

## Review: Regina Scully's *Japanese Landscape* – *Inner Journeys*

The parallels between Scully's paintings and Japanese art on view  
at New Orleans Museum of Art

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*Passages, 2012 by Regina Scully*

Where does art originate? Art schools teach techniques, theories, trends and history, but most of the artworks that survive the test of time have something mysterious or ineffable about them that can't be taught in school. Such art transcends time and space: Where did the Mona Lisa's elusively beatific smirk come from and why does it affect us? Closer to home, there's always been something inexplicably Japanese about Regina Scully's complexly lyrical abstract paintings, yet the University of New Orleans graduate never studied Japanese art and has no explanation for her works' Asian tone.

The recent acquisition of several of her canvases by the New Orleans Museum of Art inspired further interest in the parallels between her work and the museum's stellar collection of 18th- and 19th-century Japanese paintings and drawings, and the result is this unusual side-by-side expo.

Traditional Western art tried to be descriptive and was only incidentally inexpressible. Japanese artists traditionally tried to convey forces of nature that transcend the written word, but many ended up being merely descriptive. Scully only began studying Japanese art last year, but the dreamy, calligraphic, floating qualities that even her older canvases share with these Edo-period works are seen in paintings like *Passage*, 2012 (detail, pictured) with its floating, rhapsodic hints of aerial views of cities at the mercy of elemental forces. In *Cosmographia*, 2015, hints of forests, mountains, water spouts, flowers and clouds seem to dance across the canvas, in contrast to the dense clustering seen in *Navigation 7*, 2010, where crowded city streets seem to have become animated as if by an earthquake, or something supernatural. In *Mindscape 5*, 2017, colorful natural and man-made forms appear to levitate and spin in a swirling vortex, yet as violent as a verbal description of that composition might sound, its visual effect is quite buoyant, almost as lyrical as Takaku Agai's serene, Edo-period *Summer Landscape*, 1836. Both artists' works evoke the indescribable, but Scully's composition resonates a more jazzy backbeat.

The exhibit will be on view through Oct. 8.

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