

Per On Art ~ What's up & what's best in NYC

Joan Mirviss & her artists: a "diamond mountain" pinnacle of Asian art

18 Sunday, Mar 2018

POSTED BY PER LARSON IN UNCATEGORIZED

≈ LEAVE A COMMENT

Asia Week presents a unique challenge and unusual advantages to the afficiandos, collectors – and press. The empress of the art press, Marilyn White, organizes a whirlwind tour of 40+ galleries for the press to get 5-15" snippets of the each gallery's top presentations.

But even with the advantage that most Asian art galleries seem to be on the Upper East Side of NYC, in the 60s through the low 80s, such compressed viewings with little time to breath can give "Asian art indigestion".

So what does one do? go like the rest of us to the formal openings and see what still shines – and what has lost its glamour. And rely on the NY Times.

It all started this last preview week on the 14th in the Times review of "Asia Week's Rare and Unusual Objects for Art Lovers and Collectors" by Will Heinrich. The high end of the Asian Art spectrum is of course held up by the three-legged stool of Japan Society, Asia Society, and the Met Museum. The Met alone has seven Asian art exhibitions currently. In February, the NY Times reviewed the "Diamond Mountains" show at the Met's Korean Art gallery – underwritten this year with \$1 million from South Korea – one of the few countries to ensure their art has gallery space and a steady flow of key shows year round. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/08/arts/design/south-korea-north-korea-metropolitan-museum-diamond-mountains-olympics.html>)

In Heinrich's March 14th preview of Asia Week in the Times this last week, the lead star – the lodestar – of the NYC Asian art gallery scene is the incredible selection of three of the top treasures of Japanese pottery made by Joan Mirviss. The Times made the winner of this art race clear: Mirviss and her gallery at 39 East 78th Street. And if there were any question her show led the pack in the Times's The Listings on March 16th – their pick of the top 21 gallery shows to visit.

Mirviss doesn't just represent her artists. She goads, encourages, and challenges them to produce more than they're used to – some produce but a few pieces at a glacial pace. She is as much the artist as they are – especially in her complementing these shelved masterpieces with hanging masterpieces. (In fact in an interview she volunteered that she – and many of the collectors she serves – started with hanging Asian art – and that the two have now come together. A cursory examination of their beauty – and their price tags – reveals that in fact those hanging works of art are now nearly equal in value to her selections of pottery.

Her Asian wall art has a unique quality that is rarely seen – even in America’s museums. They cannot be adequately described by ascribing them to schools and trends. The interesting fact is that that for her and her collectors this hanging art was but her warmup. Now, though the spotlight is on the ceramics, both complement each other and are on equal footing.

The proof of the pudding is of course in the eating. And her banquet of national treasures was two thirds sold before even opening. Her taste has decades of proof in being impeccable. The major collectors of Japanese art world wide and certainly in America have depended on her judgment and recommendations. She has the midas touch.

With her touch she has moved way beyond a middleman role to being a proactive inspiration for both her artists and her collectors. She leads the parade – and the trade – loudly and forcefully – in her selections and in her price tags. For one thing many of the works in this year’s show would never have seen the light of day were it not for her pestering, reminding, and encouraging these masterwork artists.

Where she really married her mind to her heart was in her selection of only the top ceramic artisans – Japan’s potters – and in her encouragement of them to excel even the most esteemed levels of excellence they’d achieved before.

She is now riding the crest of a wave she created. “What can I do now?” she wailed on the eve of the opening night of her latest and most incredible show.

To which I replied, “Ride the crest of the wave... You’ve no need to outdo what you’ve done. All you need now is ride the waves and bring the rest of the collectors and these national living treasures along with you. They, and you, will enjoy the ride immensely. For now all of you, after having worked together these many years, will enjoy the realization that you have achieved the pinnacle of what was possible – and in riding that wave you have laid a foundation for incredible art to come.”

This show – her selection – is, as the NY Times has observed and concluded a pinnacle of Asian art. One of its “diamond mountains”. First her show was included in the Times article as only private show amidst the museum glut of Asian Art. Then the show was singled out as the pre-eminent gallery exhibition of 21 exhibitors this week of Japanese art. Truly it is the single most important event of Asia Week in all of New York City.

Mirviss selections are beyond comparison. This is truly the only show in town.

[Blog at WordPress.com.](https://peronart.com)