

The Conductor's Palette

I wonder how a painter chooses the title for his or her painting. Whenever I visit a museum and look at each painting, I am curious about its title, wondering how its author connected the title with the actual painting.

When I see a landscape painting, I want to be impressed by the beauty of its scenery. But when I see abstract paintings, some of them are hard to understand. As for me, when I start painting, I make sure to choose a title associated with music. Of course, I paint as a hobby, so I do not need to be picky about titling. Yet I want to let the painting be musical, or let a song be heard in the painting. Sometimes the title of my painting happens to be the name of the opera I am working on. Other times, the title happens to be the name of the project I am producing. And I always paint a conductor baton or a music score in each painting.

Curtain Call (1992)

The title of my debut painting was *Curtain Call* (1992). When I stand on the stage, especially of an opera concert, I find myself in the spotlight, bright and powerful, and I feel on the stage as if I were in a different world from the seats. I wanted to express it in this painting. Of course I did not draw a human figure in the painting but a flower vase touched by a bright light.

Carmen Paradox (1993)

Why was Carmen paradoxical? That is because she lived her entire life alive and shining. In the opera, *Carmen*, José, who had given up everything to see Carmen, stabbed and killed her out of his rage when he saw her with Escamillo, the torero. As a woman, this story leaves me unsatisfied. In my painting, a bright red vase stands confidently in the center in a sense that Carmen continues to shine forever. A discolored and broken vase is laid by the red vase. That is why it is paradoxical. People may not understand the meaning by just looking at the painting. I wish I could leave my comment on it. In the fall season of that year, I was conducting the opera *Carmen* almost daily. I borrowed the hat which was for Escamillo in the opera to draw into this painting.

Romeo and Juliet (1994)

I do not need to explain the title of the masterpiece. A vase stands, symbolically confronting two laying masks. I ordered some *bird of paradise* from a flower shop to portray it as swords. I drew the flower as soon as it arrived.

Don Giovanni (1995)

I wanted to paint a scene from the opera by Mozart. During the month of November in this year, I was conducting this opera. I set a vase on a wooden basket and symbolically placed it on the table. I portrayed two owl ornaments as Don Giovanni and Leporello, staring at the flower basket. I wanted to express something comical.

Pause for Resting (1996)

It means literally resting. Back then I was over-scheduled. I had no time to paint. Right before sending in my painting to the art exhibition, I caught a cold, but I continued conducting on medication while keeping the fever down. As a painting, it is nothing but a break.

Beyond Time and Space (1997)

I wanted to paint an object reflected in the mirror. But it was much harder than I had thought. I looked inside the mirror and kept staring at the object and its image in the mirror to compare their sizes and colors. I could not tell and express the difference well. I had been practicing the opera *Orpheus in the Underworld* composed by Offenbach when I worked on this painting. I portrayed the music score of the opera, a flute and the reflection of a clock in the mirror. I chose the title to intend a message that the wonderful music will be played over and over by all ages.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice (1998)

A broom appears in this composition written by a French composer Dukas. In this story, when his master was absent, the apprentice worked magic on the broom and had it bring buckets of water. The broom kept bringing the water because he did not know the spell to stop the broom. He was in a big trouble when the master came back. I portrayed various owl figures as the apprentice, which made the painting like an animated cartoon. I was conducting this composition when I drew this picture.

Interlude (1999)

This year, I became the resident conductor for the Central Aichi Symphony Orchestra and had been commuting between Tokyo and Nagoya by train frequently. I would conduct a student orchestra in the morning in Tokyo, have concerts in the afternoon and in the evening in Nagoya, and then return to Tokyo, so I did not have time to paint at all. But I did not want to paint another *Pause* again. This title was made out of such a situation. I used some Mediterranean colors in the painting.

Fantasy in Blue (2000)

I saw a new score of the opera *Aida* and liked the cover in beautiful blue, which inspired me to draw a painting with all blue colors. In the same year, I made a photograph album and its title was *Fantasy*.

Falling in Love with Fairy (2001)

I was planning a concert program when I painted this. The title came to my mind when I thought of performing the opera *Oberon* in an orchestra concert style. Since a fairy is the main character in the opera, I named this title. I portrayed the score of *Oberon* in the painting. I also wanted to paint a fairy-tale world.

Shining Moment (2002)

Due to ongoing concert tours in Tohoku and Nagoya, I was hardly at home. Despite the lack of time, I wanted to paint another object reflected in a mirror. It was merely a painting of objects with my favorite colors: yellow flower and blue vase. I received several comments from those who saw this painting.

I enjoyed the uniqueness. The use of the mirror was effective to create a sense of three dimensions. I felt the rhythmic movement of conducting from the motion line in a bouquet of flowers. I wondered if you portrayed the vase as yourself.

Mr. Sin'ichiro Koshida, Tomon Glee Club, Tokyo.

It was a beautiful flower painting, with the fragrance of Europe, reminding me of Ibert's piano compositions, and giving me the taste of the Mediterranean Ocean. It was a good painting with a certain atmosphere. I appreciated your

painting, wishing I could hang a painting like this in my room (with the smell of a Bordeaux wine in the air).

Mr. Shoichi Okada, former-employee for Fujitsu Ltd.

Whispered by the Muse (2003)

In this year I published the newly revised version of my first book with a new title, *Conductor Favored by the Muse*. So I included "Muse" in the title of the painting. I portrayed the masks I had bought at Barcelona.

Fragrance of Paris (2004)

I spent three months in Paris under the overseas study program of the Agency for Cultural Affairs between September and November. I finished up this painting when I came back to Japan at the end of November. I expressed the fragrance of Paris by portraying the tablecloth, the bag, and the music score books that I had used during my stay in Paris, and also souvenir chocolate.

Reflection (2005)

I drew the tablecloth because I loved its color. There weren't deeper meanings in the title.

Dancing Colors (2006)

This was the last painting to be displayed at the art exhibition. I portrayed the score book of *Bolero*, for I had been practicing the composition arranged for chorus. I always desire to be surrounded by various colors and I always desire to express music rich in color.

When I first started painting, I used dark colors and laid one color over another thickly like drawing oil paintings. After about five years, the tone of my colors began to change slightly. My favorite color that I always use is the mixed color of cobalt blue and marine blue light. Some oceans may have water with this color. Could it be the Mediterranean?

Every year, whenever I look at my painting displayed in an art exhibition, I always think that next time I would spend much more time working on it. Then I end up battling to find time to paint in-between concerts. I have been painting in such a hasty condition for several years. One day, I received a message from

a person who comes to the art exhibition every year.

Ms. Matsuo, your paintings are nothing but paintings that portray music. When I saw your painting for the first time, the painting had an impression that it was about to make sounds. Since then, I have had the same impression whenever I look at your painting each year. The way you paint with your brushes makes me imagine how you conduct with your baton, as you have commented, "I wanted to express sounds without notes." Strangely, I feel as if I were listening to your music rather than looking at your painting. My favorite work among yours is Carmen Paradox, in which I sensed the sound of the castanet and the tap dancing mixed and lingering at the very moment when Carmen finished her dancing. Meanwhile, José hardly is able to notice the sound. The ending of the opera in this painting is opposite to the one of the opera. Surely it is paradoxical. At the art exhibition I can appreciate your artistry through paintings, an extension of your music at concert halls."

Mr. Tadashi Motono, Producer, Planning • Office Nature