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

## FROM EAST TO WEST: ONE REMARKABLE OBJECT TIES THE PAST TO PRESENT IN TODAY'S CONTEMPORARY INTERIORS

New York: Ever since Portuguese traders brought Chinese and Japanese screens back from the Orient more than four centuries ago, these works of art have been an enduring and timeless element in smartly appointed Western interiors. There is no better place to select among the finest screens on the international market than **Asia Week New York**. Kicking off on March 15 and running through March 23, this extraordinary eight-day event brings together 43 Asian art specialists, the largest number to date—all united for the purpose of promoting Asian art in New York City.

Among the dazzling offerings at Asia Week New York is a trove of superb Asian screens that draw the leading interior designers to New York's preeminent galleries. There, these informed tastemakers invariably find the perfect screen to add that indispensable, just-the-right-touch to their interior designs.

"A screen is a decorator's best friend," unequivocally asserts Mario Buatta, the dean of American decorators. "It can hide a multitude of sins, it creates atmosphere, and it makes a dramatic statement, which is exactly what happened when I recently set up a Chinese screen behind the sofa in Mariah Carey's living room."

Little does Ms. Carey know, or few others for that matter, of the fascinating history behind her screens. When Jesuit missionaries came in contact with these folding partitions 400 years ago, they at first used them as a sort of blackboard, perfect for inculcating Western geography, customs, and religious beliefs into a conscripted audience of would-be converts in China and Japan. It didn't take long for another type of convert to emerge:

European traders who recognized the beauty of these utilitarian works of art and hauled them back to Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, England, and eventually America, where they have never gone out of style.



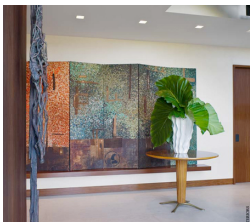
*Interior by Mario Buatta*

Says internationally renowned designer Juan Pablo Molyneux: “Exquisite craft is evident in these screens, and they speak of knowledge, culture, and time,” adding that “the screen is of a timeless style all its own, completely at home in modern interiors as well as those from the 16th century.”



*Interior by Juan Pablo Molyneux,  
Juan Pablo Molyneux Studio*

Folding screens actually came into being long before their discovery by European traders and go back to the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 AD), when the Chinese devised them as a means to protect open palace rooms from howling winds outside. Though the high estimation for Asian screens as decorative objects has never waned, tastes do change now and again. “Lately,” notes Asia Week New York participant Erik Thomsen of Erik Thomsen Gallery, in New York, “we have seen a shift in taste of collectors in line with the changes in the art market in general, with its increasing interest in modern and contemporary art.” Toward that end, Thomsen says art collectors and designers are now looking more often for screens with minimal decor rather than screens with elaborate landscapes filled with bird and flower motifs.



*Interior by David Scott,  
David Scott Interiors*

Whatever the decoration, designer David Scott is a devotee of the screen: “I have always loved to use them in my interiors because they can fulfill so many different roles, sometimes as a divider to separate space; other times as a fantastic work of art. Take for example this incredible screen by Maio Motoko that I used in a Southampton residence (pictured). I elevated it on a cantilevered wood shelf to give it even more significance in the room and provide a beautiful focal point.”

Lesley Kehoe of the eponymous Melbourne, Australia-based gallery, will also feature the work of Maio Motoko during Asia Week New York. Says Kehoe: “Motoko incorporates a sense of the past in her work, an embrace of the naturalness of ageing and decadence. In her use of found materials—ancient textiles and old documents—she expresses her desire to mark the passing of those before, to acknowledge their footprints on life, thus making them relevant today.”

Adds designer Ron Bricke: “Asian screens are versatile, beautiful, and have the incredible ability to transform the perceived proportions of furniture. In addition, they can bring light into dark corners, as in this Frank Lloyd Wright dining room [pictured]. The screens can also be utilized to create an elegant and non-obvious wall to conceal televisions and storage.”



*Interior by Ronald  
Bricke, Ronald Bricke &  
Associates*

Other celebrated designers recognize the utility of a well-placed



*Interior by Geoffrey Bradfield, Geoffrey Bradfield, Inc.*

screen in a contemporary environment. Says Geoffrey Bradfield: “I find there is an exciting synergy which becomes evident the moment one juxtaposes the East with the West. In particular, Art Deco interiors benefit enormously with this correlation.”

“I’ve used Asian and specifically Japanese screens in various projects since the beginning of my career,” says Paul Wiseman of San Francisco's Wiseman Group. “They work so well in contemporary as well as traditional spaces such as living rooms, dining rooms, everywhere!” Japanese screen variations include the folding screen, the single-panel entrance screen, and the sliding door.

Another designer who is keen for the screen is Ellie Cullman of the venerated decorating firm Cullman & Kravis. “We love using Japanese screens because they add glamour and drama to any room,” says Mrs. Cullman. “When screens are accorded, and especially when they are installed with invisible mounts, they take on a sculptural quality as well.”



*Interior by Ellie Cullman, Cullman & Kravis*

Says Frank J. Webb of White Webb in New York City: “Asian screens present a world of possibilities in modern design. Their frequently opulent beauty provides a rich counterpoint to coolly streamlined interiors, and their dimensionality can lend an interesting architectural detail. Whether bold or subtle in design, they bring a touch of soul to the rooms they inhabit.”

Don't be surprised if you spot these acclaimed designers and many others at various Asia Week New York venues, examining and selecting splendid folding screens among the other Asian riches that will be on display from March 15 to March 23.

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To help visitors easily navigate the Asia Week New York's activities, a comprehensive guide with maps will be available at all participating galleries and auction houses, along with select museums and cultural institutions, beginning February 2013 and online at [www.AsiaWeekNY.com](http://www.AsiaWeekNY.com). For the first time this year, an abridged version of the website will be available in Chinese. For more information, visit [www.asiaweekny.com](http://www.asiaweekny.com).

Asia Week New York also announces a partnership with China Center New York, which will serve as a gateway for Chinese companies entering the United States and for American businesses seeking new opportunities in China. With plans to operate multifaceted programs on six floors of the iconic One World Trade Center, China

Center New York will be comprised of a premier artfully inspired event center, membership club, multiple restaurants and bars, with a state of the art business center and conference facilities. Visit [www.chinacenter.com](http://www.chinacenter.com).

Asia Week New York Association, Inc. is a 501(c)(6) non-profit trade membership organization registered with the state of New York.

Editors Note: Hi-res jpegs are available upon request.