

Chicago Sun-Times

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

Celebs

CHICAGO PROFILE / Amy Lee Segami



SUN-TIMES/Tom Cruze

SHE IS

Chinese-born artist who specializes in Suminagashi. It's an almost lost Oriental art form. She's believed to be the only person who practices it here in a contemporary version.

PHILOSOPHY

"To see things differently, to do things a little bit differently, take the challenge. That's what brought me to this country."

SUMINAGASHI SPECIFICS

It means "flowing ink" in Japanese. Special inks are floated on still water. A brush (or air) is used to make patterns in the water. Paper laid on the water captures the design permanently. The art originated in China 2,000 years ago and was expanded by 12th century Shinto priests in Japan.

WHAT'S NEW

This Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Segami will have a free display of her works at Hotel Nikko. She has exhibited at the Chicago Botanic Garden, Navy Pier. Her art fair prices range from \$100 to \$2,000.

STATS

Born Amy Lee in Swatow, China. Uses Segami because "Segami is a river in the north of Japan, noted for the purity of the water." Grew up in Hong Kong. Came here in 1976, earned bachelor's, master's degrees at IIT in mechanical engineering, specializing in fluid mechanics. Received a NASA grant at IIT to study air flow around jet engines. Single, lives in Andersonville, soon will be a U.S. citizen.

ENGINEERING TO ART

After IIT, "I worked as an engineer with Fortune 500 companies" in fluid mechanics. "I wanted to find something where I could bring East and West together and incorporate science and arts." During a Japanese art course, her instructor mentioned Suminagashi. She left her job in 1986 to devote her time to the art form.

WHAT'S AHEAD

"Next spring I will have my first long one-person show, at IIT. I've found there's a Suminagashi master in Japan. I intend to visit him."

—Bob Herguth