

ASIAN ART

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WORK 08-1 - EXISTENCE (2008), by Kaneta Masanao (b. 1953), stoneware, about 28.5 x 54.5 x 49.5 cm, Joan B Mirviss Ltd

KANETA MASANAO NEW WORKS

Joan B. Mirviss, New York, 17 September to 22 October

This exhibition will mark Joan Mirviss' first anniversary in her Madison Avenue gallery. Kaneta Masanao, born in 1953, is an 8th generation potter at Hagi, one of the greatest of the traditional Japanese kilns. The old Japanese adage is Raku first, Hagi second, Karatsu third. Like the pottery tradition at Satsuma, the Hagi tradition began with potters brought from Korea after Hideyoshi's invasion of that country and, like the early Satsuma wares and others, the Korean potters at Hagi produced wares for the Tea Ceremony. Because of the properties of the clay at Hagi, there is a softness and warmth in the wares produced from it, accented by frequent crackle or *kannyu*. The wares could be unglazed, but were commonly covered with glazes that ranged from an unctuous off-white to subtle tones that accented its coarse origins in the earth itself.

Kaneta studied sculpture at the Tokyo University of Education, now Tsukuba University, where he is now professor of ceramics. His family training as a classic Hagi potter and his studies of sculpture merged into a new direction towards dynamism in his ceramic art.

Amongst the works in this exhibition are functional vessels such as chawan that, still traditional in some ways, diverge markedly through his innovative techniques of construction.

His use of clay for sculptural ends has parallels in the present contemporary bamboo sculpture exhibition at the Japan Society. At the risk of using the old cliché of 'letting the material speak for itself,' I find his bold stone and boulder-form sculptural works both primeval and dynamic, accented in areas with glazes that both evoke mineral differences in water or wind-polished stones in some of his sculpture and mountain crags in other works that evoke images of the mountains of Hagi. MBL

Joan B. Mirviss Ltd., 4F, 39 East 78th Street, New York 10075. tel 212 799 4021, www.mirviss.com. joan@mirviss.com. Tues-Fri 2-5; Sats 1-4 and by appointment.