

time by Kirby as the haiku Davidson was writing, also helps provide a window into the world L.A. Davidson lived in, the world which inspired her poetry.

Over the span of the forty years L.A. Davidson was writing haiku, conventions changed slightly and you can observe it here. For example, all of the haiku which start with a capitalized first word were written in the 1960's and early 1970's. The two two-liner haiku in the book were both published in 1984. That said, her most famous haiku, the one selected as the final haiku in the book has a modern feel to it, but was written in 1971 and first published in 1972:

beyond  
stars beyond  
star

I can only say that L.A. Davidson was an English language haiku pioneer and the haiku community benefited greatly from her time with us here. This book belongs in the personal library of all serious haiku poets.

*In Silence* 静けさに W Ciszy – haiga, by Lidia Rozmus. With Iwona Biederman, Masanobu Hoshikawa, and Jan Zamorski. (Sante Fe, N.M.: Deep North Press, 2017). 9" x 12". Handmade box with portfolio. Limited edition of 90. The DVD *In Silence* is attached to the book. ISBN 978-1-929116-23-2. Price: \$120.00 from rozmuslidia@gmail.com

*Reviewed by Michele Root-Bernstein*

The poet E. E. Cummings once asked himself why he also painted. “For exactly the same reason I breathe,” he answered—or rather, as he put it, didn’t answer. All he could really say was that both were essential, the painting no less than the poetry, for “they love each other dearly”

(from *Forward to an Exhibit: II*, 1945). My thoughts recently returned to this observation as I immersed myself in Lidia Rozmus's new book of haiga, *In Silence*. If anyone understands why time with the brush is not time away from the pen—or vice versa—it is surely she. For many years now, Rozmus has been painting haiku and writing sumi-e with deft mastery of both. *In Silence* builds on that foundation and expands it, in what Stephen Addiss calls in the introduction “a remarkably bold and adventurous scheme.”

Selecting eighteen haiku on the theme of silence, Rozmus conceived of three haiga for each, mixing and matching the same poem in English, Japanese, and Polish with three different art forms: photography, sumi-e painting, and colored-pencil drawings. For Rozmus, the artistic challenge involved moving in and out of the three languages, the three art forms, and the three cultures that have framed her life. It also involved collaborating with other artists and poets for most of the photography, the Japanese translation, and the Japanese calligraphy. “I was very curious if it could be done,” she told me. The answer which is an answer is yes. Consistently pairing the English haiku with photography, its Japanese translation with sumi-e, and its Polish translation with colored pencil drawings, Rozmus successfully created a series of triptychs in which each panel stands on its own as a fully conceived haiga, yet with linguistic and artistic ties binding the collection of fifty-four haiga together as a whole.

As Addiss states, haiga at their best display the “virtues of a good haiku,” which is to say, “brief but resonant insights into life and nature, suggested rather than being defined.” Rozmus's haiga achieve this in triplicate. Take, for instance, the haiku

calm  
rain falls  
on moss

paired with Rozmus's own photograph of a narrow ribbon of stream trickling across a woodland floor. At once the viewer becomes aware of a soft absorption within the haiku moment, as earth and water blend within and through myriad colors of green. The accompanying sumi-e develops

this sense of interpenetration in abstract fashion, one set of brush strokes puddling into another like sheets of rain on the horizon. Rozmus's pencil drawing for the set, a geometric abstraction of two translucent green squares intersecting over a black background, reiterates the mood. As the shape of these boxes echoes the shape of the sumi-e brushstrokes, so, too, can hard corners of our lives yield to the solace of a nurturing nature. (See the Poetry Gallery in this issue.)

The same layering of insights is to be found throughout the portfolio. In moonlight all over / inside me a prayer / never heard before, Biederman's photograph of footprints in sand on a silvered beach gives way to a sumi-e of inked crescents and then to what may be penciled cocoons suspended on filaments of silk. As feelings build with the successive imagery, prayer reveals itself as a permanence of longing in an ephemeral cup.

Similarly, wooden pier / my reflection on the water / double loneliness builds from one artistic context to another, from the literal separation of self from shadow to the figurative separation of object and reflection. In the final pencil drawing, one set of interwoven lines mirrors another across a black expanse, suggesting, as Rozmus told me, "the loneliness in the black center" of the haiku.

Mention must also be made of the twelve-minute long film by Jan M. Zamorski that accompanies the book (a trailer is available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BcGnx5Jz7E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BcGnx5Jz7E)). Largely set in a forest preserve near Chicago, the film records short sequences of birds, insects, trees, grasses, ponds, and streams moving through the seasons. We see as well the artist inking the stone, holding the brush, marking the rice paper. Everything takes place in silence, except when someone—surely Rozmus herself—suddenly sneezes. Even, perhaps especially, in the visual moment, we love the poet's presence dearly. For anyone interested in haiga, in silence or, simply, in the reasons we breathe, I heartily recommend perusal of this beautiful book (take a peek in part 2 of the slide show, *Haiga: The Poetry of Images*, Haiku Society of America website). Serious collectors will want a copy of their own.