

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

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Late Edition

Today, patches of clouds and sunshine, high 68. Tonight, clearing skies, fog outside the city, low 50. Tomorrow, partly sunny, mild, high 66. Weather map is on Page D7.

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Japanese Art In Full Flower

The market for Japanese art and antiques seems to be thriving in Manhattan. Although there are only a handful of serious specialized dealers (private and public), most do well selling a mixture of antique screens, paintings, prints, sculptures, ceramics, lacquerware, metalwork and textiles. Last year Joan B. Mirviss saw her business growing so quickly, after adding contemporary Japanese ceramics, that she moved to a new gallery at 39 East 78th Street.

In January the Japanese dealer Koichi Yanagi relocated to 17 East 71st Street. "Though I've been a dealer for 21 years, I opened a New York gallery 10 years ago because there are so many collectors and museums here," Mr. Yanagi said. "Still, most of my clients are Japanese." (His current show, "Manifestations of Japanese Kami," closes on Saturday.)

In May the dealer Erik Thomsen relocated to a town house at 44 East 74th Street. "I wanted to show how well Japanese art works in a traditional Western setting," Mr. Thomsen said. He specializes in Japanese screens, with nearly 100 in inventory, but also sells scrolls, lacquerware, ceramics, bamboo art and, this month, contemporary abstract porcelain sculptures by Sueharu Fukami, a 61-year-old master from Japan.

Mr. Thomsen grew up in Japan, is fluent in Japanese and said that 25 years ago he was one of the first Westerners invited to apprentice at a Tokyo gallery.

"Today, because of that, I'm one of the few Westerners allowed to go to auctions in Japan," he said, referring to the near-daily closed dealers' auctions at the Tokyo Art Club.

Most of his customers are Westerners, he said, "including museums and one famous author in L.A. who bought 30 screens from us." (His screens sell for \$10,000 to \$250,000 apiece.)

Recently, he was able to buy "Autumn Bamboo," a monumental screen from the Meguro

Gajoen Museum in Tokyo, which closed. Nearly seven feet tall, the two-panel screen depicts a colorful male pheasant perched on bamboo in a dense grove of cypress and cedar trees. Takashi Kamewari, a specialist in nature paintings, created it in 1932.

Mr. Thomsen is patient in explaining his art to curious visitors. He also publishes helpful illustrated catalogs in English, as do his colleagues in the Japanese Art Dealers Association (jada-ny.org), a nonprofit trade group formed to promote high standards of scholarship and appreciation of Japanese art.

Antiques

Wendy Moonan



ERIK THOMSEN GALLERY

A detail of "Autumn Bamboo" (1932), a two-panel screen by Takashi Kamewari at Erik Thomsen Gallery in Manhattan.