

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PAINTED CLAY: Wada Morihiro and Modern Ceramics of Japan

Joan B Mirviss LTD for ASIA WEEK NEW YORK

Opening March 16, 2023

Standing at the center of a long tradition of Japanese painted ceramic decoration is Wada Morihiro (1944-2008), a revered artist of intricate surface patterning on exceptional creative functional forms. For Asia Week New York 2023, Joan B Mirviss LTD is thrilled to present an exhibition of this master's oeuvre alongside the many Japanese artists who paint on clay, employing a wide range of techniques. These varied and dynamic works by Wada's colleagues and successors will stand in conversation with those by Wada and provide a rich context for painting on Japanese ceramics. *PAINTED CLAY: Wada Morihiro and Modern Ceramics of Japan* is accompanied by a fully illustrated printed catalogue with topical essays.

Wada Morihiro was one of the most popular clay artists of his generation whose work was in great demand throughout his lifetime. He paired his powerful sculptural vessels with intricately painted, abstracted patterns of grasses, cedar, and other captivating nature-based designs. Utilizing a multiplicity of techniques, including slip decoration, inlay, wax-resist, carving, underglaze, and blown-on glaze, Wada quickly emerged as a bold, fresh talent within the long tradition of Japanese painted ceramics. For several decades, until his premature death in 2008, Wada was the most respected and sought-after Japanese artist working with polychrome decorated surfaces.

A stunning diversity of his work is presented in this exhibition that covers the entire span of his career. It is complemented by highlights from his teachers, his contemporaries, and those by the next generation of ceramists whose clay forms perfectly harmonized with their painted surfaces. Whether by brush, ladle, sponge or even spray gun, it is evident from the work of past masters like Hamada Shōji (1894-1978) to those a century later by rising young stars like Tanaka Yū (b. 1989) that painting on clay is a vibrant field of innovation and creative expression within Japanese modern and contemporary ceramic art.



WADA MORIHIRO (1944-2008)
Tall rectangular vessel, titled
"Brilliance and Mystery" (*kakugenki*)
Slip-glazed stoneware, 1997
18 1/8 x 5 3/4 x 5 3/4 in.



WADA MORIHIRO (1944-2008)
Flattened vessel decorated with
connected flower-bud patterns
(*renraimonki*)
Slip-glazed stoneware, 1992
16 5/8 x 9 1/2 x 5 3/4 in.



WADA MORIHIRO (1944-2008)
Trapezoidal vessel decorated with
"Varied Thousand-Thread" pattern
(*keisenmonki*)
Slip-glazed stoneware, ca. 1995
8 3/4 x 8 3/4 x 5 1/2 in.

The influence of venerable painted ceramic traditions is evident in the work of modern masters such as Koie Ryōji (1938-2020) and Takauchi Shūgō (b. 1937) in their Oribe-glazed vessels, or Katō Tōkurō (1898-1985) in his Shino waterjar with vigorous brushwork. Not restricted to one region, painted clay in a multiplicity of styles and traditions can be found across Japan. From the works of artists based in Ishikawa Prefecture such as *kutani* masters Tokuda Yasokichi III (1933-2009) and Takegoshi Jun (b. 1948), to the primordial sculptural vessels of those based in mountainous areas north of Tokyo such as Hayashi Kaku (b. 1953) and Iguchi Daisuke (b. 1975) in Tochigi Prefecture, the artists featured in this exhibition are located not only around the heart of Japan's cultural heritage in Kyoto but also far beyond.

Modern artists have found inspiration from one region to another, including Wada Morihiro. Though a student of Kyoto-based ceramic genius Tomimoto Kenkichi (1886-1963), Wada moved to Kasama, Ibaraki Prefecture to break free of the classical aesthetics of Kyoto. The move enabled him to develop his own repertoire of motifs and techniques that were more closely aligned to the work of local master Kamoda Shōji (1933-1983). Works by both these ceramic virtuosos are presented in PAINTED CLAY.

In 1987, Wada Morihiro won the prestigious Japan Ceramic Society Prize. His work can be found in the collections of major international museums, including: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Musée national de céramique, Sèvres, France; Hamilton Gallery, Australia; Faenza International Museum of Ceramics, Italy; and the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan. PAINTED CLAY includes forty other artists who operated at the absolute pinnacle of modern and contemporary Japanese ceramics and were renowned for their command of painted surfaces.

About Joan B. Mirviss LTD

With more than forty-five years of experience, Joan B. Mirviss is a pillar in the field of Japanese art. As a dealer, scholar, curator, and advisor, she has been the driving force championing the top Japanese clay artists, who she represents exclusively, and whose works she has placed in major museums around the globe. Widely published as a highly respected expert, Mirviss has built many institutional and private collections of Japanese art. JOAN B MIRVISS LTD exhibits modern and contemporary Japanese ceramics, *ukiyo-e*, and Japanese paintings from its exclusive Madison Avenue location in New York City. Contact us for further information at director@mirviss.com.



KATŌ TŌKURŌ (1898-1985)
White Shino *mizusashi* (waterjar) with
matching cover
Glazed stoneware, ca. 1960
10 5/8 x 7 5/8 in.



TOKUDA YASOKICHI III (1993-2009)
Vase painted with brilliant blues and
deep purple suffused *kutani* glazes
Glazed porcelain, ca. 2004
12 x 9 1/2 in.



TANAKA YŪ (b. 1989)
Yellow sculpture in the shape of
furoshiki (wrapping cloth) with knot
2022
Glazed stoneware
19 x 16 1/8 x 12 1/2 in.