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Asia Week New York: 6 highlights of contemporary art

Posted on 14/03/2017

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Involving 50 exhibitions and five auction houses, Asia Week New York 2017 shines a spotlight on contemporary art.

Art Radar takes a look at some of the contemporary art highlights in this year's edition of Asia Week New York.

Hiroyuki Asano, 'Sunrise Now', black granite. Image courtesy Carole Davenport.

From 9 to 18 March 2017, Asian art takes over New York. Presented across 50 privately curated exhibitions and five auction houses, the 10-day **Asia Week New York** attracts collectors, museum curators, designers and scholars. There is a mix of ancient and contemporary art from China, India, the Himalayan region, Southeast Asia, Japan and Korea. The artworks highlighted throughout Asia Week range from examples of porcelain, jewellery and textiles to paintings, ceramics, sculpture, bronzes, prints and photographs.

MIWA Ryusaku 三輪龍作, 'Love', stoneware, 13.7 x 15 x 7 in (35 x 38.2 x 18 cm). Image courtesy Dai Ichi Arts, Ltd.

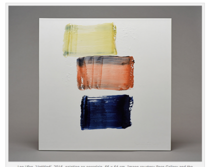
There have been 13 new additions to the gallery list this year, including contemporary art galleries such as **Tina Kim Gallery**, **Pace Gallery** and Yewn. This shows growing support for the initiative, which started out with 16 galleries in its inaugural year of 2009.

Art Radar takes a look at a few of the contemporary art highlights from the week.

Toshio Shibata, 'Osaki City Miyagi Prefecture', 2016, c-print. Image courtesy Laurence Miller Gallery.

1. Laurence Miller Gallery

Photography specialists Laurence Miller Gallery present the work of Japanese artist **Toshio Shibata** (b. 1949). Toshio Shibata's abstract photographs interweave infrastructure and landscape, evoking a balance between nature and the manmade. He often uses long exposures to capture the movement and strength of water as it spills over constructed sluices and channels. He uses a large format camera to eliminate most references to scale, sky and horizon while providing crisp detail and texture. Toshio Shibata first developed his practice in Japan, and in 1996 he captured images of American public work projects with his distinct aesthetic.



Lee Ufan, 'Untitled', 2016, painting on porcelain, 66 x 64 cm. Image courtesy Pace Gallery and the artist.

2. Pace Gallery

For Asia Week New York, Pace Gallery presents the exhibition "Lee Ufan: Ceramics", the first solo exhibition that explores Korean artist Lee's work in this medium. Throughout his 50-year career, **Lee Ufan** (b. 1936) has worked in sculpture, installation, painting and drawing, developing work that delves into philosophical theories of the East and West. The works in the show were developed in conjunction with the Manufacture de Sèvres, an atelier near Paris renowned for its production of porcelain and for working with artists.

Lee Ufan, 'Untitled', 2016. Image courtesy Pace Gallery and the artist.

In the 1960s Lee was one of the founders and major proponents of the avant-garde **Mono-ha** ("School of Things") group, Japan's internationally recognised contemporary art movement that rejected Western notions in the interrelationships between space and matter. A that time Lee worked principally in steel and stone. **Lee has commented that** the "highest level of expression is not to create something from nothing, but rather to nudge something that already exists so that the world shows up more vividly."

Asia Week New York guests, 9-18 March 2017. Image courtesy Asia Week New York.

3. M. Sutherland Fine Arts

Sutherland Fine Arts presents the exhibition **"Guo Hua: Defining Contemporary Chinese Painting"**. *Guo hua's* literal meaning is "national painting" and refers to art that is painted in China and based on traditional Chinese themes of painting. The exhibition explores the limits of this term in the context of contemporary Chinese art, questioning whether oil painting or collage could be included in the term if it articulated a philosophical viewpoint expressed in traditional Chinese painting. The exhibition involves 11 artists: Fung Mingchip, Hai Tao, Hsia Ifu, Hsu Kuohuang, Hu Xiangdong, Hung Hsien, Jia Youfu, Liang Quan, Yang Mian, Zhu Daoping and **Zhu Jinshi**.

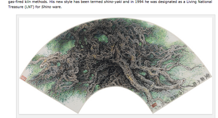
Hsu Kuohuang, 'Waterfall Hidden', 2016, ink and colorwash on paper. Image courtesy M. Sutherland Fine Arts, Ltd and the artist.

Hsu Kuohuang's 2016 work *Waterfall Hidden* uses splashed ink and colour to portray a contemporary view of a flattened out mountain range. It could be considered *guo hua* because of its subject matter, a traditional landscape theme, as well as because of the use of ink.

Suzuki Osamu (Kura), 'Shino-glazed Vessel', ca. 1985. Image courtesy Joan B. Mirviss, Ltd.

4. Joan B. Mirviss

Joan B. Mirviss presents the exhibition **"Timeless Elegance in Japanese Art: Celebrating 40 Years"**, in which the gallery gives attention to contemporary ceramics such as master ceramist Suzuki Osamu. Suzuki Osamu has developed a modern take on the traditional *shino* (creamy white feldspathic glaze), using thicker walls, longer firing time and slower cooling periods. The result is work that presents a modern feel to a traditional art form. Suzuki Osamu is the son of a ceramist and learnt his art from his father. He studied traditional methods in the Mino area before adapting his work to gas-fired kiln methods. His new style has been termed *shino-yaki* and in 1994 he was designated as a Living National Treasure (LNT) for *Shino* ware.



Luo Jianwu, 'Sandalwood Tree', 2013, a folding-fan-shaped painting, ink and color on paper. Image courtesy Kaikodo LLC.

5. Kaikodo LLC

Kaikodo, specialists in Chinese and Japanese art, are presenting five contemporary works in their exhibition **"River of Stars"**. Several of the works draw from traditional ink on paper techniques, while two works involve contemporary photographs mounted as hanging scrolls. A key work in the exhibition is Luo Jianwu's (b. 1944) *Sandalwood Tree* (2013), which is an ink and colour on paper folding-fan-shaped painting. Luo Jianwu often depicts ancient trees as a way to pay respect to their life. The branches of the sandalwood writhe like snakes and are like a forest in themselves. Yet the viewer wonders how long this old tree will last, with its harvest being desired by many religions.

Beili Liu, 'Rise & Fall Series, Wind Drawing (Panel 1)', 2016, blown sumi Ink on stretched canvas, 92 x 57.5 inches (2.5" deep). Image courtesy FitzGerald Fine Arts.

6. FitzGerald Fine Arts

Another gallery of interest is **FitzGerald Fine Arts**, who is presenting **Beili Liu**'s blown *sumi* ink on canvas entitled *Rise & Fall Series, Wind Drawing*. The large-scale triptych embraces transience, fragility and the passage of time through an evocation of the wind's movement. Liu creates immersive material-driven and process-driven, site-responsive installations. Liu often explores opposing forces, such as lightness as opposed to heft, fierceness countered by resilience and chaos balanced by order. She uses common materials, such as thread, scissors, paper, stone, fire and water, and unpacks their complex cultural meanings. Her pieces often combine eastern continuity over time with western passion for the new.

Claire Wilson

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