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# Asian Art in London 21



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21 October – 6 November

Zao Wou-Ki, Les Attiseurs, 1955

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## Elizabeth Diller Is Retelling Edmund de Waal's Story — and Her Own

Designing a show at the Jewish Museum in New York has illuminated corners of hidden history in her life, the architect says. "Edmund dug into his past. I didn't. I couldn't bear it."



A miniature carving from Japan around 1880 of a hare in ivory and buffalo horn, signed Masatoshi. This figurine inspired the British author and artist Edmund de Waal's best-selling family memoir, "The Hare With Amber Eyes". The subject of a forthcoming show at the Jewish Museum in Manhattan, is Waal's family collection.


By Celia McIner

Oct. 17, 2021

In Edmund de Waal's home in South London stands a 19th-century vitrine once in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Bronze and mahogany, seven feet tall, it was purchased by the British author and ceramic artist to hold a fabled collection of miniature carved netsuke figurines from Japan passed down over four generations.

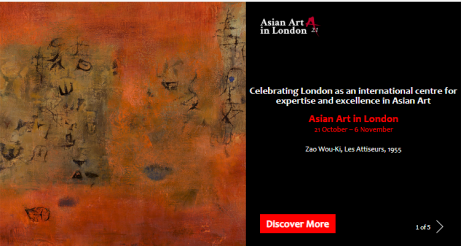
It has always been kept open so his three children, now in their 30s, could touch the treasures and listen to their father's stories, called from the family's history. One is a tiny ivory-and-buffalo-horn piece from Osaka, signed by its maker, Masatoshi, and dating from around 1880. The little creature at rest with its forepaw raised and a glint in its amber eyes is the piece that inspired de Waal's acclaimed, best-selling memoir of 2010. On Nov. 16, that carving, and the vitrine, will go on view at the Jewish Museum in Manhattan in an exhibition based on de Waal's book, "The Hare With Amber Eyes."

A literary phenomenon translated into more than 30 languages, the book has assumed a fundamental spot on any reading list on family history, the legacy of art collecting, and the role that the remembrance of things past, lost, looted, forgotten or forcibly dispersed plays in helping to reconstruct, as in de Waal's case, a time span between uneasy dynasty and Jewish diaspora.



"Rather than looking at it as a museum, we're looking at it as a domestic setting," said Elizabeth Diller, who is spearheading the interpretive design of "The Hare With Amber Eyes" exhibition at the Jewish Museum in Manhattan. A rendering shows a museum gallery with vitrines suggested by one in Edmund de Waal's home. Photo credit: Zao Wou-Ki

To evoke the book as it traces the fortunes and fate of the influential Ephraims — de Waal's ancestors on his father's side and one of the great Jewish banking families of Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries — the museum has turned to the architect Elizabeth Diller. In 2016 she oversaw the design of the museum's groundbreaking show "Pierre Chassou: Modern Architecture and Design." She is undertaking the conception, design, and execution of the new exhibiting with a team drawn not just from her own firm of Diller Scofidio + Renfro: It also includes the author.



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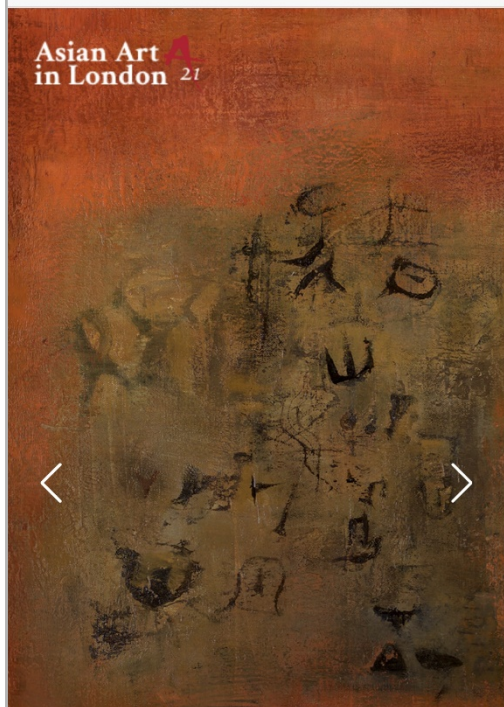
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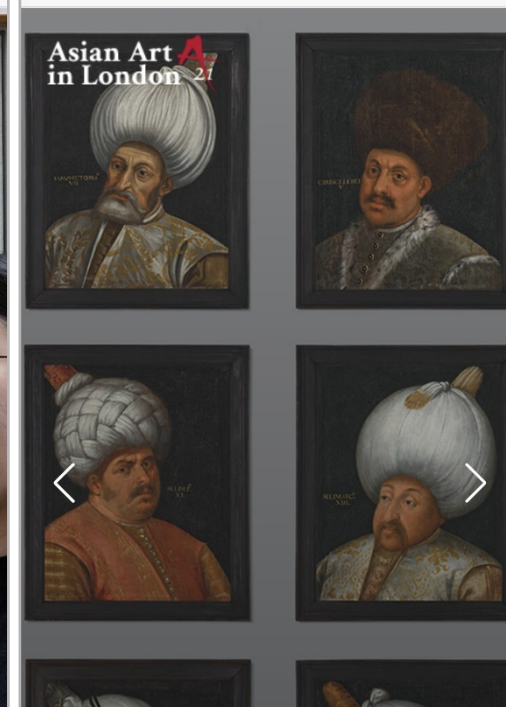
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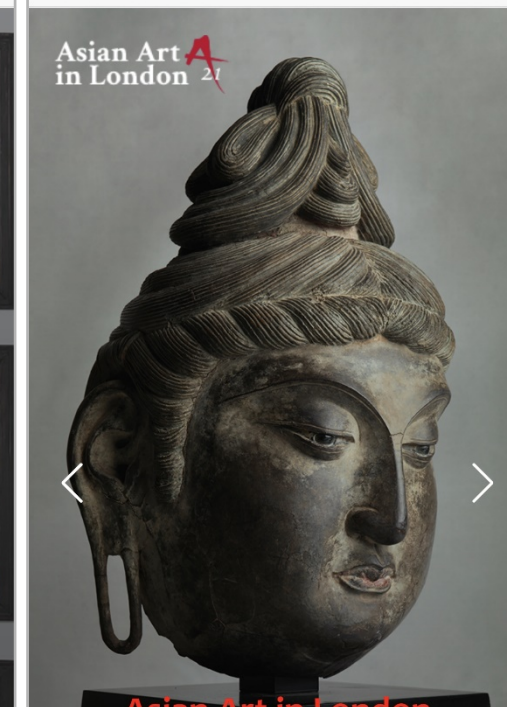
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