

Ann Purcell

Notes for “Sakura Poem Suite “ Series 2009-2010–2017

“One must always apologize for talking about painting,” French poet Paul Valéry wrote

**Snow in winter is like a Sakura in March
Indifferent time wipes out the one and the other***

(I heard this in movie “The Sun” on the relationship between Hirohito and MacArthur, a fabulous Japanese film)

"Sakura" is a national flower of Japan, and it is well-known that Japanese people celebrate the arrival of spring by having a feast under the cherry trees in full bloom (*"hana-mi"*). It is the most festive time of a year and cherry blossoms represent merry, cheerful feelings in the spring time. **In Japanese society, it also symbolizes the transient life of human beings because the blossom season lasts too short, only a week or so.**

The key note lecture for the special exhibition Setsugekka at MOA Museum of Art by Isamu Kurita, the president of the Japanese Culture Institute, Japan. *"Setsugekka"* means "snow, the moon and flowers": Kurita takes examples of these three symbols from legends, poems, narratives and performing art and interprets how the Japanese traditionally looked upon nature. According to his interpretation, flowers are the symbol of "unadulterated state", which also indicates unending cycle of life. *"Sakura"* is the most popular object among those flowers.

SAKURA POEM

**Are they not like
this fleeting world?
cherry blossoms:
no sooner do they flower
than they fall**