

CONFRONTING TRADITION IN CLAY

Japanese Living National Treasures vs Iconoclasts



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Starting in 1952, the Japanese government designated specific artists, traditional musicians and performing artists as “Intangible Cultural Properties” later termed “Living National Treasures” (*ningen kokuhô*). These individuals were viewed by the government as the embodiment of a tradition and the preservers (keepers) of that aesthetic and technique for future generations. This official perspective continues to view ‘tradition’ as the creation of something new from what has been inherited rather than simply recreating ancient vessels. Many of the early recipients of this designation were indeed pioneers in addition to being protectors of respected ancient techniques and styles. While some clay artists strove to reach this particular pinnacle of fame and national recognition, others have refused this honor. Those artists whose work stands outside of any recognized tradition have persevered either as independent artists or as part of alternative associations.

More than thirty ceramic works will be exhibited by celebrated artists, who have mastered, preserved and re-invented centuries-old clay traditions, together with those ceramists who refused to conform to any specific tradition or aesthetic and pushed the boundaries of function into the realm of sculpture.



Kawamoto Goro (1919 - 1986)
White glazed teapot-shaped bottle
10.25 x 6.5 x 11.38 inches



Kawai Kanjiro (1890-1960)
Shallow bowl with abstracted design of a "flower in hand"
2.75 x 11.75 inches

FRONT: Yamada Hikaru (1923-2001)
Diamond-shaped glazed stoneware sculpture
12.25 x 12.25 x 3.13 inches

BACK: Nakajima Hiroshi (b. 1941)
Celadon glazed vase
13.13 x 14.63 inches



Matsui Kosei (1927 - 2003)
Covered box with marbled colored-clay inlays
5.5 x 10 inches



Hamada Shoji (1894-1978)
Vase with gray and iron-oxide glazes
8 x 7.63 inches



Yagi Kazuo (1918-1979)
Vase with white and crystalized glazes
6.25 x 6 x 4 inches

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at the 2011 Winter Antiques Show where we also display a
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