

## YAGI KAZUO (1918-1979)

Born in Kyoto on July 4, 1918, Yagi Kazuo was the eldest son of ceramist Yagi Issō (1894-73), who excelled at works inspired by Chinese Song Dynasty ceramics. After graduating from the sculpture department of the Kyoto Municipal School of Arts and Crafts, Yagi Kazuo became a student at the Ceramic Research Institute in Kyoto and in 1946 took part in establishing the Young Pottery-makers' Collective, which was disbanded in mid-1948. Later that year, he co-founded the avant-garde group Sōdeisha as a vehicle for expanding the expressive possibilities of clay.

Yagi focused on the creation of "objets" — neither pure sculpture nor simply vessels. In 1954 at the Form Gallery in Tokyo, he exhibited his now iconic work "Mr. Zamsa's Walk," which marked his radical repositioning of the potter's wheel as a mere mechanical tool instead of the determining factor in the forming process. However, like his Sōdeisha colleagues, Yagi began with utilitarian vessels inspired by modern Western art. In 1962, together with Yamada Hikaru, he established Mon Kōbō ("Corner Workshop"), in which Yamada was responsible for the functional forms and Yagi for the surface patterning. Yagi was quite comfortable producing sculptural forms and utilitarian vessels simultaneously and respected them equally. He was also the first artist to incorporate smoke-blackened ware into the modern ceramic vocabulary, starting in 1957. This manner of treating the surface allowed the original sharpness of the sculpted clay form to remain visible; moreover, it remained unassociated with any prior Japanese ceramic tradition.

With broad interests in poetry, music and photography and known for his sarcastic wit and intellect, Yagi inevitably became Sōdeisha's spokesman. Over time, as its central figure Yagi also assumed the mantle of standard-bearer for contemporary ceramic art in postwar Japan.

1918	Born in Kyoto
1937	Graduated in sculpture from Kyoto Municipal College of Art and Craft
1938	Enlisted in the army
1940	Discharged from the army due to tuberculosis
1943	Became an art teacher at the Chūgū Elementary School in Kobe then at the Second Ritsumeikan Junior High School
1946	Resigned from teaching Participated in organizing the Young Pottery-makers' Collective
1948	Co-founded Sōdeisha
1950	Works included in exhibition at and acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York
1952	Co-organized Gendai Bijutsu Kondankai (Genbi) (Contemporary Art Discussion Group)
1957	Became an adjunct instructor in sculpture, Kyoto Municipal College of Fine Arts
1965	Works included in the traveling exhibition, New Japanese Painting and Sculpture that toured the US, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York
1971	Appointed professor at Kyoto Municipal College of Fine Arts Designed the front of the Olympic medals for the Sapporo Winter Olympics
1973	Sent to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran as the leader of the Silk Road Research Group of the Kyoto Municipal College of Fine Arts
1976	Built a kiln in Uji, Kyoto
1978	Exhibited FIAC at Grand Palais, Paris

Awards:

- 1948 Kyoto Mayor's Prize at Kyōten exhibition
- 1959 Grand Prize, Second International Congress of Contemporary Ceramics,  
Ostend, Belgium
- 1962 Gold Medal, Third International Academy of Ceramic exhibition, Prague, Czech Republic
- 1973 Japan Ceramics Society Award

Solo Exhibitions:

- 1954 Kyoto-fu Gallery, Kyoto  
Form Gallery, Tokyo
- 1955 Umeda Gallery, Osaka
- 1956 Takemiya Gallery, Tokyo
- 1963 Fujikawa Gallery, Osaka
- 1964 Beni Gallery, Kyoto  
Ginza Matsuya Art Gallery, Tokyo
- 1966 Yamada Gallery, Kyoto  
Feigen/Palmer Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, Kyoto
- 1969 Ichibankan Gallery, Tokyo  
Shinjuku Isetan Gallery, Tokyo
- 1971 Tenmaya Art Gallery, Okayama
- 1972 Isetan Gallery, Tokyo (also in 1977)
- 1974 3D Iteza Gallery, Kyoto
- 1975 Masudaya Gallery, Tokyo  
Heian Gallery, Kyoto
- 1977 Kasahara Gallery, Osaka
- 1978 *Kazuo Yagi – 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Birth*, Isetan, Tokyo  
*Yagi Kazuo Ceramic Sculptures (Haiku series)*, Kasahara Gallery, Osaka exhibit in FIAC  
Grand Palais, Paris, France
- 1981 *Yagi Kazuo*, National Museums of Modern Art, Kyoto and Tokyo sponsored by Nihon  
Keizai Shimbun
- 2004-05 *Yagi Kazuo ten (Yagi Kazuo - a Retrospective)*, National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto;  
Hiroshima Prefectural Museum of Art, Hiroshima; Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum, Ibaraki;  
Tokyo Metropolitan Teian Art Museum, Tokyo; Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu

Group Exhibitions:

- 1939 *First Japan Ceramic Sculpture Association Exhibition*
- 1941 *Sixth Rekitei Art Association Exhibition*
- 1942 *Seventh and Eighth Rekitei Art Association Exhibitions*
- 1949 *Yagi Issō and Yagi Kazuo*, Asahi Gallery, Kyoto
- 1947 *Young Pottery-makers' Collective*, Asahi Gallery, Kyoto
- 1948 *First Sōdeisha Exhibition*, Takashimaya Art Gallery, Osaka
- 1950 Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY  
*Contemporary Japanese Ceramics*, Musée Cernuschi, Paris, France

- 1951 *Contemporary Japanese Ceramics*, Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza, Italy
- 1954 *Genbi*, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, Kyoto
- 1955 *Sōdeisha Shōhin*, Kyoto Gallery, Kyoto
- 1957 *Milan Triennale*, International Ceramic Exhibition, Milan, Italy
- 1959 *Contemporary Japanese Ceramics*, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
- 1960 *Tsudaka Kazuichi and Yagi Kazuo*, Nakanoshima Gallery, Osaka
- 1961 *Kyoto-Paris Kōkan Tōgei*, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, traveled to Musée national de céramique Sèvres, Sèvres, France
- 1963 *Survey of Contemporary Japan Ceramics*, National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto  
*Hands and Machines on Crafts*, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
- 1964 *International Ceramics*, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (also traveled to Kurume, Kyoto and Nagoya)
- 1965 *New Japanese Painting and Sculpture*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA
- 1966 *The First Japan Art Festival*, New York, NY, Chicago, IL, Pittsburgh, PA, and San Francisco, CA  
*Tsuji Shindō and Yagi Kazuo*, Ichibankan Gallery, Tokyo
- 1968 *The New Generation of Contemporary Ceramics*, National Museums of Modern Art, Tokyo and Kyoto
- 1970 *Contemporary Ceramics: Europe and Japan*, National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto
- 1971 *Contemporary Ceramics: the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Japan*, National Museums of Modern Art, Kyoto and Tokyo
- 1976 *Japanese Ceramic Masterpieces*, Rostock and Dresden, Germany
- 1977 *Japanese Contemporary Masterpieces*, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo  
*Celebrating Thirty Years of Sōdeisha Exhibition*, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, Kyoto
- 1993-94 *Modern Japanese Ceramics in American Collections*, Japan Society, New York, NY; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA; Honolulu Academy of Art, Honolulu, HI
- 2003 *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics, a Close Embrace of the Earth*, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Japan Society, New York, NY; National Japanese American Museum, Los Angeles, CA
- 2005-07 *Contemporary Clay: Japanese Ceramics for the New Century*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Japan Society, New York, NY
- 2008 *Modern Ceramic Art from an International Perspective: Through the Collection of Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum*, Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum
- 2011 *Birds of Dawn: Pioneers of Japan's Sōdeisha Movement*, Joan B. Mirviss, Ltd., New York, NY
- 2014 *Japan in Black and White: Ink and Clay*, Joan B. Mirviss, Ltd., New York, NY  
*Into the Fold: Contemporary Japanese Ceramics from Horvitz Collection*, Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida (until 2016), Gainesville, FL
- 2015 *Ancient to Modern – Japanese Contemporary Ceramics and their Sources*, San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas  
*Unfolding Worlds: Japanese Screens and Contemporary Ceramics from the Gitter-Yelen Collection*, Houston Museum of Fine Arts, TX  
*Tsubo: The Art of the Vessel*, Asia Week New York exhibition in collaboration with Shibuya Kurodatoen Co., Joan B Mirviss LTD, New York, NY
- 2016 *A Palette for Genius: Japanese Water Jars for the Tea Ceremony*, Asia Week New York exhibition in collaboration with Shibuya Kurodatoen Co., Joan B Mirviss LTD, New York, NY

*Gendai Tōgei Guide*, Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum, Kasama  
*Craft Arts: Innovation of "Tradition and Avant-Garde," and the Present Day*, Crafts  
Gallery, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo  
2017 *Timeless Elegance in Japanese Art: Celebrating 40 Years!*, Joan B Mirviss LTD, New  
York, NY

Selected Public Collections:

Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum  
Aizawa Art Museum, Niigata  
Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum  
Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art  
Ikenobo Society of Floral Art, Tokyo  
Kyoto Municipal College of Fine Arts  
Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan  
Mie Prefectural Art Museum  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN  
Musée Tomo, Tokyo  
Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza, Italy  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura and Hayama  
Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY  
Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama  
Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu  
National Museum of Art, Osaka  
National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto  
National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo  
Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art  
Rockefeller Foundation, New York, NY  
Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, Gainesville, FL  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA  
Scripps College, Claremont, CA  
Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, Shiga (Shigaraki Tōgei no Mori)  
Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo  
Takamatsu City Art Museum, Kagawa  
Tokoname City Board of Education, Aichi  
University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom

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