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Asia Week in New York Includes More Than 40 Shows



Richard Goodbody/Joan B Mirviss LTD, New York

Hiroshige's "Mount Oyama in Sagami Province," an 1858 wood block at Joan B. Mirviss.

By ROBERTA SMITH
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New York never lacks for art, but as spring approaches, movable feasts of it seem to arrive in waves. Last week nearly a dozen fairs put extra servings of contemporary and Modern art on the table. Friday is the official beginning of Asia Week, a visual repast of more than 40 shows staged by New York and out-of-town dealers and spread mostly through galleries around the Upper East Side, on or just off Madison Avenue.

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That's not all, of course. There are auctions, museum exhibitions and lectures and symposiums, as well as a small, choice art fair. For a reasonably complete, if not overwhelming, sense of what is on offer, consult the Asia Week Web site (asiaweekny.com) and that of the Japanese Art Dealers Association (jada-ny.org); printed guides from both organizations can be picked up at participating dealers. What follows are recommendations based on shows that could be previewed this week.

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The stone face of a Buddha from Thailand in the seventh to ninth centuries, shown by John Eskenazi.

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Krishna embraces Radha in a scene from the Gita Govinda, from India around 1775-80. It is on view at Kapoor Galleries.

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KooNewYork

A Korean portrait from the 19th century of Buddhist messenger guardians and their steeds.

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Maggie Nimkin Photography

A 10th-century dancing Ganesha from North India, at Carlton Rochell.

China

The signal event for Japanese art is the **Japanese Art Dealers Association fair** (Fletcher-Sinclair mansion, 2 East 79th Street), from Saturday through Wednesday.

Devoid of booths, this is less a fair than a collaborative exhibition of some 120 works that range through numerous mediums and about eight centuries. **Leighton R. Longhi** is contributing a rare lacquer screen by Shibata Zeshin, a formidable 19th-century lacquer artist. His effort depicts a tumbling wave, carefully combed to suggest brush strokes, surrounded by a small universe of shells that oscillate between meticulous naturalism and visionary abstraction.

Mika Gallery will show a large and splendid 17th-century Edo period Buddhist mandala, a result of many, many wood blocks. Koichi Yanagi will bring a 17th-century portrait of Sen no Rikyu, a revered 16th-century tea master, along with tea-ceremony objects, including an elegantly rustic 16th-century tea bowl so famous it has a name: Iwai. (It was actually made in Korea, whose ceramic culture was crucial to Japan's.)

Erik Thomsen will contribute several screens, including a gold-leaf-ground, richly colored Rimpa-style rendition of the four seasons. **Sebastian Izzard's** several paintings will include "Beauty With Her Hair Down," a large hanging scroll of a lavishly attired actress famous for her porcelain skin, by Keisai Eisen (1790-1848). Mr. Izzard will also mount a survey of nearly 40 ukiyo-e prints on the mansion's ground floor.

Almost all of these dealers will also have exhibitions in their own spaces. In particular, **Koichi Yanagi** (17 East 71st Street, through April 10) has a spare presentation of rarities, including a 14th-century star mandala and the expansive "Landscapes of the Four Seasons," a pair of six-panel screens in ink and gold by the 17th-century master Kano Tan'yu. The work alternates calligraphic renderings of buildings and trees with expanses of nearly bare paper intimating mist, water, snow, mountains and moon, for an implicitly radical, minimalist effect.

Further excursions into Japanese screen painting are possible at **Erik Thomsen** (23 East 67th Street, through April 27), where nine works range over four centuries, culminating in "Plovers Flying Over Waves," a work in mineral pigments that can evoke Winslow Homer, by Suzuki Kinji, who will turn 101 this year.

At **Joan B. Mirviss** (39 East 78th Street, through April 13), "Approaching the Horizon: Important Japanese Prints From the Brewster Hanson Collection" is rife with unfamiliar landscape prints by Hokusai, Hiroshige and Eisen. **Scholten Japanese Art** (145 West 58th Street, through March 24) is presenting "Sacred Sutras and Profane Pledges," which weaves together the strands of love poetry, tremulously beautiful calligraphy and printmaking (more Hiroshige), and crosses several centuries to beguiling effect.

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There are several outstanding exhibitions of Chinese material, but the emphasis is changing. **J. J. Lally** (41 East 57th Street, through April 14), arguably the dean of New York Chinese art dealers and especially known for his extraordinary exhibitions of ancient bronzes, has shifted his attention this year to rarer metals with “Silver and Gold in Ancient China.” This exhibition of small vessels and objects presents one showstopper after another. I’ll cite but two: a 10th-century Liao dynasty funerary mask, modeled and engraved to represent the wise-looking face of a man with a long nose, heavy eyebrows and delicate beard, and an astounding 13th-century Song dynasty pictorial dish. Its elaborately engraved landscape scene depicts Su Shi (1037-1101), a beloved Northern Song scholar, and two friends enjoying nature from a drifting boat. Waves, clouds, cliffs, vegetation, a waterfall and even a constellation are all accorded their due in elegantly linear terms.

Chinese ceramics receive lavish attention from two private dealers who serendipitously do business in the same building. **Eric J. Zetterquist** (3 East 66th Street, through March 28) is celebrating his 20th anniversary with a display of Song and Tang vessels reflecting his characteristically impeccable taste and including several examples of Dingyao, or white ware, variously Song, Jin or Yuan. Especially impressive is a large celadon vase from the 10th or 11th centuries, decorated with semi-abstract leaf designs on a diamond grid; the pattern eloquently splits the difference between raw and cooked.

Upstairs at **Courage & Joy**, Joe-Hynn Yang has mounted “Serene Glazes, Elegant Forms” (through March 24). His selection revisits the Song and Tang achievements, but often with relatively flamboyant material. In a display strong in Tang dynasty sancai, or three-color, glazes, I mainly had eyes for a gorgeous green-and-brown marbled pillow and a superbly shaped Northern Song vase in an unusual metallic brown, speckled with iron. Quite a bit of time could be spent at these two shows.

More Chinese ceramics can be glimpsed in “Magnificent Obsessions” at **Kaikodo** (74 East 79th Street, through April 16), where Chinese and Japanese hanging scrolls line the walls and an album of images by the great Ogata Korin (1658-1716) can be viewed. Other standouts include a mid-sixth-century earthenware horse groom wearing a red coat and a suspicious expression, and an imposing Eastern Zhou bronze vessel known as a hu, whose distinctive decorations include bands of sharp, toothlike triangles.

The thirst for Chinese bronzes may be slaked by **Galerie Christian Deydier** of Paris (27 East 67th Street, through March 24), which opens Friday with a display of Shang and Zhou vessels from the collection of Marcel and Chantal Gerbe.

South Asia

As is often the case, Asia Week has outstanding offerings from the many cultures of South Asia. You might want to start with the wonderfully nimble dancing Ganesha, a 10th-century North Indian sandstone rendering of that elephant-headed Hindu god of success, at **Carlton Rochell** (121 East 71st Street, through next Friday). At **Nancy Wiener** (39 East 78th Street, through next Friday), nearly everything rewards prolonged attention, but especially two small Khmer bronzes, one of a kneeling man from the 11th century, the other of a late-10th-century Buddha seated in lotus position on a coiled snake. The Buddha emits a mesmerizing fusion of abstract enlightenment and bodily energy that seems to emanate from its exquisitely precise upward-flowing posture. Also not to be missed is a rare 11th-century Chola-period seated Shiva carved in granite and a fabulously refined Mughal depiction of an emaciated ascetic receiving disciples, in pencil and watercolor, from around 1700.

One highlight of Asia Week is the trove of extraordinary objects with which the London dealer **John Eskenazi** (24 East 80th Street, through March 25) almost annually reshapes and refines knowledge of the glories of South and Southeast Asian art. This year he does so with a quietly voluptuous stone face of a Buddha from southern Thailand (seventh to ninth centuries); two extravagantly simplified stone figures — a seventh-century Goddess Durga and a sixth-to-seventh-century Buddha of the Future (on a throne) — both from the Mekong Delta kingdom Funan; and a rare and subtly geometric 15th-century Phagpa Lokeshvara, the patron guardian of Tibet, just over three feet tall and made of wood

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painted pale gold to evoke gilt. Even more geometric is a gilded-bronze standing Buddha with a flaring plinthlike torso, from 18th-century Sri Lanka. Relatively pliant are a seated ninth- or 10th-century bronze goddess from Cham (southern Vietnam), who seems to have double-jointed arms, and a grasshopperlike dancing yogini from 11th- or 12th-century Cambodia. This is a sublime exhibition.

In between visiting the cosmopolitan presences at Wiener and Eskenazi, pop into **Kapoor Galleries** (1015 Madison Avenue, at 78th Street, through March 30) to consider a large marble Jain tirthankara (an enlightened being not unlike a Buddhist bodhisattva) from 12th-century Rajasthan that has the awkward rightness of great folk art. The gallery's splendid display of Indian paintings is worth savoring.

And more Indian (and a few Persian) paintings are at **Michael C. Hughes** (39 East 72nd Street, through March 24), along with a truly bizarre Chinese ancestor portrait from the early 1930s that spans seven generations and features a painting-within-a-painting of a Model T Ford. Mr. Hughes shares space with **Koo New York**, which has an interesting selection of Korean portraits, mostly from the 19th century, and two exuberant paintings of Buddhist messenger guardians and their steeds.

Contemporary Asian art is an increasing presence among the riches of Asia Week. **Chambers Fine Art** in Chelsea (522 West 19th Street, through March 24) is participating for the first time, with a show of the wizard of cut-paper technique, Wu Jian'an. **M. Sutherland Fine Arts** (55 East 80th Street, through March 24) will offer a selection of contemporary Chinese ink paintings, and the **Chinese Porcelain Company** (475 Park Avenue, at 58th Street, through March 24) is devoting its walls to the dense, traditional-looking ink paintings of Tai Xiangzhou.

The eccentric ceramics of Kawabata Kentaro, including a water jar for the tea ceremony, at **Dai Ichi Arts** (958 Madison Avenue, at 75th Street, through March 24) are also worth a peek. The path to the future often lies through some portion of the past; it is just a question of which one.

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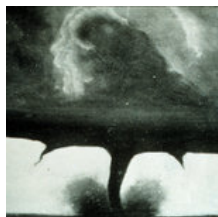
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