosh, it's sumi-nagashi

By Michael Bonesteel  
ART CRITIC

### REVIEW

Pondering Amy Lee Segami's art works, one feels like an armchair surfer riding wild waves of swirling, kaleidoscopic color and form.

So compelling are some of her pieces, a palpable sensation of vertigo arises from gazing across rippling canyons of liquid marble or plunging headlong into iridescent starbursts.

Segami has revived an archaic art form known as *sumi-nagashi* — which means "flowing ink" — a technique that requires floating ink upon the surface of water, then laying a sheet of rice paper upon it so it picks up the patterned designs.

*Sumi-nagashi* flourished in China 2,000 years ago and popped up again in Japan around the 12th century.

Except for a few works that have been made into limited edition lithographs, they are all one-of-a-kind pieces: mostly organic blends of purple, blue, green, and orange. Less successful examples feature garish juxtapositions of fluorescent raspberry, lime green and sky blue.

The decorative nature of this work

tempts one to dismiss it as merely a shallow exercise in the manipulation of form, color and texture, however technically dazzling its gimmick may be.

The ultimate way to judge art's effectiveness is how long it can hang on the wall before one gets tired of looking at it. Segami's work, with its lyrical rhythms and infinite detail, could have an extremely long shelf life.

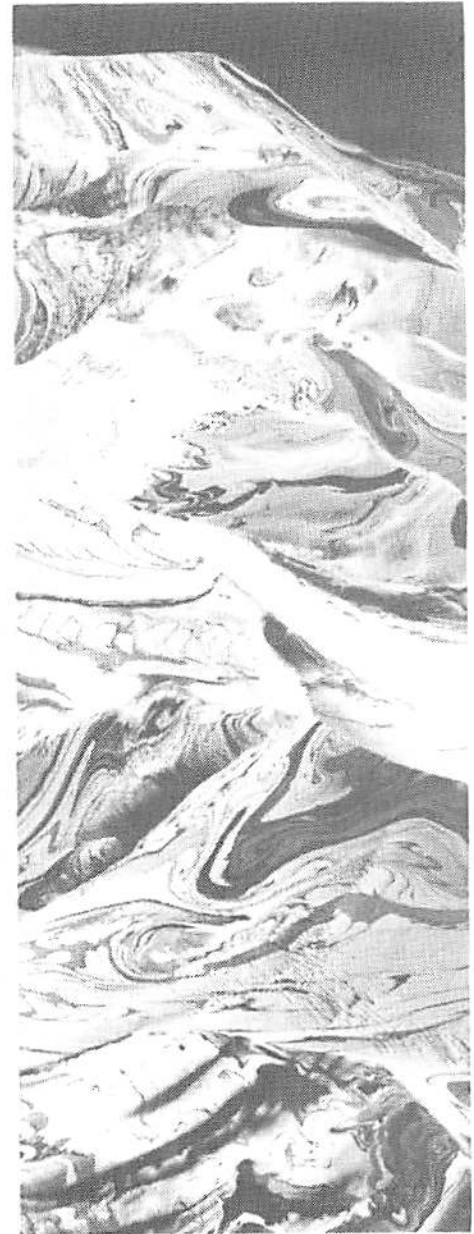
The best pieces boast the undeniable power to sweep the observer into three-dimensional fantasies of flying over rolling ocean waves or mountain ranges awash with bubbling colors and shapes.

And with titles like "Whispering Melody," "Summer Storm" and "Pond of Passion," there is an open invitation to read metaphoric nuances into these basically abstract pieces.

Some titles make obvious references to flowers. "Absolute Orchid" and "Tiger-Lily" contain gold blooms of metallic ink unfolding in caverns of purple and black.

While most of Segami's *sumi-nagashi* have slick feel, as if they were generated on a computer, others look old and weathered, like ancient scroll paintings. In fact, it appears that she can achieve almost any texture she desires, from photographic precision to hazy impressionism.

The fluid, stylized "motion" of her work



Segami's "Snow Fantasia."

seems wholly Asian in feeling and fits well within a tradition that encompasses both Chinese landscapes and Japanese *sumi-e* brush painting.

But rarely in the art of any culture does the experience of looking compare to a vivid dreamscape. Viewers are advised to fasten their seat belts.

*Segami is also a professional speaker on the integration of arts and science. For more information please contact:*

*Segami Studios, Fine Arts Building  
410 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60605-1491 U.S.A.  
Voice (312)922-5811 Fax (312)922-5825*