

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

Time Out New York
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Shio Kusaka

More utilitarian than arty, these ceramics still delight the eye.

By Anne Doran



Photograph: Courtesy Anton Kern Gallery, New York.

The recent abundance of ceramics in art galleries notwithstanding, Shio Kusaka's work falls more on the utilitarian end of the art-craft continuum than is typical for Chelsea. Nevertheless, this exhibition of one-of-a-kind porcelain and stoneware vessels is a stealth hit of the summer.

The installation, two long tables on which individual pieces alternate with family groups, doubles as a lexicon of Kusaka's formal vocabulary. Shapes are simple, and usually either bottom-heavy or columnar. Pots that resemble a pear or a calabash squash are common, and all of them are slightly lopsided. The palette is minimal—blacks, whites, grays and browns, for the most part, enlivened with cool blues and greens. The often awkward interaction of straight line and curved plane (or drawing and sculpture) seems to be an ongoing preoccupation, as witnessed in bulbous vases decorated with parallel vertical stripes or regular grids (which leave triangular voids) and the recurrence of Buckminster Fuller-like patterns of interlocking triangles (which don't). Like T.S. Eliot's *Cousin Nancy*, these functional artworks dance all the modern dances, their painted surfaces sometimes reminiscent of James Siena's drawings or Lily van der Stokker's plaid wallpaper. But they perform eccentric versions of traditional dances as well: Kusaka counts among her influences pottery from Neolithic Japan and 18th Dynasty Egypt.

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At times Kusaka seems to be straining to find new variations on a particular theme. More often, though, the works—a turquoise-and-white pot decorated with a traditional Japanese wave pattern, or a stupendous bowl whose design of crudely painted triangles disintegrates into abstraction where the glaze has dripped—seem both unmistakably hers and very much themselves. They are likely to deliver a jolt of pleasure whether they're encountered for the first time or the hundredth.

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