



Obata Yuji SAKURA SPRING

November 12-23, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday November 14, 6-8 pm

Location: Onishi Gallery, 521 W. 26th Street, New York City

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm

Onishi Gallery is proud to present *SAKURA SPRING*, by Obata Yuji, his third solo-exhibition with the gallery. Spring represents the beginning of the season and life. The blooming of cherry blossoms (*SAKURA*) is captured by Obata to express the feeling of happiness and anticipation of new beginnings. Cherry blossoms are his main motif that Obata draws upon his decorative work. Each petal of his blossoms is drawn with the finest touch. On his pots, the blossoms bloom in full glory, delicate and magical. Not only is the design unique, but his colors are distinctive as well, particularly the pink he creates out of a material called “*Shoenshi*” or “*OBATA PINK*.” This color is lively and beautiful, and is a color that hardly any other artists can successfully master when working at such a refined level of porcelain ware. Obata’s work balances bold and graceful beauty, intense color and pure white, and is not to be forgotten.

Obata Yuji was born in 1961 in Arita, Saga prefecture, Japan. He graduated from Aoyama Gakuin University in 1984, and Saga Prefectural Arita College of Ceramics in 1987. He is a regular member of Japan Crafts Committee and a Member of Arita Ceramic Association. Obata has won prizes at Japan Traditional Arts and Crafts Exhibition, Japan Ceramic Art Exhibition, and Issuikai Exhibition. Most recently he exhibited at The Japantique 2019 in Tokyo, and held his first solo exhibition in Europe, that was in Budapest, Hungary.

No plant is more closely associated with a country than the cherry tree is with Japan. The kiwi fruit may evoke New Zealand or chili peppers Mexico but Sakura, the cherry blossom, is the enduring symbol of spring in Japan. The flowering of the cherry heralds the end of the cold winter and a time of renewal. Clouds of the delicate pink flowers cover the trees in a brief interlude that reminds us of the fleeting nature of life. After a few short days, the petals begin to fall, covering the ground in a fragile carpet of white and palest pink.

The blossoming of the trees is anticipated with great excitement. Japanese families and friends celebrate this lovely moment with Hanami, “watching the blossoms,” with parties and picnics under the trees in parks and gardens across the country. It is a time of joy and optimism; spring has arrived once again.

Depictions of these blossoms can be found in ukiyo-e woodcuts, paintings, kimono textiles, ceramics, poetry and literature. It is a universal theme, tied to Buddhist ideals and reminding all of the transient nature of life. It was especially relevant to samurai whose lives could be as brief as the time of flowering cherries.

Artist Obata Yuji celebrates these Nihon spirits in his latest solo exhibition “SAKURA SPRING.” Lacy cherry blossoms spread over rounded porcelain vessels that become small flowering trees. Glimpses of the tree trunks peek through the flowers that will never fade and fall to the ground. The artist has captured the fleeting moments of Sakura to be contemplated throughout the year on these beautiful and delicate ceramics. With these vessels, Obata Yuji adds to the centuries-old tradition of artists celebrating the coming of the spring.

(Stephen E. Globus, Globus Washitsu, NYC)

For more information, contact Nana Onishi at 212-695-8035 or nana@onishigallery.com

