

JOAN B MIRVISS LTD

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Press Contact: Marilyn White
973-783-3649
MWhitePR@aol.com

AFTER THIRTY YEARS AS PRIVATE DEALER, JOAN B. MIRVISS TO OPEN NEW GALLERY AT 39 EAST 78TH STREET

VIEWS FROM THE PAST, VISIONS OF THE FUTURE: MASTERWORKS OF JAPANESE ART -- INAUGURAL EXHIBITION ON VIEW AT JOAN B MIRVISS LTD, SEPTEMBER 17 -- OCTOBER 15, 2007

NEW YORK: Whether it's New York, London or Paris, news abounds about art and antique dealers retrenching and closing their galleries to become private dealers. However, one dealer -- Joan B. Mirviss, one of the world's leading Japanese art specialists -- is taking the opposite route. After thirty years as a private dealer, she will open her first gallery -- **JOAN B MIRVISS LTD** -- at 39 East 78th Street, at the corner of Madison Avenue. Her inaugural exhibition, ***VIEWS FROM THE PAST, VISIONS OF THE FUTURE: MASTERWORKS OF JAPANESE ART*** will open on September 17 and be on view through October 15, 2007.

“The first exhibition in our new gallery will include approximately fifty-five works of art, including antique screens, hanging scrolls, woodblock prints and contemporary ceramics,” Mirviss said. “Many of the screens and some of the paintings originate from old private Japanese collections. The ceramics, which include works by masters of the second half of the twentieth century, will also feature works by leading contemporary artists, many of which were created specifically for this exhibition.”

Mirviss enlisted the architectural firm of Hut Sachs Studio, which has done extensive work for the Guggenheim Museum as well as created numerous galleries in New York, to design the 1500 square foot jewel-box space. “Joan has been a private dealer for many years. In designing the gallery we wanted the gallery to maintain the intimacy and

JAPANESE ART *By Appointment*

39 East 78th Street, 4th floor | New York NY 10075

Telephone 212 799 4021 | Facsimile 212 721 5148

joan@mirviss.com | www.mirviss.com

elegance of Joan's home," states Jane Sachs, principal architect. "Rather than imitating Japanese architectural language, the gallery reflects Japanese spatial concepts. Doorways are detailed like portals, the captured view through to the next space is carefully considered and the two windows in the gallery are detailed to read as voids rather than windows, allowing the space to expand beyond the gallery walls.

All architectural detailing is minimal and modern, but the material palette is rough, complementing the works of art Joan shows," explains Sachs. "As an exhibition space it is not the ubiquitous white box. The gallery is a further expression of Joan's vision and deep understanding of Japanese culture."

When Mirviss started **JOAN B MIRVISS LTD** in 1977 at age 24, Japanese art was just a budding field with a small collector base. Three years spent living and dealing in Paris and a similar period in Tokyo, provided her with life-long relationships and extensive knowledge of the European and Asian markets.

Fast forward to the present -- the tremendous growth and interest in Japanese art in the West, most especially contemporary ceramics, combined with the desires of the clay artists to have an appropriate venue for presenting their best work in the United States, compelled Mirviss to finally take the plunge and open a gallery.

Up until now, she and her staff, which includes three women with specialized academic training and museum experience, have been working out of a beautiful art-filled apartment overlooking Central Park. As a private dealer, Mirviss has been able to assemble a national and international clientele, largely through exhibitions in collaboration with galleries around the country and participation at prestigious arts and antiques fairs from coast to coast. "However, with the exponential growth in interest in Japanese art coupled with a burgeoning passion for clay, I realized that the time was right to move forward in a new direction," Mirviss said. "Now I'll have the freedom to create thematic exhibitions, as well to expose the public to subjects and artistic developments that have never been presented here."

As a distinguished and highly respected specialist in her field, Mirviss has advised and built collections for many of the top private collectors and corporations in the United States. In addition, she facilitated the donation of the Robert O. Muller Collection of over 4,000 Japanese works of art to the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian, and has on her roster of clients over fifty of the most prestigious art institutions in the world, including: the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Brooklyn Museum of Art; Yale University Art Gallery; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Minneapolis Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and Museum of Fine Art, Houston. Her corporate clients include Goldman Sachs, Citigroup, Coca Cola, and Target.

In addition, she has penned numerous catalogues and articles, lectured extensively, exhibited at international art and antique fairs, and has served as a guest curator for many museum exhibitions both here and in Japan. Her major publications include: *Jewels of Japanese Printmaking: Surimono of the Bunka-Bunsei Era* for the Ota Kinen Art Museum in Tokyo (2000), *The Frank Lloyd Wright Collection of Surimono* for the Phoenix Art Museum (1995) and *Utamaro: Songs of the Garden*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Viking Press (1984).

Although Mirviss began her career as a print and painting specialist, as early as 1983 she expanded her focus to include the now hot field of contemporary ceramics. “The uninterrupted clay tradition in Japan is one of the oldest in the world. While contemporary artists reflect on the work of the tens of thousands of ceramists who came before them, I find that the most successful are those whose work infuses these ancient traditions with their own new vision. It is the delicate balance between traditional and new, between the established and the avant-garde, that sets these artists apart,” explains Mirviss.

When introducing new collectors to the field, Mirviss advises them to “buy something that excites your eye, heart and mind---something that you love. Read as much as you can, talk with knowledgeable curators and academics, visit museums, and see as many

related exhibitions as possible. This field is still accessible and beautiful objects remain available and affordable. What is particularly special about Japanese art and ceramics is their connection to spirituality, nature and their continuity with past traditions.”

“I am very excited about my new and expanded platform and thrilled with the possibilities that will enable me to showcase this art to a new generation of collectors” Mirviss added.

Mirviss has spent decades attending exhibitions, competitions, solo shows and artists’ studios in order to find the finest artists and secure only their best work. Her current exhibition exemplifies the essence of the Japanese aesthetic that Mirviss describes as ”one of utmost refinement and beauty. Japanese art embodies a unique blending of nature, spirituality, and functionality that has led to the creation of some major highlights in the visual arts canon. Regardless of medium-- painting, print or ceramic-- Japanese art has always embodied a keen sense of the connection between the artist and the natural world from which the work emanated.”

The inaugural exhibition ***VIEWS FROM THE PAST, VISIONS OF THE FUTURE: MASTERWORKS OF JAPANESE ART*** will include an exceptional selection of masterworks of Japanese art that range in price from \$350 to \$150,000.

In the area of paintings, the stand-outs include a pair of six-fold screens of peacocks, which epitomize the grand style of one of the most influential artists working in Kyoto during the early nineteenth century, **Hara Zaichû** (1750-1837). The pristine condition of the gold leaf creates a dazzling background for the highly decorative treatment of the clouds and water, in addition to the rich coloration of the birds and flowers. Other extremely rare and early paintings are a set of hanging scrolls by the most important Japanese painter of eighteenth century, **Maruyama Ôkyo** (1733-1795). The paintings possess a heightened sense of dynamism and energy that is not often found in his later more controlled works. Ôkyo has taken the standard subject of tiger and dragon and transformed it into something uniquely his own with startling effect, painting his subjects

with unbridled passion. An early twentieth-century work that will be included is a two-fold screen of chrysanthemums by **Kamisaka Sekka** (1866-1942), the defining artist of Japan's modern art movement. This screen is an exceptional example of his highly decorative style that combines the celebrated traditions of the Rimpa school of painting with the bold lines of modern design. The shimmering surface of the gold leaf provides a striking background for his thoroughly modern interpretation of the traditional subject of chrysanthemums and bamboo fence.

In the area of ukiyo-e, or woodblock prints, the exhibition will include **Utagawa Hiroshige** (1797-1858) who is one of the most celebrated landscape artists in the history of Japan. A remarkably early impression in absolute superb condition of *Plum Estate at Kameido* from his series *One-hundred Famous Views of Edo* is one of his most recognizable and influential designs. This design was a favorite with European artists including Vincent van Gogh, who created his own interpretation in oil. Another print highlight is the rare triptych in excellent condition of Japan's beloved Kintarô, the boy wonder, by leading ukiyo-e master **Utagawa Toyokuni** (1769-1825). Despite its age and the use of fragile, vegetable-based inks, the print retains near perfect saturation of color, which is exceedingly rare for works from this period. And perhaps the rarest print in this exhibition is an early work of kabuki actors by **Tsunekawa Shigenobu** (cat. ca. 1720-40) with hand-coloring and metallic dust. The subject includes two of the most famous actors of the day Ichimura Takenojô IV and Matsushima Hyôtarô, a specialist in female impersonations.

The contemporary ceramics presented in this exhibition include only the finest examples of Japan's most celebrated artists working in clay. There is a rare example of a "calla lily" vessel, which is one of the most challenging forms for the "master of celadon" **Kawase Shinobu** (b. 1950) to both pot and fire successfully. Since it is exceptionally difficult to throw such a thinly walled vessel with a narrow base supporting such an outspread mouth, Kawase has released very few works in this scale and form. Also included is a powerful sculptural vessel with black and red iron glazes by the ceramist **Morino Hiroaki Taimei** (b. 1933), who has long been a favorite among international

museums and private collectors. Morino masterfully blends traditional Japanese aesthetics with a decidedly contemporary western feeling. In addition Mirviss will feature remarkable examples of contemporary porcelain, which is tremendously difficult to use as a sculptural medium as it is so unforgiving. **Sakurai Yasuko** (b.1969), one of the top talents among the new generation of women clay artist, nonetheless has succeeded in creating a dramatic, almost skeletal sculpture that, although fully perforated, maintains its soaring form.

JOAN B MIRVISS LTD is located at 39 East 78th Street, in New York and will be open Monday through Friday, 10 AM to 6 PM, when an exhibition is on view, or by appointment. For more information, phone 212-799-4021 or visit www.mirviss.com.