

ASIAN ART

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HORSE (1837) by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861), from the series Drawings of Birds and Beasts, colour woodblock, about 25 x 36.25 cm, Joan B. Mirviss Ltd.

DARING VISIONS: PRINTS OF THE UTAGAWA SCHOOL

Joan B. Mirviss Ltd. Gallery, New York, 3 March-2 May

Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints are certainly hogging the limelight this month, what with the exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum and the Asia Society and the exhibition of very early prints and books at Sebastian Izzard Asian Art, this subject-specific exhibition at Joan B. Mirviss Ltd. guarantees that the field of *ukiyo-e*, in all of its shades, will be properly covered and available to be seen.

Within the field of *ukiyo-e* itself, the Utagawa School has hogged its own limelight because, after all, it is responsible for more than half of all extant Japanese woodblock prints. The chef d'oeuvre for both this exhibition and the one at Brooklyn is Laura J. Mueller, gallery director of Joan B. Mirviss, Ltd. (see last paragraph.) The Mirviss exhibition of about 60 prints and paintings will include all the main players of this long-lived (1770-1900) school: Toyohiro, Hiroshige I, Hiroshige II, Kuniyoshi, Toyokuni I, Toyokuni II, Toyokuni III (aka Kunisada) Kunimaru, Kyosai, Sadahide and Yoshitoshi. Toyohiro leads off with a rare, and very early *surimono*, a

category of commissioned prints created with every possible 'bell and whistle' of printing techniques. Both Hiroshiges are represented with some of their best landscapes, including examples from *One Hundred Views of Edo*. Kuniyoshi, always robust in his compositions, is represented by both prints of warriors and animals. Kunisada, often dismissed as having lived too long and producing far too many repetitious figure prints, was actually brilliant at the subject, given the chance, and many of his actor prints are indeed exceptional. Sadahide, first known for military triptychs along the lines of his teacher Kuniyoshi, also successfully turned his hand to other genres including fan-shaped *uchisawa-e* prints of beauties. Additional highlights include a couple of spectacular triptychs of foreigners in Japan called Yokohama prints by Yoshikazu and Yoshitora.

Both the Brooklyn and Mirviss exhibitions will completely reveal the remarkable development of the Utagawa School, in all of its variants, during the 19th century, but it is only from this exhibition of prints that one can actually go home with one.

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Collaboration: Japanese Prints of the Utagawa School by Laura J. Mueller, gallery director of Joan B. Mirviss Ltd., will be available. This is a handsome catalogue illustrating more than 200 prints from the renowned Van Vleck Collection of Japanese Prints at the Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, many works of which were once part of the Frank Lloyd Wright's collection of Japanese prints, price \$100.

From 19 March to 2 May a second exhibition will also be on show: *Ebb and Flow/Movement in Clay: The Art of Sakiyama Takayuki*. Joan Mirviss has always been known for her knowing eye for contemporary Japanese ceramics and as Japan is a country with over 10,000 active ceramic artists, separating the gold from the dross is no easy task. Too often and for too long, we have been exposed to both Japanese ceramicists and American mimics who believe either glittery showmanship or what I call the Thrown Mud School of pottery sculptures are acceptable substitutes to creative designs. Standing far apart from that pervasive tradition is Sakiyama Takayuki, whose works have been acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery, the Museum of Arts and Design, the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum, amongst others.

Born in 1958, he works principally in Shigaraki clay, which because of its feldspathic inclusions, gives his finished works a bold sense of strength and durability. They are pure design, without the interference of decoration. Living on the Izu coast, he has taken inspiration from the designs of nature and the orderly movement of both water and sand. His clay moves under its own steam and taking a term from Japanese swords, *sunagashi* or 'drifting sands,' the pieces I have seen look like nature itself frozen in mid-movement.

Having won the prestigious Emperor's Cup award two years ago, he was recently the first artist to be invited to present a one-man exhibition at the Imperial Villa at Numazu City. The sculptural vessels created for this venue were monumental in either size or presence and 12 of these works will be included in this exhibition. This will be this artist's second solo show outside of Japan.

At the International Asian Art Fair, they will be exhibiting *Rays of Light: The Intricate Ceramic Art of Kishi Eiko*.

Joan B. Mirviss Ltd. Gallery, 4F, 39 East 78th Street, New York 10075, tel 212 799 4021, joan@mirviss.com. Tuesdays-Fridays 2-5; Saturdays 1-4, or by appointment. **MBL**