

Fujikasa Satoko's stoneware takes flight.

Written by Janet Koplos

Fujikasa Satoko hand-builds her sculptures and works slowly, so her show at the Joan B. Mirviss gallery in New York consisted of just thirteen works, all of tabletop scale, from 11 to 27 inches tall. Fujikasa, at 35 years old, has already made such a name for herself that this show was sold out before it opened. It's easy to see why.

Fujikasa Satoko has created an immediately recognizable look that nevertheless allows her great scope for expression; the works are vessels—with an inherent inward focus—yet strikingly gestural at the same time. They operate as metaphors for (or embodiments of) all kinds of fluid motions, from the flow of water to fluttering drapery to the unfolding of petals. The only constants are the materials—stoneware with translucent matte glaze giving an effect less refined than porcelain but more elegant than plaster—and a small foot that moves from restriction to a sense of expansion and release. For example, *Rotation* (2015) has a complicated base from which it gushes upward like a water fountain but also moves around the central void. It might recall a rotating sprinkler except that the surge is so substantial. Maybe it evokes a waterspout? An attentive viewer will stand before the piece and try out identifications, for something seems familiar even if the association can't be narrowed into finality.

Flowing I, 2014.





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patterns in the air
with his baton.



Wind Direction, 2015.



Blossoming, 2014.

Flowing I (2014) is one of the broadest works, 27 inches at its widest point, with two sweeping appendages that make fluid and continuous lines. It might evoke a time-lapse photo of a conductor tracing patterns in the air with his baton.

Blossoming and *Plant Growth* (2014) name an association; both are notably vertical. The former is the tallest in the show and the latter is much smaller at 14^{1/2} inches, although it still has considerable force and, in a photograph, a sense of monumentality. Both present the dynamic of unfolding petals; they may recall Georgia O'Keeffe's floral paintings in a loose sense, or the canna flower more specifically.

Other associations is named by *Soar* (2015) and *Wind Direction* (2015). One of the *Soar* works provides a stellar demonstration of balance. The bulk of the form moves from the base to the left, which folds over in sufficient thickness to balance the higher and broader extension to the right (depending, of course, on one's viewpoint). The two *Wind Direction* works have in common a flattish plane at top that stretches across the center void of the piece; on one it curls upward at the higher end, bringing to mind old-fashioned illustrations of a personified north wind blowing curlicues of cold air. ■

Fujikasa Satoko received Takashimaya Art Prize from the Takashimaya Cultural Foundation in November 2015.

About the Author

Janet Koplos was awarded a National Endowment of the Arts critic's grant in 1978 and from 1990 - 2009 she was a staff editor at *Art in America* magazine. She is the author of *Contemporary Japanese Sculpture* (1991) and co-author of *makers: A history of American Studio Craft*. (2010, University of North Carolina Press).