

ART & DESIGN | ART REVIEW

## Highlights From Asia Week

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER MARCH 10, 2016

Asia Week, the 10-day parade of exhibitions that arrives each spring from every corner of that continent, can seem like a parallel universe to the art world most often written about here.

Unlike the big art fairs crammed with spectacles-within-spectacles, Asia Week takes place primarily in a few dozen small galleries on the Upper East Side. Craft and tradition are emphasized over the hot and trendy, and history is always present, reflecting matters from ancient conquests to subtle changes in domestic living that shaped the design of everyday objects.

This year's Asia Week also appears against a backdrop of major events. The ups and downs of the Chinese economy concern art dealers, while the loosening of trade embargoes with Iran has allowed gallerists to arrive in New York with Persian art. This year, Friday is also the fifth anniversary of the cataclysmic earthquake and tsunami that struck northern Japan in 2011, which set off a nuclear crisis. The Japan Society is commemorating that with an exhibition of contemporary photography ("In the Wake: Japanese Photographers Respond to 3/11") and other events. At the same time, commerce continues with the annual Japanese Art Dealers Association fair, which opens on Saturday at the Ukrainian Institute of America.

This is the Chinese year of the fire monkey, an ambitious and adventurous creature — but one that also gets irritable. With 45 dealers, more than a dozen cultural institutions and five auction houses, Asia Week New York is ambitious. The irritable part is up to you: Pace yourself. Here is a guide to some highlights.

### Ancient Worlds

The lush, quiet gallery of **J. J. Lally** (41 East 57th Street) is where you will find some of the oldest works on view in Asia Week. Jade objects carved during the Neolithic period into the Han dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 220) suggest a variety of ritual purposes, though their exact use is unknown. The Brussels dealer **Gisèle Croës** (showing at Gagosian, 976 Madison, at 76th Street) also specializes in ancient art. She has a Shang dynasty bronze bell from the second millennium B.C., covered with bead-like magical "eyes" that would have been taken to a mountain top in Southern China and sounded.

**Mika** (41 East 57th Street) has a tiny goggle-eyed earthenware figure from around 1000 to 800 B.C. whose exact purpose is also lost to history. From a different region and a later millennium, **Nayef Homsî** (7 East 75th Street) has a gorgeous pink sandstone, a "Standing Shiva" Hindu temple figure from around the ninth or 10th century A.D. in Northern India, while Nancy Wiener (49 East 74th Street) has a third-century A.D. carved Greco-Buddhist figural grouping from the Gandhara region of India that shows the roving influence of Alexander the Great.

### Ceramics

Ceramics are ever-present in Asia Week, and the objects on view at **Zetterquist** (3 East 66th Street) reveal the deep history of the medium in China, while offering a modern take: Much of the spare, reductive work looks as if it were created in the last century. The Japanese pottery specialist **Joan B. Mirviss** (39 East

78th Street) has water jars for the tea ceremony made by modern masters and contemporary practitioners like Takahiro Kondo, who has patented a glaze that looks like water condensing on a jar. **Dai Ichi Arts** (18 East 64th Street) has a show of contemporary ceramics devoted to nature, including Goro Suzuki's fantastic vase from 2002, with the characteristic Oribe copper-green glaze and shaped like a tree.

## Painting

There are plenty of depictions of gods and monsters in the galleries, but portraits of historical figures are more rare. **Kaikodo** (74 East 79th Street) has a wonderful 17th-century "Portrait of a Prince" by the artist Ku Jianlong while **Navin Kumar** (24 East 73rd Street) has a 17th-century thangka painted on silk of the fifth Dalai Lama. In a more familiar vein, **Sebastian Izzard** (17 East 76th Street) has a gorgeous 1790s Ukiyo-e print by Toshusai Sharaku depicting the actor Osagawa Tsuneyo II dressed for a female role.

One of the quirkiest objects that I saw in my Asia Week crawl was at **Michael C. Hughes** (showing at Shepherd/W & K, 58 East 79th Street): a 1933 ancestor portrait of seven generations of a northern Chinese family, with nearly 150 figures. Included in a tiny picture-within-the-picture is a drawing of a Cadillac Wecker, a luxury car the Chinese emperor Puyi had ordered from General Motors, demonstrating the extraordinary great merger of East and West, ancient (family) and modern.

Indian painting is a highlight of Asia Week. **Oliver Forge & Brendan Lynch** (9 East 82nd Street) is showing paintings assembled by Günter Heil, a German graphic designer whose sensibility you can see in a very modern-looking painting of the "Tortoise Avatar of Vishnu" from 1694. **Francesca Galloway** (W. M. Brady & Co., 22 East 80th Street) often shows Indian painting, but she has benefited this year by the loosening of United States trade sanctions with Iran: She's showing 16th- and 17th-century Persian manuscript pages created for two Shahs.

## Modern and Contemporary

The collision of tradition and change can also be seen in many modern and contemporary exhibitions. **DAG Modern** (41 East 57th Street) has a roundup of Indian modern masters, including a warm-hued abstract tantra image by G. R. Santosh depicting a goddess. **Kang Collection** (9 East 82nd Street) has a large-scale painting made with buttons by Ran Hwang, while the **Korean Cultural Center** (460 Park Avenue, at 58th Street) has an exhibition devoted to Hanji, a traditional paper made from mulberry trees and updated by the artist Aimee Lee, who sculpts little animals and sews dresses from the paper.

The Taipei Cultural Center (1 East 42nd Street) is showcasing paintings by Taiwanese women, while **Laurence Miller** (20 West 57th Street), has modern and contemporary Asian photographs, including the quiet environmental-abstractions of the Japanese artist Toshio Shibata.

One of the strangest-sounding contemporary presentations might be also one of the most appropriate: at **the Rubin** Museum of Art (150 West 17th Street), the transgender performance artist Genesis Breyer P-Orridge has an installation, including an altar to which visitors may bring offerings and receive a "psychic cross" in return. (Offerings cannot include weapons, ammunition, explosives, human remains, bodily fluids or live or dead animals.) The project seems like an anomaly at first — then it feels perfectly linked to all those shape-shifting deities, actors and avatars traveling through dimensions of time, space and reality uptown.

Asia Week New York runs through March 19, and the Japanese Art Dealers Association fair runs from Saturday through Monday; [asiaweekny.com](http://asiaweekny.com) and [jada-ny.org](http://jada-ny.org).

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