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ART FOCUS

CENTRAL NEW YORK GALLERY TO STAGE JAPANESE MASTER SCULPTURE EXHIBITION

By Sam Stevenson

Central New York gallery Joan B Mirviss LTD will hold four exhibitions over the coming year to highlight the work of four monumental ceramicists.

The first of the four exhibitions—which aim to celebrate the art, impact and legacy of the Japanese artists—will feature Koike Shōko (born 1943).

Shifting Rhythms: The Sculpted Moments of Koike Shōko, which is the gifted artist's third solo exhibition at Joan B Mirviss LTD, will take place from 11 September until 19 October 2018.

Koike draws her inspiration from the hues of blue created by the sky reflecting off the sea. Early in her career, she fostered the approach of adding glass flakes to her glazes. This technique served to create a blue 'pool', through which she incised shell-like forms.

She gave the shells dimensionality by sculpting them in clay. These shell-like shapes, coupled with the puddled blue glaze in shades ranging from Persian blue to turquoise, to the most recent cerulean, serve as the conceptual foundation for her clay works.

While their spiral forms occur in nature, the centrifugal force generated by Koike when using the potter's wheel to create these shell-like forms evokes for her the rhythms of the universe beyond simply those of the ocean. The clay cores thrown on the wheel function as the base for further hand building and glazing, which ultimately results in pleated, dancing vessels bursting with energy.

For Koike, her work embodies a rhythm—each sculpture either flowing or staccato, each captured in a still moment amid an otherwise frenetic existence, as she explains:

'First, I imagine the shape that dances a certain pulsating rhythm, which then extends to my hands and leads them to weave a form from the mound of clay before me.'

Koike had an immensely creative upbringing. Her mother, Koike Chie (1916-2014) was an internationally recognised fashion designer who had studied in Paris and was, for many decades, an enormously influential and inspiring teacher at Bunka Fashion College.

Thus, Koike Shōko's childhood was spent in a kaleidoscope of textiles and women's fashion, immersed in the intersection of colour, pattern, and form, to the extent that upon reaching university she decided to evoke the same energy through a new medium: clay.

As one of the first female graduates from the prestigious ceramics department of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music where she studied under Tamura Kōichi (1918-87) — a pupil of Tomimoto Kenkichi—Koike Shōko is among the few women ceramists of her generation to be a self-supporting studio artist.

Because of her artistic autonomy, she has become one of the world's most recognised female ceramists, with sculptures in important museum collections throughout the world including those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres; and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

In shows spread throughout the year, the Manhattan gallery will also celebrate contemporary women masters Ogawa Machiko (born 1946) and Fujikasa Satoko (born 1980), as well as Tomimoto Kenkichi (1886-1963)— who is considered one of the most influential clay artists and teachers of all time.

[Read more on Arts & Collections about the Jane Bown photography exhibition at Proud Galleries, London.](#)



**Image courtesy: Joan B Mirviss LTD - Koike Shōko, White Form, (2018)
Glazed stoneware, 20 1/2 x 15 3/4 inches \$20,000 - © Koike Shōko**

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