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New York City

SOFA 2008

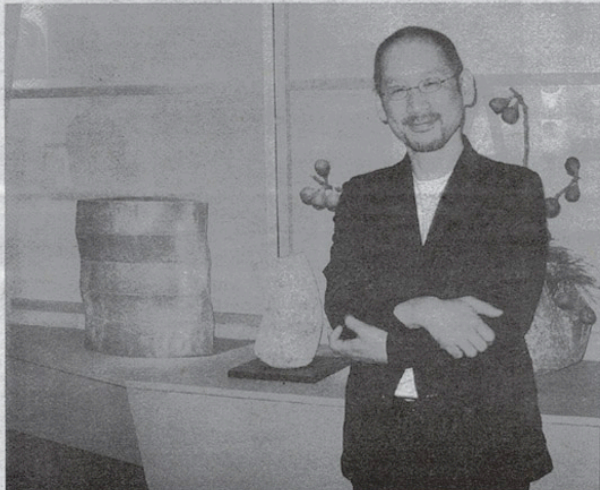
by Lita Solis-Cohen

For the 11th year SOFA (Sculpture Objects & Functional Art) offered one-of-a-kind, limited-edition, and hand-made objects in ceramics, glass, fiber, metal, and wood. The fair filled the 67th Street Armory on Park Avenue in Manhattan from May 29 through June 1 and held a crowded opening night party on May 28, where some quick buy-

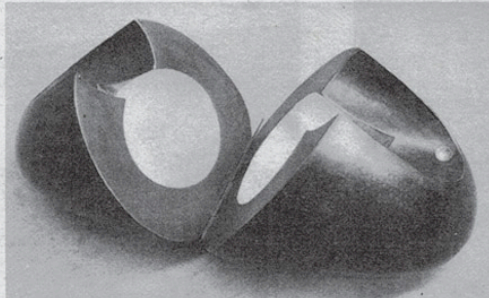
ing was done. The opening was not a benefit; tickets were \$100 each, and many got free passes. There was a private dinner that began at 8:30 in the Tiffany Room to support the Museum of Arts & Design in New York City. Mark Lyman, the founder of the SOFA fairs in Chicago and Manhattan, runs the fairs as vice president of dmg world media,



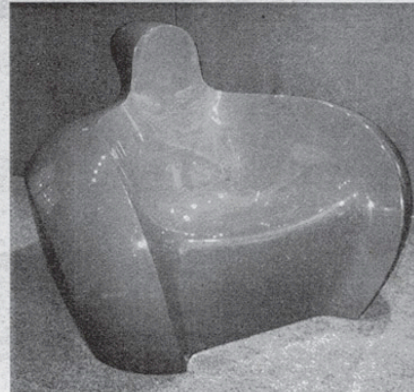
Donna Schneier Fine Arts, Palm Beach, Florida, asked \$6000, \$10,000, and \$6000, respectively, for these three George Ohr vases. The \$10,000 one sold.



Joan B. Mirviss Ltd., New York City, showed the work of Mihara Ken (pictured), who makes stoneware with a natural ash glaze the colors of Tuscany and Umbria and some suggesting paintings by Rothko, in various sizes. The show was a sellout. Prices were mostly under \$10,000 each.



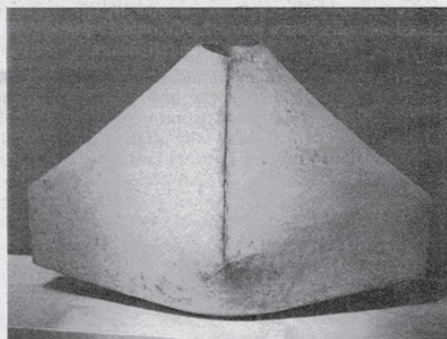
Barry Friedman Ltd., New York City, asked \$17,000 for *Bis*, a 15" x 16½" x 12 5/8" contemporary dinanderie (medieval bronze work) in hammered copper with gold leaf by Hervé Wahlen, 2006. SOFA photo.



By Wendell Castle, this 39" x 57" x 46" Wichita Chair, 2008, is of red fiberglass in an edition of eight and was \$48,000 from Barry Friedman Ltd.'s gallery exhibition of Castle's fiberglass furniture.



The David Gilhooly sculpture was \$14,000 from Donna Schneier Fine Arts.



This work by Mihara Ken suggests Mont Sainte-Victoire or Mount Fuji. It was \$9000 from Joan B. Mirviss Ltd.

the international fair company that bought SOFA in 2005. He said he was pleased with the energy on opening night.

A few dealers said they had a successful show; some said they did OK; and some were disappointed. London dealer Adrian Sassoon, who shows at a number of fairs in the U.S., sold a 2008 hand-hammered silver and gold vase by Hiroshi Suzuki, *Aqua-Poesy XI Kin*, priced at \$155,000. Sassoon also sold the largest piece on his stand, *Succulent Mother Gourd* by Kate Malone, a London-based artist, for \$57,000. "People in America want to buy the biggest and the best," he observed.

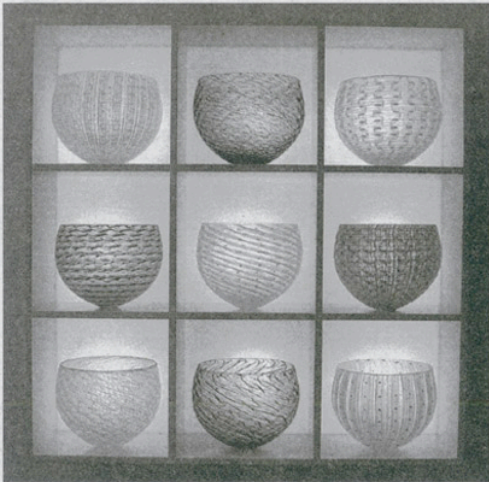
As a marketing tool, the fair offered an invitation-only opening day breakfast for interior designers, at which Jack Lenor Larsen spoke about his Long-House Reserve, a museum and sculpture garden in East Hampton, Long Island, New York. After Larsen's talk, designers could shop—before the fair opened to the public. It was a way of educating designers, who then could educate their clients to become collectors.

Lectures on Thursday drew an audience, but dealers said that the crowds were disappointing on the weekend, and sales were not brisk. Those who came were enthusiastic and selective.

Joan Mirviss, a New York City dealer in Japanese works of art, drew much praise for her sold-out exhibition of ceramics by Mihara Ken, priced from \$3500 to \$12,000. One piece was bought by the Los Angeles County Museum and another by Yale.

Michael and Douglas Heller, New York City dealers in glass, sold well, finding buyers for works by the well-known Lino Tagliapietra (b. 1934) and the work of Steffen Dam and Tobias Møhl, two younger Danish artists.

Barry Friedman Ltd., New York City, sold figurative ceramic sculptures by Akio Takamori (b. 1950) and glass vessels by Toots Zynsky (b. 1951). Moderne Gallery, Philadelphia, sold an oak music stand by Wendell Castle and some tables by Nakashima.



Heller Gallery offered a 2007 glass nest collection by Tobias Møhl of Denmark at \$6900 for each set of three. Several sold.



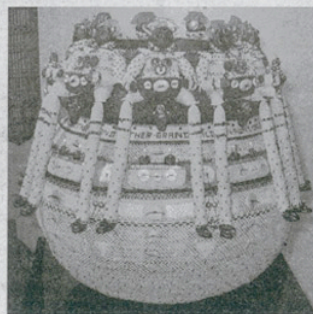
There was some relatively inexpensive glass. Adam Aaronson of Heller Gallery, New York City, asked between \$500 and \$2000 for these vases; most were under \$1000.



Ferrin Gallery, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, showed this 23" x 16" x 10" work, *A Swan's Wedding Day*, by Mara Superior for \$12,000.



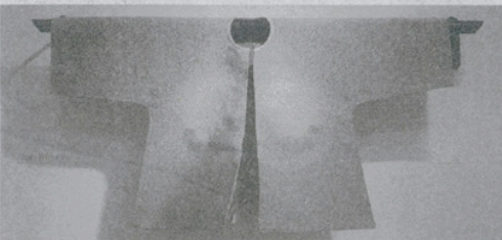
This untitled glass art (tallest 10") is by Steffen Dam of Denmark and \$16,000 from Heller Gallery.



Judy Mulford created this gourd form, *Generations*. It's covered with knotless netting, integrated with photographs, drawings, and found objects. It was \$30,000 from browngrotta arts, Wilton, Connecticut. "My work is autobiographical," said Mulford, who was at the fair. "I used beads, mother-of-pearl buttons, paper, paint, photographs; stuff collected in Alaska, Africa and flea markets. Each piece becomes a container from conscious and unconscious thoughts."



Robert Aibel of Moderne Gallery, Philadelphia, showed furniture by George Nakashima. The English walnut coffee table with two rosewood butterflies was \$60,000; the bench, \$40,000; and the two-part buffet, a custom order, \$45,000. Aibel said he sold only one piece of Nakashima, the bench, but sold a variety of ceramics and turned wood, furniture by contemporary furniture designer David Ebner, and a Wendell Castle music stand.



Snyderman-Works Galleries, Philadelphia, showed this tapestry coat by Jon Eric Riis. It was \$28,000.

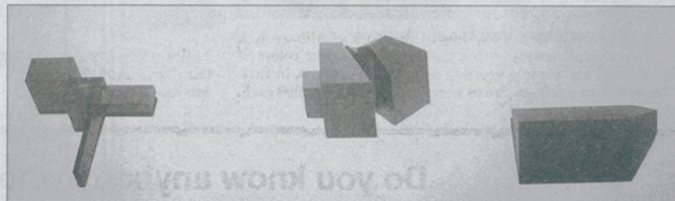
Donna Schneier, who deals in the secondary market of American crafts, said she made numerous sales, including works by Michael Lucero, Toshiko Takaezu, Adrian Saxe, and Dale Chihuly, all early in the show.

Dealers in contemporary jewelry sold well. Collectors may have been inspired by the catalog published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston on its recent acquisition of the jewelry collection of Philadelphia dealer Helen Drutt and by the news that Donna Schneier gave the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City 150 pieces of contemporary jewelry when she moved to Florida, as her legacy gift honoring her long association with Manhattan, with a catalog to come.

There were some first-rate classic works, especially fiber art at browngrotta arts, but not many surprises at this year's SOFA, which has changed little over the last five years. The same dealers were the stars at this boutique show. SOFA New York suffers from its late spring date; after Memorial Day New Yorkers head for their weekend retreats. That may be why some major dealers were missing this year and why some major collectors did not fly to New York City from afar for the fair. Or it may be a sign of the times.

Nevertheless, dealers said they were looking forward to the 15th annual SOFA Chicago, November 7-9, a much larger and far busier pre-holiday fair at Chicago's Navy Pier with a preview on November 6.

For more information, visit SOFA on line (www.sofaexpo.com) or call (800) 563-7632.



Eva Eisler brooches were \$1200 each from The David Collection, Pound Ridge, New York. Eisler is from Prague, Czech Republic.



These 2007 glass sculptures by Dan Dailey were offered by Leo Kaplan Modern, New York City. Left, *Remember*, 20" high, \$64,000; right, *Think*, 24 1/2" high, \$66,000. Kaplan sold a pair of bird sconces to a private collector for \$90,000.



From left: *Oak Pot*, \$9200; *Oak Pot*, \$8600; *Ash Pot*, \$2000, all by David Ellsworth, from del Mano Gallery, Los Angeles.

