



# BREAKING FROM TRADITION

## Japanese Ceramics Today



Guest curated by Halsey and Alice North



August 6 - September 8, 2009  
Opening reception: August 6, 5 - 8pm  
Gallery talk: 6pm

Presented by

**HARVEY / MEADOWS GALLERY**

in conjunction with

**JOAN B MIRVISS LTD**



**Fukumoto Fuku** (b. 1973 Kyoto), the daughter of fiber artists, received formal training in ceramics at Kyoto City University of Arts. She throws and carves graduated porcelain components that are then glazed and stacked. During firing, the glazes, in a variety of blue colorations, actually fuse the multiple elements together.



**Kaneta Masanao** (b. 1953 Hagi), while an 8th-generation Hagi potter, studied sculpture at university in Tokyo. His independent approach to ceramics remains sculptural as he carves and scoops from a single block of densely pounded clay. The white, snow-like Hagi glaze on his mountain forms slides down the sharp edges and pools in the protected valleys of his rugged vessels.



**Katsumata Chieko** (b. 1950 Kyoto), while in France studying painting, was inspired to pursue ceramics by Texan, Fance Frank (1931-2008). On returning to Japan, she developed her technique of applying layers of brightly colored kaolin slip through cloth, in between repeated sanding of selected areas and multiple firings. These highly personal surfaces appear on biomorphic forms reminiscent of plants, flowers and coral.



**Kawase Shinobu** (b. 1950 Oiso) studied with his grandfather and father, both masters of Chinese blue-and-white and polychrome enamel porcelain. Choosing to move in a different direction, he specializes in the difficult celadon glaze (*seiji*). His undulating, thinly walled porcelainous stoneware vessels, inspired by forms in nature, are all wheel thrown and molded by hand. In Japan, he is nicknamed "Mr. Celadon."



**Kishi Eiko** (b. 1948 Kyoto), a self-taught artist, developed a technique she calls "colored inlay" (*saiseiki zōgan*) in which tiny indentations are filled with delicately colored liquid clay. These textured surfaces resemble woven fabric and require many months of meticulous work. The sharp angles of her forms together with the striated lines marking the inlays produce a visual tension between shape and texture.



**Koie Ryōji** (b. 1938 Gifu), a long-time innovator in the contemporary clay movement, is known for his politically charged work as well as functional table and tea ware. It is the classical ceramic tradition of green *oribe* ware, a specialty of his region, for which he is celebrated. His work reflects his passion for spontaneity and his exuberant personality.



**Kondo Takahiro** (b. 1958 Kyoto), the grandson of a Living National Treasure specializing in cobalt blue decoration (*sometsuke*) on porcelain, has incorporated the heritage of his family with two inventive departures of his own – after his third firing, adding a beaded glaze consisting of silver, gold, and platinum and topping the forms with his own cast glass.





**Mihara Ken** (b. 1958 Izumo) has pioneered a new method of firing in which he encases his ancient yet starkly modern forms in fire-resistant liquid clay and then repeatedly fires them (3 to 4 times) at a high temperature for up to 40 hours. Afterwards, the peeling clay covering is removed to reveal colors ranging from black and grey to lavender, yellow, and peach.



**Mishima Kimiyo** (b. 1932 Osaka), an early sculptural ceramics pioneer, criticizes the consumptive obsessions of the modern world in her playful recreations of "breakable printed matter." Through silk-screening and transfer paper, her stoneware sculptures become convincing representations of printed imagery – discarded newspapers, cardboard boxes, posters, and magazines.



**Miyashita Zenji** (b. 1939 Kyoto) first studied with his father before receiving formal training at Kyoto City University of Arts. His surface designs are created with thin, overlapping bands of clay, custom colored with cobalt, chrome, and other metal-based pigments. These are then applied on his uniquely shaped stoneware bodies, producing images evocative of mountain scenery, seascapes, sunrises and rainbows.



**Morino Taimei** (b. 1934 Kyoto) is a leader of the Kyoto ceramics community, who was first influenced by his celebrated teacher, Tomimoto Kenkichi (1886-1963), and soon thereafter by his years teaching at the University of Chicago. Morino constructs his work, using slab and hand-building techniques and applying a variety of colorful glazes with surface patterns reflective of both his time abroad and Kyoto aesthetics.



**Sakiyama Takayuki** (b. 1958 Izu Peninsula) is a first-generation, university-trained potter. His sand glaze highlights the undulating curves of his twisting double-walled stoneware forms. Fully integrating interior and exterior space, these vessels suggest the gently rippling seas, sandy beaches, or raked gravel gardens near his ocean-side residence.



**Sakurai Yasuko** (b. 1969 Kyoto) first studied ceramics at university in Kyoto, before becoming an artist in residence in both Shigaraki, Japan, and Limoges, France. She creates perforated, unglazed, white porcelain forms that are studies in light and shadow. These forms are created around bundles of plastic tubing that leave circular or elliptical holes.



**Yagi Akira** (b. 1955 Kyoto) works in porcelain and his aesthetic combines the traditional precision of his grandfather and the intellectual curiosity of his celebrated father, Yagi Kazuo (1918-1979). Akira creates elegant, precise sets of objects that are all hand thrown and then carved. His principle interests are geometric form and the space surrounding it.

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Since our first visit to Japan together in 1986, we have enthusiastically visited many of the artists selected for this exhibition and actively collected their work. Our passion for this incredible art form recently became the focus of a major exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Japan Society in New York, at which time the work by these artists spurred a high level of interest by new collectors, the press, and other institutions in this country and Europe. We were very honored and excited, in conjunction with our lecture at the Anderson Ranch, to be asked to curate this exhibition, drawing from the New York gallery of distinguished and pioneering dealer, Joan B. Mirviss.

The fourteen artists chosen by us for this show are among the leading creative forces in Japanese sculptural ceramics today. Each in his or her own way has broken from tradition with innovative ideas, creative forms, patented new glazes, remarkable textures, and inventive building and firing techniques. They range from senior pioneers active since the start of the sculptural movement in the 1950s to emerging young talents. Some have studied at academic institutions while others are descended from long lines of distinguished ceramic traditions. The work of every member may be found in numerous museum collections in America. All have been richly recognized with awards and honors both in Japan and abroad; furthermore, most have been included in several important international exhibitions. The work of four may be seen starting this month in *Soaring Voices: Contemporary Japanese Women Ceramic Artists* that has just moved from its Paris venue to the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento and is scheduled to tour across America.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to Alleghany Meadows, Sam Harvey, and Joan Mirviss for making this exhibition possible. We all wish to thank Lee Eagle for conceiving the show and her encouragement, Paul Collins for his steadfast support, Anderson Ranch for its continuing commitment to excellence, and the artists for their sheer creative brilliance. Their works never cease to amaze and delight us. With over 10,000 ceramic artists making a living in Japan, we hope that you will enjoy this encounter with these fourteen, whom we believe to be among the best and most creative talents working today.

- Halsey and Alice North  
Guest Curators

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