

KATSUMATA CHIEKO

NATURE TRANSFORMED

6.9.15 - 7.31.15



JOAN B MIRVISS LTD



Akoda Pumpkin
17 3/4 x 19 3/4 x 22 inches

COLOR AND NOTHINGNESS

Initially focused on simple vessels intended for everyday use that beautifully complement the food on them, whether Japanese or western, Katsumata Chieko turned away from functionality in the 1990s as she became dissatisfied with designing “receptacles that are easy to use.” Her focus shifted to exploring the very nature of her materials and how they responded and reacted to her manipulation and orientation. She found inspiration in the textures and forms of ancient glass and cast bronzes, and sought to evoke their corroded, rusty, and gritty surfaces in her biomorphic forms. Following this period of exploration, her work became more sculptural as she sought to express her inner self. Her biomorphic, organic plant-like forms evolved from coral, shellfish, and carnivorous plants, to what she terms *akoda* or “pumpkins.”

These pumpkin or squash shapes of the past two decades represent her twin desires to escape functionality and to express her own spirituality. They are characterized by their rounded lobes, which have progressed beyond the previous plant-inspired forms. The layering of brightly colored slip glazes on the exterior of these sculptures creates a sense of depth. The vibrant surfaces encase dark, mysterious interiors resulting in pronounced tonal contrasts. It is Katsumata's intent that these darkened cavities evoke a sense of “nothingness” or a “perfect void.” For her, the absence or presence of this nothingness is what distinguishes ceramics from sculpture. Katsumata comments further,

“For me, clay is the ideal material as I search for a means of expression, stepping outside formal functionality, to represent physical space and emptiness. It is the manipulation of clay that allows my soul to enter the material, thus also serving as a sensory experience.”

This artist's recent aesthetic direction has been driven by her search for the tension between appealing and frightening, likeable and abhorrent.

COVER: *Akoda Pumpkin*
15 3/4 x 19 1/4 x 18 7/8 inches

BACK: *Kai Shell*
6 x 10 1/4 x 9 7/8 inches
Photography by Saiki Taku
Portrait by Kushimoto Noriko

Through the nature of the material she has chosen as her medium, Katsumata conveys her artistic concept via the movement of her hands, which in turn rewards her mind after the completion of a day's work. This daily practice is what nurtures her and gives her a sense of ritual and purification. Indeed, she views this process as the critical element for distinguishing sculpture from ceramics. It may be said that sculpture is a fine art in which the chosen materials are not in any way restricted. By their very nature, ceramics and hence all crafts are defined by the materials utilized in their creation. "My dialogue with clay is something extremely natural." This remark fittingly describes the state Katsumata has arrived at through decades of experimentation. Through this process, Katsumata has succeeded in creating masterful "craft-like" sculptures (*kōgei-teki-zōkei*) that reveal the very essence of her strength and passion.

Kaneko Kenji

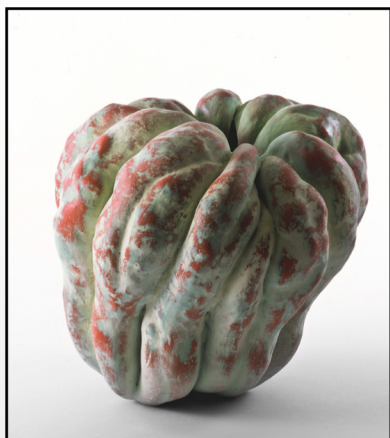
Director, Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum

Former Director, National Museum of Modern Art, Crafts Division



Akoda Pumpkin

11 3/8 x 11 x 13 inches



Akoda Pumpkin
11 x 13 x 13 inches



Shinkaigyo Deep Sea Fish
9 7/8 x 9 1/2 x 11 7/8 inches



Akoda Pumpkin
17 3/4 x 17 3/4 x 18 7/8 inches



Akoda Pumpkin
17 3/4 x 16 1/8 x 17 3/8 inches



Sango Coral
10 5/8 x 11 3/4 x 12 5/8 inches



Akoda Pumpkin
17 3/4 x 19 3/4 x 19 1/4 inches

Born in Shizuoka, Japan in 1950, Katsumata Chieko studied at Nihon Women's University, Tokyo and while there received a grant from the French government to study design in Paris. She then enrolled at the Atelier Francine Del Pierre, apprenticing to American ceramist, Fance Franck (1931-2008) while also attending classes at École nationale supérieure d'Arts et Métiers. In 1978, she returned to Japan and established her first studio in Kyoto.



This exhibition marks Katsumata's first solo show in the US although this gallery has been representing her for over a decade. In addition to solo exhibitions in Japan and France, her art has been featured in exhibitions throughout the world. Highlights in the West of the past decade include major shows at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2005 and 2008); Musée national de Céramique, Sèvres, France (2006, 2008 and 2010); Smith College Museum of Art (2009); Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (2014-15); Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida (2015-16); and San Antonio Museum of Art (2015). Her work is in permanent collections of numerous museums on three continents. A member of the International Academy of Ceramics and the Japan Society of Oriental Ceramic Studies, Katsumata has been a frequent lecturer at universities and ceramics festivals in Japan and Europe.



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