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Are Lévy and Mnuchin Together Again? Both Have Upcoming Shiraga Shows

Rozalia Jovanovic and Josh Niland, Monday, November 10, 2014

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Kazuo Shiraga, *Chizokusel Kojoso*, (2001).
Courtesy of Dominique Lévy Gallery.

Early next year, New York galleries Dominique Lévy and Mnuchin will each stage a show of major paintings by Japanese artist Kazuo Shiraga. Shiraga's work has got a lot of attention over the past couple of years through museum shows and at auction (see "[Art Market Analysis: Why Is](#)

Gutai Member Kazuo Shiraga's Market Soaring?"), and now, it seems, New York galleries are finally catching up.

"Body and Matter" opens at Dominique Lévy on January 29 featuring 15 important Shiraga works along with ceramics by Japanese artist Satoru Hoshino, known for his expansive installations which often extend onto the floor and walls. The show, which will explore the manner in which both artists translated disorder into form, is curated by Koichi Kawasaki who also curated the Dallas Museum of Art exhibition "Between Action and the Unknown: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Sadamasa Motonaga," which opens February 8.

"Shiraga is an artist's artist," Lévy told artnet News in a phone interview, noting that artists have been singing Shiraga's praises for a very long time. She says Sigmar Polke and Yves Klein were admirers and that the market is coming "late" to the game. Lévy first saw his work in 2007 at the Palazzo Fortuny in Venice at the exhibition "Artempo" organized by Axel Vervoodt. She started dealing in Shiraga's work roughly two years ago.



Kazuo Shiraga, *Zuisouhen* (1986).
Courtesy of Mnuchin Gallery

Her interest was further piqued when she learned that contemporary artist Paul McCarthy owns a major work. "That's when I wanted to do the show," she said. While the work owned by McCarthy will be heading to the show in Dallas, Lévy will display an untitled red painting that was bought by French critic Michel Tapié (responsible for introducing Gutai artists to the French market in the 1960s) directly from Shiraga.

Shiraga is best known as a founding member of the avant garde Gutai group, a cadre of artists with roots in Osaka, Japan, whose style and radicalism are credited by many with anticipating the Fluxus movement, among others. Shiraga engaged in a kind of action painting, forgoing brushes in favor of painting with his bare feet or his entire body,

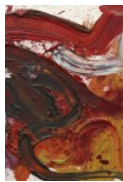
dramatically moving across a canvas while hanging from a rope.

The exhibition at Mnuchin, which opens March 2, will display 15 works that trace the evolution of Shiraga's famed "foot painting" technique over the course of his career, which lasted more than four decades beginning in the late '50s until his death in 2008. Dealer Robert Mnuchin told artnet News that while he has only known about Shiraga for a couple of years, we shouldn't make anything of that. "There was a time when people had only known about Twombly for a couple of years," he said.

Lévy and Mnuchin were partners in L&M Arts for seven years before Lévy left in 2012 to start her own gallery. But while the timing of the two Shiraga shows is uncanny, both dealers denied knowing about the other dealer's exhibition. "It caught me completely by surprise," Lévy said about Mnuchin's show, while Mnuchin said they both discovered each others' plans only recently.

"But you know what," said Lévy, "it's not such a surprise that we would have similar taste." She added, "It's going to be a feast around Shiraga."

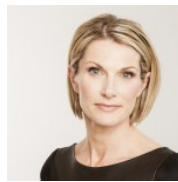
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