

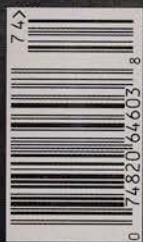
Ceramics

Art + Perception

April 2018

#108

USD	\$20
EUR	€18
CAD	\$27
AUD	\$27
GBP	£15





Mishima Kimiyo

at MEM and Art Factory Jonanjima, Tokyo

Written by Janet Koplos

Mishima Kimiyo (b. 1932) has long been known for her *trompe l'oeil* ceramic objects that appear to be newspapers or household trash. Two recent exhibitions in Tokyo offered paintings, mixed-media and found objects plus large-scale installations including fiberglass, as well as the expected variety of ceramic work. One show was impressive for its breadth and the other was staggering for its large scale.

Early Works at MEM was not quite accurately titled since it presented works from 1966 to 2017, with the majority dating from the 1980s. The oldest works, collaged paintings titled *Transfiguration of Venus II and IV*, were interesting to see because of her Pop use of borrowed imagery – a silhouette and reproduction of the central figure of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* – and the applied newspaper pages that seem to presage her ceramic work. These are large square canvases that incorporate veils of semi-transparent geometric forms – a circle in one work and a triangle in the other – applied over the figures and set amid large blocks of strong flat color. They could be compared with feminist painting (in the West, not Japan) and the kind of vivid 'primary structures' that were seen in both painting and sculpture at the time.

But these are outliers, related to the other works only in their adoption of popular culture. The only other two-dimensional works are four gelatin silver prints from 1980, collectively titled *Memory* (bundled magazines, as if ready for

delivery to a news-stand) and four etchings from 1981 that present photographic images of stacks of newspapers or piles of cardboard on a street. Here Mishima has found her subject matter. On the floor at the center of the gallery were thick undulant ceramic slabs printed with pages from German and French newspapers. They are not *trompe l'oeil* because they are oversize in addition to being too thick to be real, but they are attention-grabbing. More persuasive was a nearby work on a pedestal, *Newspaper P-89* (1989), which convincingly imitates a stack of folded Japanese newspapers with a thick book in the middle that's marked NTT on its side: a phone book.

MEM's second, much smaller, room was chockablock with collections of seemingly or actually manufactured objects, most of which were ceramic but occasionally wire or other metal substances found on the streets of New York during a year Mishima spent there on an Asian Cultural Council fellowship. These are mildly amusing for their unexpectedness – a tape measure, for instance – but some aggregations are not visually interesting. The best are most impressive for their illusionistic convincingness, a technical achievement that recalls Marilyn Levine's astonishing 'leather' goods. Mishima prefers canned goods, and perhaps the star of the show was a wire-mesh trash can stuffed with vending-machine cans of coffee or soda – Pepsi, Mello Yello and that Japanese classic, Pocari Sweat among them – and some beer cans as well.

In both these exhibitions, time seems to be Mishima's obsession.

