

A PALETTE FOR GENIUS

JAPANESE WATER JARS FOR THE TEA CEREMONY



JOAN B MIRVISS LTD



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Mizusashi: Water Jars for the Japanese Tea Practice of Chanoyu

Andrew L. Maske

The water jar (*mizusashi*) plays a distinctive role among the utensils used in a Japanese tea gathering. Usually made of ceramic, its entry into the tea room marks the beginning of the formal preparation of tea, and it occupies a prominent position throughout the proceedings. Apart from some basic requirements in regard to size and shape, the artist has tremendous freedom in creating a vessel that will be visually compelling yet functional.

This exhibition of water jars features a stunning display of work by Japan's most renowned modern and contemporary ceramic artists. Their techniques span the range of traditional, innovative, and original processes that reflect a wide array of aesthetic approaches, from rough and gestural to refined and exquisite.

The water jar is probably the least-appreciated of the major ceramic utensils used in a Japanese *chanoyu* tea gathering, but it offers perhaps the greatest potential for variety in terms of shape, size, and expressiveness. Along with the iron tea kettle, the *mizusashi* serves as a locational and aesthetic anchor for the other utensils that enter or exit the tea room over the course of a gathering.

Although tea gathering water jars entered major American collections of Japanese ceramics in the late nineteenth century, their numbers were far fewer than other tea vessel types like tea bowls and tea caddies. There are a number of reasons for this. First, water jars were among the larger ceramic pieces, and their bulky shapes made them less easy to pack and transport than more compact and uniform shapes like bowls, plates, and smaller jars.⁽¹⁾ Second, in Japan, water jars were rarely treated with the same respect as tea caddies and tea bowls, and relatively few historical examples by known artists survive. Third, the water jar had

no attractive functional equivalent in the American drawing room or kitchen, and therefore was likely less appealing to Western collectors, even those who had no intention to actually use the Japanese ceramics they acquired.⁽²⁾ Moreover, in the Muromachi period (1338-1573), water jars were often utilitarian vessels adopted into use for tea, and the rough and sometimes ordinary appearance of such vessels may have made them less attractive to foreign collectors of Japanese ceramics.

While their use for containing “mere” water may have made them seem rather pedestrian vessels to non-Japanese, *mizusashi* and their flower vase cousins known as *hanaire* play not only essential physical roles in the tea room, but philosophical ones as well. Water is the only one of the five traditional elements (fire, water, earth, metal and wood) that can be imbibed; as such, it is supremely life-giving, both to animals and plants. Thus, the water jar represents a connection to nature and to Purity, one of the four key aspects of *chanoyu*.⁽³⁾ The flower vase and the blossoms in it exemplify water's role in supporting life in the natural world, while the contents of the water jar represent the source of nature's bounty for the participants of a tea gathering. In fact, traditionally, great care was used when selecting water for serving powdered tea, with the host sourcing it from a famous spring, well, or stream. Today, superior spring water is typically used in formal *chanoyu* gatherings.

Among works by both historical and contemporary Japanese ceramists, there are several contrasting approaches to the creation of *mizusashi*. In order to make it easier to grasp the differences in these approaches, I have created four basic categories. Although these categories have been named arbitrarily, they help to define and distinguish the most fundamental approaches to creating water jars for use in *chanoyu*.

MIWA KAZUHIKO (b. 1951)
See page 41

TANAKA SAJIRO (b. 1937)
See page 13



The first approach utilizes what I call the Elemental aesthetic. This approach is based in the original concept of the water jar as a natural receptacle of life's essential liquid. Vessels made with this aesthetic often resemble cliffs, rocks, or unadorned earth. They may be of uniform shape, but often display rough or irregular surfaces. The traditional unglazed stoneware types of Shigaraki and Bizen, first used in tea in the fifteenth century, are typical of this approach, and are vaguely reminiscent of the stone *tsukubai* hand-rinsing basin found just outside the tea room. Examples in this mode by some of the most famous modern Japanese ceramists, including Kitaōji Rosanjin and Yagi Kazuo, are featured in the current exhibition.

A very different approach is the Classic Chinese aesthetic, which hearkens back to the earliest tea ceramics brought to Japan in the Southern Song dynasty. Typically of clean, elegant shapes, these pieces are frequently covered in a celadon glaze or decorated in a traditional Chinese format, such as the crisp black-and-cream designs of Cizhou ware. In this exhibition, works by Kawase Shinobu and Suzuki Osamu are outstanding examples of the former, while the *mizusashi* by Ishiguro Munemaro represents the latter.

During the Edo period (1615-1868), what I refer to as the Pictorial aesthetic approach became popular in *chanoyu* utensils. Emerging around the time of Nonomura Ninsei (act. 1640s-1690s) in the mid-to late-seventeenth century, the Pictorial approach developed further under Ogata Kenzan (1663-1743). Ceramists working in this mode used the wide surface of the *mizusashi* as a canvas on which representations of nature (typically floral motifs) were depicted. Use of water jars of this type could help to brighten the atmosphere of the tea room and balance the austere appearance of the other utensils. Painting styles ranged from restrained literati landscape depictions to colorful Rinpa-style illustrations that might have come directly from a pair of folding screens. After the expansion of women's participation in *chanoyu* in the nineteenth



Burst-bag-type freshwater jar, late 16th - early 17th century. Stoneware with natural ash glaze; lacquer cover (Iga ware), 8 1/4 x 8 11/16 inches. The Minneapolis Institute of Art, Mary Griggs Burke Collection, gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015 (L2015.33.303a,b).



Freshwater jar, late 17th-18th century. Stoneware with iron oxide and underglaze cobalt-blue decoration (Ko-Kiyomizu ware), 7 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mary Griggs Burke Collection, gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015 (2015.300.268a,b).



century, production and use of Pictorial format tea utensils grew even greater. With the development and perfection of new technical processes in the twentieth century, new Pictorial styles emerged, such as Kiyomizu Rokubei VI's *kokisai* decoration, and surface applications such as Ono Hakuko's gold leaf decoration.

Some *mizusashi* water jars combine various aspects of the types listed above and are therefore belong to a type I designate as Integrated. Some of them feature distorted shapes, dynamic glaze application, or abbreviated brushwork, modes that were first popular in tea ceramics during the Momoyama period (1573-1615). They may be rather rough and craggy, like some Elemental pieces, but are more expressive and idiosyncratic. Others may mimic some of the basic shapes of the Classic Chinese approach, but present them with unusual glazes and other alterations. *Mizusashi* of the Integrated genre may have simple decoration that is painted, stamped, or incised, but, unlike Pictorial works, it is not the primary focus. Overall, Integrated works form the largest body of water jars for *chanoyu* in contemporary Japan. Works in the current exhibition by Katō Tōkurō, Miwa Kyūwa, Suzuki Gorō, and others can be classified in this category.

Today, only most committed practitioners of *chanoyu* use *mizusashi* for their original purpose. Even so, the beauty of these vessels is easily appreciated even outside the tea room. The selection featured in this exhibition demonstrates the wide range of aesthetic possibilities found in this compelling genre. As examples of modern Japanese ceramics, these *mizusashi* reflect the melding of tradition and innovation in tea ceramics that began in the middle part of the 20th century and has continued to the present.

Joan Mirvis and Kuroda Kōji would like to extend their gratitude for this insightful essay to Dr. Andrew Maske, Associate Professor of Art History, School of Art and Visual Studies at the University of Kentucky and noted authority on Japanese ceramics.

NOTES

1. Edward S. Morse included relatively few water jars in his collection, probably because they took up more space than he would have liked. He sought to acquire representative types of the broadest possible range of Japanese stoneware producers, and smaller pieces would have been the most economical way to achieve that goal. Andrew L. Maske. "The Impact of Asian Ceramics on the United States." Kookmin University Occasional Papers for Academic Year 2008, Seoul: Kookmin University, 2009, p. 11.
2. The quandary of how to use *mizusashi* outside the tea room is faced even by modern Japanese, as illustrated by the unsatisfying use of a four hundred year-old Shino water jar as a flower vase in Kawabata Yasunari's 1952 novel *A Thousand Cranes* [*Senbazuru*]. Transl. Edward Seidensticker. New York: Knopf, 1959, p. 81.
3. Sen Rikyū (1522-1591), codifier of the Way of Tea, is believed to have designated the aspects of Harmony, Respect, Purity, and Tranquility as key elements of the *chanoyu* discipline.



KATŌ TŌKURŌ (1898-1985)
Shino mizusashi; Shino-glazed Water Jar
 1973
 Glazed stoneware
 8 3/8 x 8 x 7 5/8 inches



OKABE MINEO (1919-1990)
Oribe mizusashi; Oribe-glazed Water Jar
 ca. 1960
 Glazed stoneware
 6 5/8 x 6 1/2 x 6 1/8 inches



MIWA KYŪWA (KYŪSETSU X)
 (1885-1981)
Hagi-yaki mizusashi, mei iwashimizu;
 Hagi-glazed Water Jar
 "Fresh Water Flows Over Stones"
 1963
 Glazed stoneware
 6 5/8 x 6 inches



KOYAMA FUJIO (1900-1975)
Kohiki mizusashi;
 Water Jar with *Kohiki* Glaze
 ca. 1970
 Glazed stoneware
 6 1/8 x 7 x 6 3/4 inches



MIWA KYŪWA (KYŪSETSU X) (1885-1981)
Hagi kaku mizusashi; Hagi-glazed Square Water Jar
 ca. 1975
 Glazed stoneware with lacquer cover
 5 7/8 x 7 3/4 x 6 1/4 inches

HORI ICHIRŌ (b. 1952)
Shino mizusashi;
Shino-glazed Water Jar
 2013
 7 x 7 1/4 inches
 Glazed stoneware



KANETA MASANAO (b. 1953)
Hagi haikaburi kurinuki mizusashi;
Hagi and Ash-glazed Scooped-out Water Jar
 2012
 Glazed stoneware
 8 1/4 x 8 1/4 x 8 1/2 inches



KISHIMOTO KENNIN (b. 1934)
Iga tomobuta mizusashi;
Iga Water Jar with Cover
 2012
 Glazed stoneware
 6 7/8 x 7 1/8 inches



TANAKA SAJIRŌ (b. 1937)
Karatsu ameyū mizusashi;
Karatsu Iron-glazed Water Jar
 1998
 Glazed stoneware
 7 1/2 x 10 3/4 x 10 1/8 inches



TSUJI SEIMEI (1927-2008)
Shigaraki mizusashi;
Shigaraki water jar
 1970s
 Glazed stoneware
 7 x 6 1/2 inches



HARADA SHŪROKU (b. 1941)
Bizen mizusashi; Bizen Water Jar
 1998
 Glazed stoneware
 8 1/2 x 9 x 7 1/2 inches



KANESHIGE MICHIAKI (1934-1995)
Inbe mimitsuki yahazukuchi mizusashi;
Inbe-style Eared Water Jar with Recessed Mouth
 ca. 1980
 Glazed stoneware
 8 1/4 x 9 x 8 inches

KITAŌJI ROSANJIN (1883-1959)
Shigaraki sorobantsubu mizusashi;
 Shigaraki Abacus Bead-shaped Water Jar
 1929
 Glazed stoneware
 5 7/8 x 7 5/8 inches



YAGI KAZUO (1918-1979)
Shigaraki mizusashi; Shigaraki Water Jar
 ca. 1970
 Glazed stoneware
 4 1/2 x 6 7/8 inches



ISHIGURO MUNEMARO (1893-1968)
Kairagi mizusashi; Water Jar with Crawling Glaze
 ca. 1950
 Glazed stoneware
 6 3/4 x 6 1/4 x 5 3/4 inches



ISHIGURO MUNEMARO (1893-1968)
Kakiotoshide mizusashi; Water Jar with Sgraffito Design
 ca. 1950
 Glazed stoneware
 7 1/4 x 7 inches



SUZUKI GORŌ (b. 1941)
Oribe mizusashi; Oribe-glazed Water Jar
 ca. 1996
 Glazed stoneware
 6 5/8 x 8 3/4 x 7 3/8 inches



KATŌ YASUKAGE (1964-2012)
Nezumi shino mizusashi;
Nezumi shino-glazed Water Jar
 2006
 Glazed stoneware
 7 1/4 x 7 3/8 x 7 inches

KATŌ YASUKAGE (1964-2012)
Oribe mizusashi;
Oribe-glazed Water Jar
 2008
 Glazed stoneware
 7 1/4 x 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches





KOIE RYŌJI (b. 1938)
Kohiki mizusashi;
Kohiki-glazed Water Jar
 ca. 2008
 Glazed stoneware
 7 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches



NISHIHATA TADASHI (b. 1948)
Kaiyū mizusashi;
Ash-glazed Water Jar
 2015
 Glazed stoneware
 5 1/2 x 10 3/8 x 7 3/4 inches



SUZUKI GORŌ (b. 1941)
Raku mizusashi; Raku-glazed Water Jar
 2000
 Glazed stoneware
 8 1/4 x 8 1/2 x 8 inches



SUZUKI OSAMU (1926-2001)
Mizusashi seihakujii; Bluish-white-glazed Water Jar
 ca. 1982
 Glazed porcelain
 6 x 5 inches

YAGI AKIRA (b. 1955)
Seihakujii mizusashi;
 Bluish-white-glazed Water Jar
 2015
 Glazed porcelain
 4 5/8 x 8 inches



FUKUMOTO FUKU (b. 1973)
Tsuki; Moon
 2015
 Unglazed porcelain with
 blue-glaze decoration
 7 3/4 x 6 3/4 inches



KAMADA KŌJI (b. 1948)
Yōhen ginshō tenmoku kakewake mizusashi;
 Two-toned Tenmoku Water Jar with Kiln Effects
 2015
 Glazed stoneware
 8 1/2 x 7 1/4 inches

KAWASE SHINOBU (b. 1950)
Seiji mizusashi; Celadon Water Jar
 2015
 Celadon-glazed porcelainous stoneware
 with lacquer cover
 7 x 8 inches

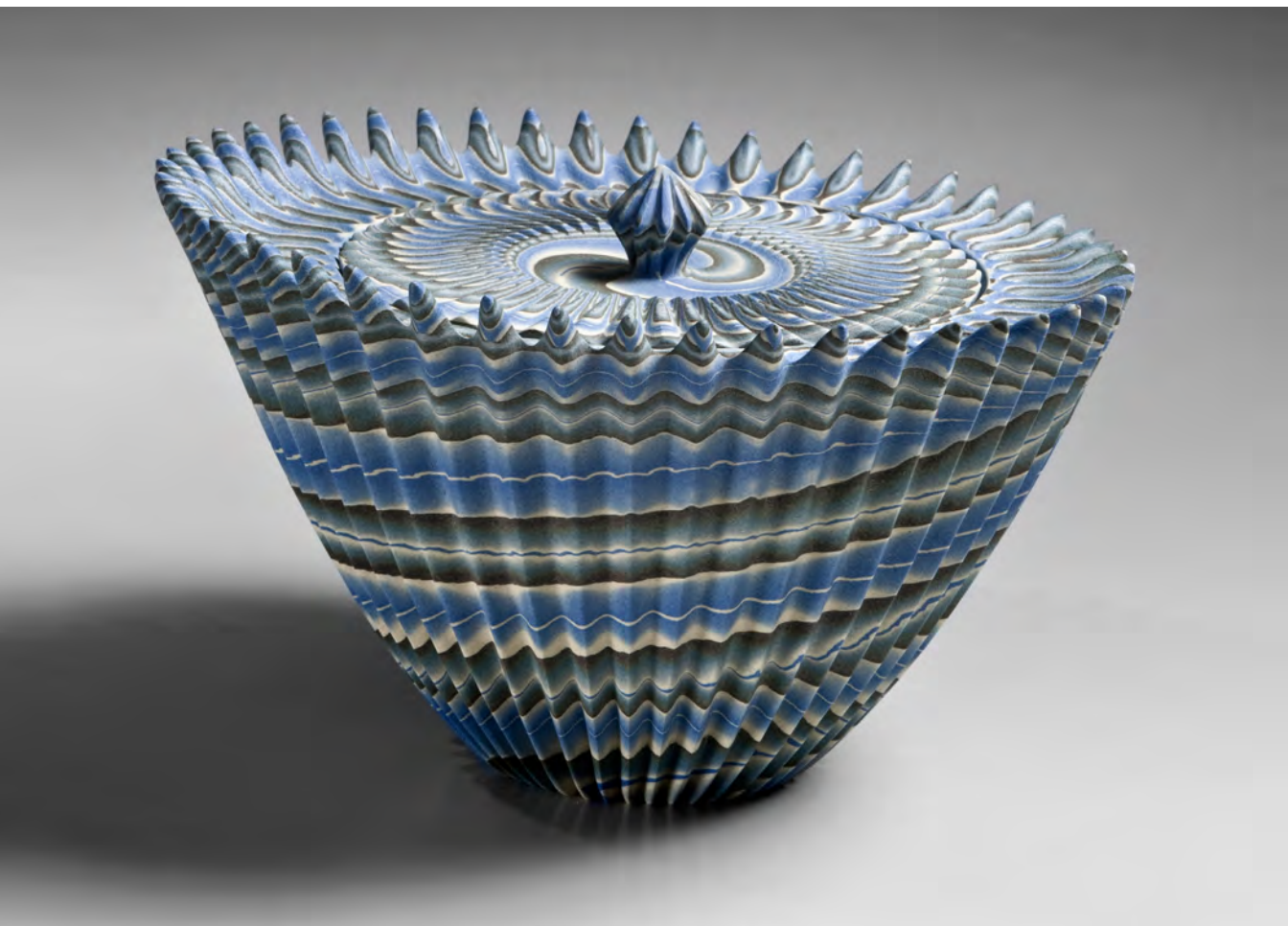




FUJIMOTO YOSHIMICHI (NŌDŌ) (1919-1992)
Akae kinsai uzurazu mizusashi;
 Red and Gold-glazed Water Jar with Quail Design
 ca. 1965
 Glazed stoneware
 7 1/2 x 7 inches



KIYOMIZU ROKUBEI VI (1901-1980)
Kokisai ebinegusa mizusashi;
 Water Jar with Artist's Glaze, Decorated with Calanthe Orchids
 ca. 1978
 Glazed stoneware with gold and silver, with lacquer cover
 6 3/8 x 8 1/2 inches



OGATA KAMIO (b. 1949)
Kyoku; Thorns
 2015
Neriage (marbleized) stoneware
 5 x 8 1/4 inches

ITÔ HIDEHITO (b. 1971)
Rensai mizusashi;
 Marbleized Colored-clay Water Jar
 2015
Neriage (marbleized) porcelain with
 craquelure glaze
 6 5/8 x 8 1/2 inches



KAMEYAMAGAMA
Neriagede mizusashi;
 Marbleized Clay Water Jar
 ca. 1954
 Marbleized stoneware
 7 x 6 inches



NAKAMURA BAIZAN (1907-1999)
Mizusashi; Water Jar
 ca. 1960
 Glazed stoneware
 8 1/8 x 5 3/8 inches

TOKUDA YASOKICHI III
 (1933 - 2009)
Hekimeiji yōsai mizusashi;
 Brilliant Clear Blue-glazed Water Jar
 ca. 1997
 Glazed porcelain
 6 1/4 x 8 1/2 inches



MORINO HIROAKI TAIMEI (b. 1934)
Mizusashi desho; Water Jar "High Tide as the Moon Rises"
 2015
 Glazed stoneware
 6 3/4 x 6 1/2 inches



ONO HAKUKO (1915-1996)
Hakuji kinrande mizusashi;
 White-glazed Water Jar with Gold Leaf on Red Overglaze
 ca. 1985
 Glazed stoneware
 5 3/8 x 7 3/8 inches

KATŌ HAJIME (1900-1968)
Moegi kinrande kikumon mizusashi;
 Grass Green-glazed Water Jar with
 Gold Foil and Chrysanthemum Patterning
 ca. 1960
 Glazed porcelain with lacquer cover
 4 x 8 inches



SUDA SEIKA II (1892-1971)
 Water jar with *kutani* polychrome glazing
 1950s
 Glazed porcelain with lacquer cover
 5 x 7 inches



KONDŌ TAKAHIRO (b. 1958)
Garasufuta gintekisaiki;
 Blue Mist Vessel with Glass Cover
 2015
 Glazed porcelain and blue glass cover
 6 3/4 x 5 5/8 inches



KONDŌ TAKAHIRO (b. 1958)
Garasufuta gintekisaiki;
 Blue Mist Vessel with Glass Cover
 2015
 Glazed porcelain and green glass cover
 6 3/4 x 6 1/4 inches





SAKIYAMA TAKAYUKI (b. 1958)
Chōtō; Listening to Waves
 2015
 Stoneware with sand and orange glazes
 6 5/8 x 8 1/4 inches



KAWASE SHINOBU (b. 1950)
Furea; Flare
 2015
 Unglazed stoneware
 7 1/8 x 9 inches

ITŌ SEKISUI V (b. 1941)
Mumyōi mizusashi;
 Mumyōi (Sado Red Stoneware) Water Jar
 ca. 1995-1998
 Unglazed stoneware
 7 x 8 inches





KATSUMATA CHIEKO (b. 1950)
Akoda mizusashi; Pumpkin-shaped Water Jar
 2015
 Matte-glazed stoneware
 7 x 9 7/8 x 9 7/8 inches



MIWA KAZUHIKO (b. 1951)
Enza; Deep Meditation
 2015
 White Hagi-glazed stoneware
 8 1/8 x 10 x 9 3/4 inches



KOIKE SHŌKO (b. 1943)
Mizusashi, shiro no katachi; Water Jar “White Form”
2015
Glazed stoneware with glass glaze
7 3/4 x 11 1/4 x 10 1/2 inches



Names are given in Japanese sequence with family name first.

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Front Cover:	OKABE MINEO (see p. 9)
	SAKIYAMA TAKAYUKI (see p. 38)
	KATŌ TŌKURŌ (see p. 8)
Inside Cover:	KAMADA KŌJI (see p. 26)
Back Cover:	OGATA KAMIO (see p. 30)
	SUZUKI OSAMU (see p. 24)
	KAMADA KŌJI (see p. 26)
	KAWASE SHINOBU (see p. 27)
	KONDŌ TAKAHIRO (see p. 37)

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