

eric firestone gallery

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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in February

By Martha Schwendener

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‘Godzilla: Echoes from the 1990s Asian American Arts Network’

Through March 16. Eric Firestone, 40 Great Jones Street and 4 Great Jones Street, 646-998-3727, ericfirestonegallery.com.

Odes to tea, kung fu and fortune cookies, as well as sly responses to racism, sexism and negative stereotypes swirl through the works in “Godzilla: Echoes From the 1990s Asian American Arts Network,” a two-venue show featuring 39 artists. The title refers to the collective Godzilla: Asian American Arts Network, which was founded in New York in 1990 to support Asian American artists of different backgrounds.

The works here are from that era to the present. Martin Wong, perhaps the best-known member of the group, is shown with his “Bruce Lee Shrine” (1993), a crush of toy figures and religious curios, displayed in a small gilded shrine. Skowmon Hastanan’s “Victory of the Goddess” (2001) is a photo collage featuring a famous Thai model who appeared in Playboy magazine, while Emily Cheng’s more recent canvases use stupas — Buddhist ceremonial mounds — as models for her abstract canvases.

Many more good works are here, including paintings by Barbara Take-naga, Charles Yuen, Kim Anno, Byron Kim, Betty Kano and Uday Dhar that borrow Asian patterns and techniques; Stefani Mar’s wicked “Black Leather Tea Set” (1993); and China Blue’s eerie 2019 sound installation, made with NASA, that captures the sound of Saturn’s rings. While the earlier works tend to be more biting and ironic — like the group’s name — recent works show the enduring relevance of identity-based collec-tives, particularly at a time when, as Dhar says on his website, everything is called into question, like “who gets to call themselves American.”



Martin Wong's “Bruce Lee Shrine” (1993) in the exhibition “Godzilla: Echoes From the 1990s Asian American Arts Network.” The Martin Wong Foundation and PPOW, New York; via Eric Firestone Gallery, New York

EAST HAMPTON

4 NEWTOWN LANE
EAST HAMPTON, NY 11937
631.604.2386

EFG@ERICFIRESTONEGALLERY.COM

LOFT

4 GREAT JONEST STREET, #3
NEW YORK, NY 10012
917.324.3386

EFG@ERICFIRESTONEGALLERY.COM

ERICFIRESTONEGALLERY.COM