Restraint and Flamboyance

MASTERWORKS OF MINO

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Joan B Mirviss LTD
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The Foundations and Reincarnations of Mino Ceramics

Andrew L. Maske

THE PROVINCE OF MINO IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

Mino Province (now Gifu Prefecture) is located in the very center of Japan's main island of Honshū. Because of its important industries of sword and paper making, as well as its proximity to the ancient capital of Kyoto, it has been a significant cultural and political area through Japan's recorded history. Perhaps because of its role as the crossroads of Japan, Mino and its adjacent province of Owari saw the development of Japan's earliest glazed, high-fired ceramics beginning in the ninth century.

Mino was also the site of some of Japan's greatest military conflicts, most notably the Battle of Sekigahara, which in 1600 solidified the position of the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu (fig. 1) allowing him to create a dynasty that would rule Japan for over 250 years. One of Ieyasu's supporters in that confrontation was the warrior/tea master Furuta Shigenari (1544–1615), better known as Furuta Oribe. Oribe had been a student of the tea master Sen no Rikyū (1521–1591), who is credited with codifying the formalized practice of powdered tea drinking known as *chanoyu*, or the Japanese

FIG 1. Portrait of Tokugawa Ieyasu by unknown Kanō School artist. Color and ink on silk; hanging scroll. Collection of the Nikkō Tōshōgu Shrine.

tea ceremony. Rikyū met his end when he was ordered to commit ritual suicide (*seppuku*) by his lord, the ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), because of his involvement with the political issues of the day. Ironically, Oribe followed Rikyū as leading tea master and met the same fate in 1615 when it was discovered that he had changed sides and was secretly supporting Hideyoshi's heir who opposed Ieyasu.

What was it about *chanoyu* that made it so important to the powerful men of sixteenth and seventeenth century Japan? Although the philosophical, social, and religious underpinnings were of significance, shifting aesthetics and the competition for prized utensils and artworks had a greater impact on making *chanoyu* involvement a standard for taste and culture among Japan's elite warriors.

Rikyū had been among those to create an aesthetic revolution in Tea by advocating a simpler and more austere approach to *chanoyu* known as *wabicha*, using utensils of subdued and rustic domestic manufacture rather than the rare Chinese antiques that had been preferred previously. After Rikyū's death, Oribe became the foremost arbiter of *chanoyu* taste, designing tea gardens (*roji*), tea huts (*chashitsu*) and promoting his preferences for tea utensils (*chadōgu*). Because the first utensils for preparing matcha were imported from China in the thirteenth century, *chanoyu* developed within the assumption that the utensils used and the art displayed should be rare, if not unique. While Rikyū's aesthetic focused on subtle variations of hue, shape, texture, and material, Oribe advocated items that were bolder departures from convention. Even as he continued to espouse Rikyū's basic approach to *chanoyu* practice, Oribe made significantly different aesthetic choices, introducing greater distortion, stronger patterns, and sharper contrasts. His influence is most clearly seen in the medium of ceramics. Although he affected tea ware style at production areas throughout Japan, Oribe's impact is most clearly seen in the ceramics of Mino.

THE EMERGENCE OF DISTINCTIVE MINO CERAMICS

Although not produced in the same province, both Seto and Mino ceramics historically were referred to as Seto ware. Potters from Owari and Mino migrated between the two areas and often made similar items using the same techniques.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, military conflicts in Owari province resulted in the migration of a large number of potters into eastern Mino. There, they developed a new, larger type of kiln, the *ōgama*, and under the influence of Kyoto and Sakai tea masters, began creating new kinds of tea ceramics. Represented in this catalogue are modern interpretations of the four major ceramic genres created by the Mino potters: Yellow Seto (*ki-seto*), Black Seto (*seto-guro*), Shino and Oribe. The first two are considered to be earlier and date from the *ōgama* era in the second half of the sixteenth century. The latter two both feature painted decoration and began somewhat later. Oribe ware was produced only following the introduction of another type of kiln, the climbing kiln (*noborigama*), around 1600. Shino wares are found in *ōgama* kiln sites but only in consumer sites that post-date 1600, so it seems that *ōgama* production continued beyond the sixteenth century, perhaps changing from Black Seto and Yellow Seto wares to Shino wares after 1600.

Of the four Mino ceramic types, **Oribe ware** (fig. 2) is by far the most varied. Its most distinguishing

FIG 2. Mino ware, Narumi Oribe type ewer with cherry blossoms and picnic curtain. Early 17th century. Glazed stoneware, 8 1/8 in. (H). Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of Mary & Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015.300.270a–c.

characteristics are: 1) asymmetrical shapes; 2) idiosyncratic painted designs; and 3) use of a copper-green glaze on part or all of a piece. In fact, virtually every example of Oribe ware displays at least one of these features. **Shino ware** (fig. 3) displays only moderate irregularity and its painted patterns are generally abbreviated adaptations of flora from nature. It is beloved for its thick, irregular white glaze that sometimes blushes orange where it is thin. The Nobel Prize-winning novelist Kawabata Yasunari used a Shino teabowl as the alter-ego of his tragic heroine Mrs. Ota in the novel *Thousand Cranes* (*Senbazuru*, 1952). Mouse-gray (*nezumi*) Shino is a variation that is created by applying an iron wash underneath the white glaze. **Yellow Seto ware** (fig. 4) has no painted decoration and is usually symmetrical in shape, although items such as teabowls may have irregularities similar to those of Shino. Incised and molded patterns are sometimes seen, as is the use of patches of copper-green as highlights. **Black Seto ware** (fig. 5) was limited to teabowls, which were pulled out from the kiln in the midst of firing and rapidly cooled to cause their glaze to mature to a jet-black color. The bowls tend to be deep, with nearly vertical walls, and may have been an influence on Sen no Rikyū in his development of black Raku tea bowls around the same time.

In the 1620s, the Oribe style began to lose popularity among tea practitioners. With the peace and policy of national isolation ushered in by the Tokugawa shogunate, many potters moved back to Owari Province, where a collateral branch of the Tokugawa family was in control. Potters remaining in Mino shifted production to basic utilitarian wares such as sake flasks. Fine examples of tea ceramics from earlier Mino

FIG 3. Mino ware, Shino type straight-sided teabowl with bridge pattern in underglaze iron-oxide. Late 16th century. Glazed stoneware, 4 1/8 × 5 1/2 in. Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of Mary & Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015.300.271.

FIG 4. Mino ware, Yellow Seto (*ki-seto*) type food dish (*mukozuke*). Late 16th century. Glazed stoneware, $2\,1/2 \times 2\,1/8$ in. Private collection.

FIG 5. Mino ware, Black Seto type teabowl, known as "Iron Mallet." Late 16th century. Glazed stoneware, $3\,11/16 \times 4\,3/4$ in. Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of Mary & Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015.300.272.

production were handed down in prominent collections, but their Mino origins were soon forgotten, if they were ever acknowledged at all.

While ceramics production spread and diversified throughout Japan, Mino styles such as Shino and Oribe remained in obscurity throughout the eighteenth century. A few Kyoto potters made homage pieces during that time, which kept recognition of the old styles alive. It was not until the first half of the nineteenth century that Mino style ceramics began to experience a revival. Seto potters like Katō Shuntai (1802–1877) found a ready market for new ceramics in the style of Oribe ware in particular. This Mino revival period overlapped with the reopening of Japan in the 1850s and 1860s, and collectors and dealers like Edward S. Morse (1838–1925) and Siegfried Bing (1838–1905) began to introduce Mino styles to connoisseurs in America and Europe, but during this time the pieces were still believed to have originated in Seto.

MINO CERAMICS IN THE MODERN AGE

Finally, in 1930, the budding potter Arakawa Toyozō discovered sherds of Shino ware near the Mino town of Toki where he grew up. One in particular closely matched a cylindrical tea bowl decorated with a bamboo shoots design that had been handed down since the Momoyama period. Arakawa's discovery and subsequent excavations proved beyond doubt that Shino, Black Seto, Yellow Seto, and Oribe wares were first produced in Mino, not Seto as previously thought.

Arakawa's find was only the most significant of a series of investigations of kiln sites throughout Japan and Korea (then part of the Japanese Empire) that helped to transform understanding of early ceramics, particularly the stoneware kilns that had produced ceramics for Tea. As a result, in the 1920s and 1930s, potters, researchers, and others carried out kiln excavations in ceramics-

producing areas that included Karatsu, Bizen, Hagi, Arita, and Takatori, as well as Mino. This, in turn, led to a new revival of interest in reproducing the most compelling aspects of these historical wares and eventually led to the creation of new versions of tea ceramics that fit the modern aesthetic and creative spirit of the time.

The movement to resurrect and reinvigorate the sixteenth and seventeenth century tea wares of Mino, Karatsu, Bizen, Shigaraki, Iga, Raku, and other styles during the twentieth century is known as the Momoyama Revival. Following Japan's defeat in World War II and the resulting Allied Occupation, the activity that had begun in the 1930s found added stimulus with the spread of international art trends such as abstract expressionism. A new clientele for Japanese art and craft was also introduced, in the form of nearly 300,000 Allied (mostly American) military personnel. Ceramics became a vehicle through which Japanese traditional culture, embraced by the Imperial authorities as evidence of Japan's unique place in the world during the war but largely discredited in the immediate aftermath of defeat, could reassert itself as a relevant creative force.

An important, yet sometimes overlooked, aspect of Momoyama Revival ceramics is the fact that many of the most influential personalities did not come from traditional ceramics-producing households. Kitaōji Rosanjin is the most outstanding example, having begun his professional life as a calligrapher and coming to ceramics through his love of good food, food presentation, and his antiquarian interests. Arakawa Toyozō grew up in a Mino ceramics community, but did not begin to learn ceramics himself until his late twenties, and then did so in Kyoto, not Mino. Kawakita Handeishi was famously a major figure in the financial world before focusing on ceramics in later life, and

FIG 6. Kaneshige Tōyō. Mino ware, Shino type teabowl. ca. 1945. Glazed stoneware, $3\,3/4 \times 5\,7/8$ in. (see p. 24)

Takauchi Shūgō was a stockbroker who decided to become a potter at age 30.

There are certainly exceptions to this, such as the Mino potter Katō Tōkurō (1897–1985), Bizen's Kaneshige Tōyō (1896–1967), Miwa Kyūsetsu X (later known as Kyūwa (1895–1981) of Hagi, and the Karatsu potter Nakazato Tarōemon XII (later known as Muan, 1895–1985). These potters from established ceramics lineages refocused their families' traditions by their active participation in the research into Momoyama ceramic production that was taking place as they came into maturity (fig. 6). There were even collaborations with potters from non-ceramic backgrounds, such as the Karahine-kai that was founded by Kawakita Handeishi with Kaneshige, Miwa and Arakawa Toyozō in 1942 to promote the creation of Momoyama-style ceramics that were in keeping with their own age. Nevertheless, the craftsmen from established ceramics families were rather limited in the extent to which they could explore traditions outside their own, in ways that others were not.

The craftsmen mentioned above can be considered the first generation of Momoyama Revival potters. During their period of greatest influence, the 1950s, a new generation of ceramics makers was coming of age. These young men differed from their forebears in that they were generally trained in ceramics programs in vocational institutes or art schools, even if they were born into potting families. As a result, they had broader exposure to new ideas and different styles. Some of them, like the members of Sōdeisha (The Sliding Through Mud Society) positively rejected traditional approaches to ceramics, at least early in their careers.

It is interesting that many of this later generation of ceramics makers eventually softened their stance against traditional vessels, including the members of Sōdeisha featured in this exhibition: Yagi Kazuo and Kumakura Junkichi. It is furthermore intriguing that none of the later generation potters featured here, even those who focused mainly on vessels, limited themselves solely to traditional Mino formats. Even Katō Tōkurō's son, Okabe Mineo, became a master of celadon as well as an outstanding Mino potter, and Katō Yasukage (fig. 7) spent several years of his youth living and working in Bizen. Far from diluting the power of the Mino tradition, this diversification of skills has enriched the realm of contemporary Mino ceramics and created works that go far beyond modern versions of Momoyama period tea wares.

It is a tribute to the originality and taste of Japanese ceramics makers and their patrons over the past four hundred years that the Mino styles have not only managed to survived, but to thrive, as the works of current Japanese potters invoking these ancient formats continue to delight ceramics lovers around the world today.

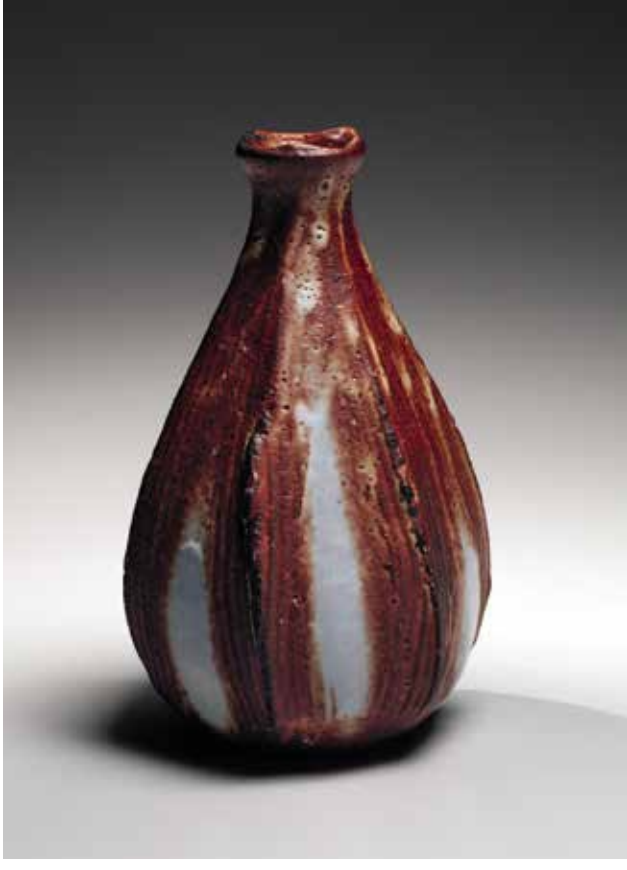

FIG 7. Katō Yasukage. Mino ware, Gray Shino type (*nezumi-shino*) vase. 1998. Glazed stoneware, 8 1/2 × 5 in.

Andrew L. Maske is Associate Professor of Art History (Asianist) at the University of Kentucky. His numerous publications on Japanese ceramics include *Potters and Patrons in Edo Period Japan: Takatori Ware and the Kuroda Domain* (Ashgate 2011).

WORKS IN EXHIBITION

^

OKABE MINEO (1919–1990)
岡部嶺男
Pair of straight-sided Mino ware teacups: one Oribe type and the other Shino type with iron glaze
ca. 1960
Glazed stoneware
$3\frac{7}{8} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ in.
$3\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{5}{8}$ in.

>

OKABE MINEO
Mino ware, Oribe type, striated, square plate with low straight sides and cut corners
ca. 1965
Glazed stoneware
$1\frac{1}{8} \times 9\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$ in.

<

OKABE MINEO
Mino ware, Oribe type, columnar vase with alternating carved banding
ca. 1963
Glazed stoneware
$8\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ in.

>
ARAKAWA TOYOZŌ (1894–1985)
荒川豊蔵
Mino ware, Yellow Seto (*ki-seto*) vase in the shape of a *kinuta* (wooden block for beating cloth)
ca. 1955
Glazed stoneware
$8\frac{1}{8} \times 4$ in.

<
OKABE MINEO
Mino ware, Oribe type, round bowl with alternating carved banding
ca. 1965
Glazed stoneware
$3\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in.

>
OKABE MINEO
Mino ware, Oribe type, *tokkuri*-style vase with alternating carved banding
ca. 1962
Glazed stoneware
$8\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ in.

<

ARAKAWA TOYOZŌ
Mino ware, Painted Shino (*e-shino*) type, straight-sided teabowl with bridge pattern in iron-oxide
ca. 1965–74
Glazed stoneware
3 5/8 × 5 3/8 in.
Exhibited/published: *Ningen kokuhō Arakawa Toyozō Exhibition*, Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu, and other venues, 2007–09 and in accompanying publication, pl. 58.

v

ARAKAWA TOYOZŌ
Mino ware, Shino type, straight-sided teabowl with unglazed circle in interior
ca. 1965–74
Glazed stoneware
5 1/8 × 5 1/4 in.

^

OKABE MINEO

Mino ware, Painted Shino (*e-shino*) type, teabowl with underglaze geometric patterning in iron-oxide
ca. 1965
Glazed stoneware
$3\,^{3}/_{8} \times 5\,^{1}/_{2} \times 5\,^{3}/_{8}$ in.

<

OKABE MINEO

Mino ware, Shino type, straight-sided teabowl decorated with unusual carved, angular patterning with iron-oxide glaze
ca. 1955
Glazed stoneware
$3\,^{1}/_{4} \times 3\,^{3}/_{4} \times 4$ in.

<

KITAŌJI ROSANJIN (1883–1959)
北大路魯山人
Mino ware, Oribe type, vase in the form of a stemmed gourd with incised woven bamboo patterning
ca. 1958
Glazed stoneware
8 × 6 7/8 in.

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KITAŌJI ROSANJIN
Mino ware, Oribe type, square, curved platter with reed patterning
1949
Glazed stoneware
1 5/8 × 10 3/8 × 10 3/8 in.

^

KITAŌJI ROSANJIN
Mino ware, Red Shino type, straight-sided teabowl with lattice patterning
ca. 1955
Glazed stoneware
3 3/4 × 5 × 5 1/8 in.
Published: Kuroda, Ryōji. *Kitaōji Rosanjin: kokoro to sakuhin*. Tokyo, 1983, p. 45, pl. 26; Takegoshi, Nagao. *Nyūmon Rosanjin no tōki* Tokyo, 1977, p. 26.

>

KITAŌJI ROSANJIN
Mino ware, Gray Shino (*nezumi-shino*) type, teabowl with lattice patterning and slightly flared lip
ca. 1958
Glazed stoneware
4 5/8 × 4 3/4 in.

KITAŌJI ROSANJIN
Mino ware, Red Shino type, undulating square plate with iris patterning
ca. 1957
Glazed stoneware
1 3/4 × 11 3/8 in.

>
KATŌ HAJIME (1900–1968)
加藤肇
Mino ware, Narumi Oribe type,
kutsu (clog-shaped) teabowl
with beads-on-string patterning
ca. 1948
Glazed stoneware
4 7/8 × 5 1/4 in.

<
KITAŌJI ROSANJIN
Mino ware, Oribe type, cylindrical vase with
attenuated eared handles and rolled-in mouth
ca. 1955
Glazed stoneware
10 3/4 × 4 1/8 × 5 1/4 in.

^
KUMAKURA JUNKICHI
(1920–1985)
熊倉順吉
Mino ware, Oribe type, straight-sided bowl
with irregular mouth, ca. 1960
Glazed stoneware
15 5/8 × 15 1/4 in.

<

KAWAKITA HANDEISHI (1878–1963)
川喜田半泥子
Mino ware, Black Oribe (*kuro-oribe*) type, Momoyama-style *kutsu* (clog-shaped) teabowl with central white section decorated with underglaze grasses patterning
ca. 1943
Glazed stoneware
6 1/8 × 6 1/4 in.

^

KAWAKITA HANDEISHI
Mino ware, Shino type, round teabowl with high foot and abstract underglaze patterning in iron-oxide
ca. 1940
Glazed stoneware
5 1/4 × 5 7/8 in.

^
KANESHIGE TŌYŌ (1896–1967)
金重陶陽
Mino ware, rare Shino type, straight-walled teabowl made when working at Arakawa's Mutabora kiln
ca. 1945
Glazed stoneware
$3\,^{3}/_{4} \times 5\,^{7}/_{8}$ in.

>
YAGI KAZUO (1918–1979)
八木一夫
Mino ware, round, squat, *mizusashi* (waterjar) with dripping Shino glaze and matching ceramic cover
ca. 1970
Glazed stoneware
$5\,^{1}/_{4} \times 8\,^{1}/_{8}$ in.

>
SUZUKI OSAMU (KURA) (b. 1934)
鈴木蔵
Mino ware, Shino type, tall five-lobed (cherry blossom-shaped) vessel
ca. 1994
Glazed stoneware
11 × 11 1/4 in.

^
KOIE RYŌJI (b. 1938)
鯉江良二
Mino ware, Oribe type, *tsubō* (vessel) with iron-oxide splash patterning and incised abstract patterning
1991
Glazed stoneware
11 5/8 × 10 1/4 in.

>
SUZUKI GORŌ (b. 1941)
鈴木五郎
Mino ware, Narumi Oribe (green, brown and white-glazed) type, geometric-patterned tea caddy with matching cover
ca. 1996
Glazed stoneware
4 × 2 3/8 in.

^
SUZUKI OSAMU (KURA)
Mino ware, Shino type, straight-walled teabowl with irregular mouth and decoration in iron-oxide
2010
Glazed stoneware
3 5/8 × 5 3/8 × 5 3/4 in.
Exhibited/published: *Gendai no meiwan ten* (Master Teabowls of Our Days). Tokyo: Musée Tomo, 2013, pl. 30.

>
SUZUKI OSAMU (KURA)
Mino ware, Shino type, faceted, thickly walled teabowl
2015
Glazed stoneware
4 3/8 × 4 5/8 × 5 1/8 in.

<
SUZUKI OSAMU (KURA)
Mino ware, Shino type, sculptural vessel comprised of three thick, folded, conjoined slabs, banded in a creamy white glaze on red clay
ca. 1980
Glazed stoneware
11 3/8 × 11 1/8 × 11 3/8 in.

>
HAYASHI SHŌTARŌ (b. 1947)
林正太郎
Mino ware, Shino type, slightly curved-walled, shallow basin with iron-oxide patterning
ca. 1985
Glazed stoneware
5 1/8 × 12 5/8 in.

<
WAKAO TOSHISADA (b. 1933)
若尾利貞
Mino ware, Oribe type, irregular, cube-shaped vase with triangular patterning in iron-oxide and impressed designs
ca. 2004
Glazed stoneware
7 1/4 × 6 1/4 in.

>
SUZUKI OSAMU (KURA)
Mino ware, Shino type, cherry-blossom-shaped *mizusashi* (waterjar) with vertical stripes in red clay and milky white glaze
1988
Glazed stoneware
9 1/8 × 8 1/4 in.
Exhibited/published: *Shino - Suzuki Osamu*, Takashimaya Art Galleries, Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Yokohama, 2001, p.17.

<

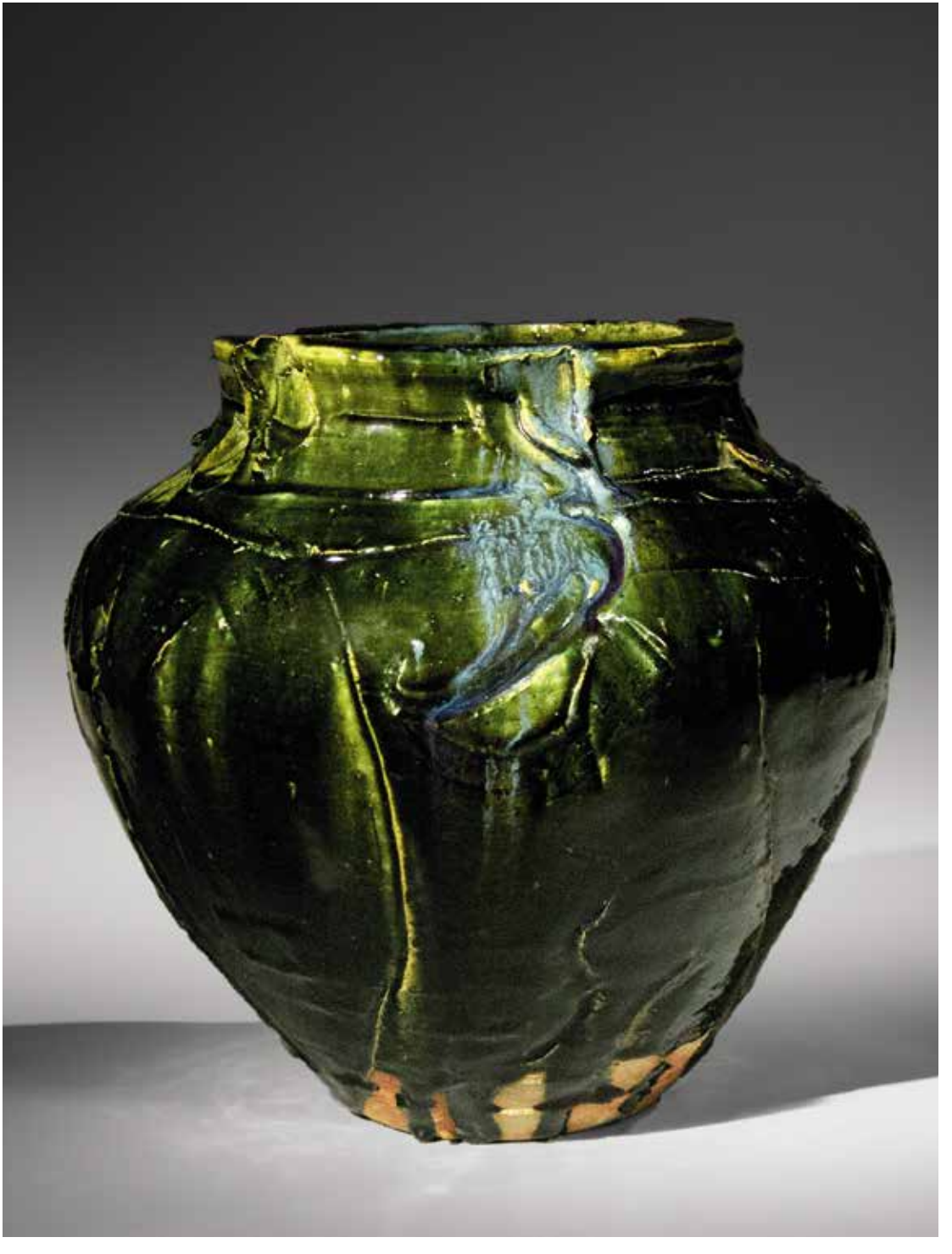
WAKAO TOSHISADA
Mino ware, Gray Shino (*nezumi-shino*) type, cylindrical *mizusashi* (waterjar) with matching recessed cover
ca. 1990
Glazed stoneware
6 1/2 × 6 7/8 in.

<

KATŌ SHIGETAKA (1927–2013)
加藤重高
Mino ware, Oribe type, covered rectangular box with decoration in four quadrants and tree design in interior
ca. 1978
Glazed stoneware
6 1/4 × 9 1/2 × 8 1/2 in.

v

KATŌ YASUKAGE (1964–2012)
加藤康景
Mino ware, Oribe type, rectangular, footed platter with carved, spiral patterning
ca. 2005
Glazed stoneware
2 1/2 × 18 × 7 1/4 in.



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TAKAUCHI SHŪGŌ (b. 1937)
高内秀剛
Mino ware, Oribe type, *tsubō* (vessel) with wide raised mouth and carved irregular linear patterning
2012
Glazed stoneware
12 × 12 in.

^

KATŌ YASUKAGE
Mino ware, Black Seto type, teabowl with irregular mouth and slightly crawling glaze
ca. 2006
Glazed stoneware
3 3/4 × 4 3/4 × 4 1/4 in.

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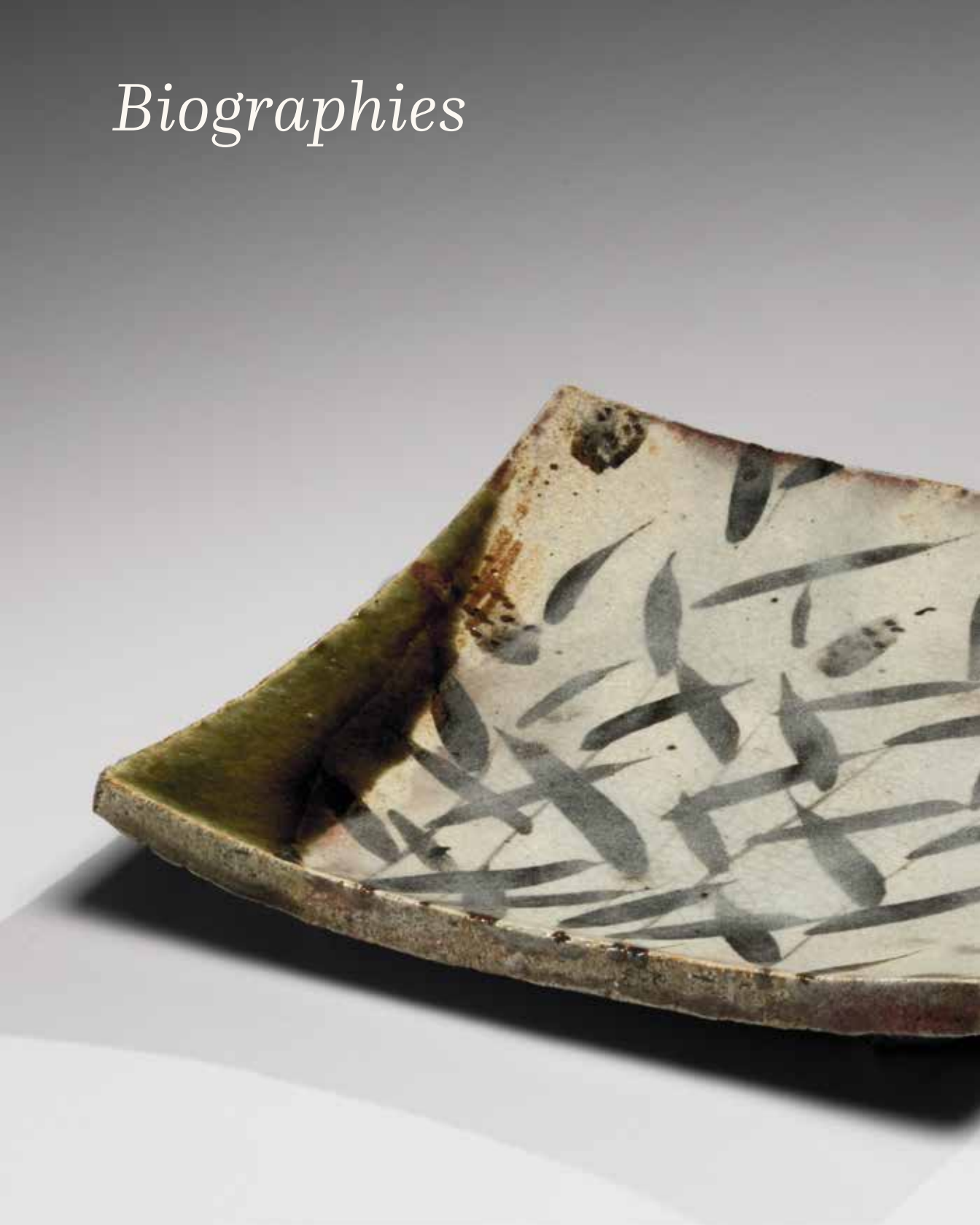
KATŌ YASUKAGE
Mino ware, Shino type, irregular straight-sided teabowl
1998
Glazed stoneware
4 1/4 × 5 in.

<

KATŌ YASUKAGE
Mino ware, Yellow and Black Seto type, teabowl with straw burn marks on unglazed clay
ca. 2010
Glazed stoneware
3 3/8 × 4 1/2 × 4 1/4 in.

KITAŌJI ROSANJIN
Mino ware, Yellow Seto (*ki-seto*) type (fired to a pale bluish gray)
tsubō-shaped vase with copper-underglaze splashed patterning, 1950
Glazed stoneware, 9 × 9 1/4 in.

Biographies



ARAKAWA TOYOZŌ (1894–1985)

As both a scholar and potter, Arakawa Toyozō left a profound mark on the world of ceramics in numerous ways. First pursuing painting, he began to study ceramics in 1922. While apprenticing with the celebrated, irascible ceramist Kitaōji Rosanjin (1883–1959), Arakawa discovered the ancient kiln sites at Mino that allowed him to redefine the origins of Momoyama tea ceremony wares. Most importantly, through this discovery, Arakawa successfully replicated the Shino and Oribe glazing techniques of the 16th century, becoming the first modern potter to do so. His work and research earned him in 1955 the designation of Living National Treasure for Shino ware, the first to be so recognized.

HAYASHI SHŌTARŌ (b. 1947)

Born into a family of potters, Hayashi Shōtarō developed his own approach to traditional Shino ware. In researching this process, he explored methods of controlling the unpredictable “flame patterning” that appears on the surface of fired works when using iron either in the clay or the glaze. Additionally, he established several kilns for testing numerous clay types and glazes under a variety of firing and cooling processes. His experimentation, spanning decades, has resulted in work covered in thick, unctuous, creamy, multi-hued glaze on a reddish ground. The strong potting and dynamic, rough surfaces of his largely functional works provide balance for his powerful, creative reinterpretation of centuries-old glazes.

KANESHIGE TŌYŌ (1896–1967)

One of the most important ceramic artists of the 20th century, Kaneshige Tōyō was the first Bizen potter to be designated a Living National Treasure in 1956. He was not only a master ceramist, but also a prominent teacher and mentor, producing many disciples including those who later themselves became Living National Treasures. Today, hundreds of potters follow his footsteps in Bizen. He was one of the regional potters who became an integral part of the "Momoyama revival movement" and strove to rediscover the ancient techniques used—of clay preparation, kiln building, kiln loading, and firing—to produce that celebrated, coveted tea ware.

KATŌ HAJIME (1900–1968)

By age fourteen, Katō Hajime began working as a painter’s apprentice at Senpōen, a ceramic manufacturing company, and he later studied design and painting at the Aichi Prefectural Ceramic School. In 1926, at the Gifu Prefectural Institute of Ceramics, he began researching ancient Chinese ceramics and created his own ceramic artworks, transforming himself from designer to ceramist. From then on, Katō’s career took off and his ceramics gained international attention, even winning the grand prize at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1937. The pinnacle of his ceramic career came in 1961, when he was designated the second Living National Treasure for polychrome porcelain, following Tomimoto Kenkichi.

KATŌ YASUKAGE XIV (1964–2012)

Katō Yasukage, who was one of the top young ceramic talents in Japan, specialized in the centuries-old traditions of milky white Shino and green-copper glazed Oribe wares. Following the sudden deaths of his illustrious father and grandfather, both renowned ceramists, the fifteen-year-old Katō was sent by his family to Bizen for several years to study ceramics and that region’s firing techniques. After further academic training and highly influenced by his time in Bizen, he returned to Gifu and brought with him a fresh vision to these classical approaches. Powerful forms and exquisite glazes characterize his masterfully wood-fired sculptural vessels.

KATŌ SHIGETAKA (1927–2013)

Shigetaka was the second son of Katō Tōkurō (1898–1985), who was one of Japan’s greatest 20th century masters but also a controversial figure. Shigetaka, like his elder brother Okabe Mineo (1919–1990), overcame the burden of having such a renowned father, and became a celebrated potter in his own right, with styles and aesthetics uniquely his own. Initially, he opposed continuing in his father’s footsteps, but after the latter’s death, he returned to the world of classical ceramics in a style not unlike that of Tōkurō. Shigetaka won several awards, including a prestigious award in 1966 from the Japan Ceramic Society.

KAWAKITA HANDEISHI (1878–1963)

One of the artists having the largest impact on the Japanese tea world was Kawakita Handeishi, a prosperous banker who held several important financial positions but who also found time for calligraphy, painting, poetry, and photography. At the age of fifty-six, Handeishi turned exclusively to the world of clay and brought new life to a then stagnant field with his non-tradition-based aesthetics. His very personal, charming, and delightful teabowls and other tea implements influenced many young ceramists of the pre-war era who in turn became masters.

KITAŌJI ROSANJIN (1883–1959)

Thought by many to be one of Japan's greatest ceramists, Kitaōji Rosanjin mastered an outstanding range of styles, forms and glazes. He was peerless in his day, with an astonishing array of traditional glaze traditions all applied to seemingly effortlessly made, classically inspired forms. As both an antiques dealer and restaurant owner, he profoundly understood why, through history, certain vessels and dishes were made the way they were and equally how the glazes “should” look. To keep up with the demand for his work, he needed assistants and in 1927 hired the future Living National Treasure for Shino ware, Arakawa Toyozō.

KOIE RYŌJI (b. 1938)

One of the most versatile and forward-thinking of Japan's contemporary artists, Koie Ryōji is best known as a ceramist, but esteemed for his two-dimensional art work as well. His love of experimentation has led to his creation of "ceramic happenings," with themes that are social and often political critiques of the horrors of the 20th century, such as Nanking, Auschwitz and Chernobyl. Born in the ceramic center of Tokoname, Koie spent over a decade training at local institutes before opening his own studio. An extremely popular artist, he is now elderly and in fragile health, and has ceased working.

KUMAKURA JUNKICHI (1920–85)

Kumakura Junkichi graduated in 1942 from Kyoto Institute of Technology as a design major. From 1946 to 1947, Kumakura, along with Tamura Kōichi, was an assistant to Tomimoto, when he was greatly influenced by the master's techniques and concept of the role of ceramist-artist. Not long thereafter, he became a core member of Sōdeisha. Unusual for the period, much of his sculptural work is boldly focused on sexuality and eroticism. He was awarded the first Japan Ceramic Society Award in 1954, and soon thereafter he began exhibiting in international competitive shows in Europe, where his work was awarded major prizes.

OKABE MINEO (1919–90)

Although born into a famous ceramic family, Okabe Mineo fought throughout his youth to avoid a career in the field and had hoped to one day become a physicist. However, he was forced to return to that world after military service in WWII, whereupon he struggled to survive as an impoverished potter. Starting in the early 1950's, with new bold work inspired in part by ancient Jōmon vessels but covered in his uniquely brilliant blue-green Oribe type glaze, Okabe began to win prestigious prizes with his highly original hand-built forms. About ten years later, he tackled the very difficult double-crackle celadon glaze with extraordinary results, making some of the most beautiful celadons ever created in a wide range of colors and textures.

SUZUKI GORŌ (b. 1941)

Suzuki Gorō has revitalized the aesthetics of classical Oribe ceramics with his unrivaled inventiveness. His most groundbreaking technique, called *yobitsugi* (patchwork), demonstrates his playful nature. His aesthetics are traditional, yet lively and charming, classical yet avant-garde. Through his endless creativity, Suzuki makes each of his vessels different and unique, often incorporating contemporary elements from the world around him such as light bulbs, cars, and barking dogs, all of which convey the artist's sharp comic sensibility and genius for blending modernity with the traditional Oribe repertoire of patterns and glazes.

SUZUKI OSAMU (KURA) (b. 1934)

As the young son of a talented potter, Suzuki Osamu visited and studied many of the local ancient kilns in the Mino area and marveled at the 16th century kiln building, firing, and throwing methods. Despite the sophistication and brilliance of the Momoyama ceramics, Suzuki believes that he is best able to re-cast his ideas of contemporary Shino ceramics using a gas-fired kiln, for which he employs modern scientific methods. Through exhaustive experimentation, Suzuki has developed his unique Shino with notably thick walls, requiring longer firing and slow cooling periods, endowing his works with modernity and dynamism not found elsewhere. For this he was designated in 1994 as the Living National Treasure for Shino glaze.

TAKAUCHI SHUGŌ (b.1937)

First employed in a design company, in 1986 Takauchi Shūgō was motivated to change fields and enter the ceramic world after visiting Mashiko and studying the vessels of Hamada Shōji. Takauchi specializes in thickly walled stoneware vessels adorned with ladle-poured glazes and contemporary versions of medieval Japanese Oribe, Shino and ash-glazed functional vessels. Often extremely large in scale, his works are, in effect, sculpture, but with a decided traditional origin. Takauchi represents one of those rare artists who can work freely in a wide range of regional and historical styles. His work has been featured in exhibitions around the world over several decades.

WAKAO TOSHISADA (b. 1932)

Specializing in Gray Shino (*nezumi-shino*) ware, a type of ceramic glazing with a long tradition originating in the Momoyama period (16th century), Wakao Toshisada chiefly produces tableware, large-scale plates and vases in abstract forms. The daring sculptural silhouettes of his work contrast with the natural decorative motifs inspired by *rinpa* painting that cover their surfaces. To achieve such intricate decoration, he first applies iron slip, followed by scraping, application of resist, adding layers of glaze, and then multiple firings. He also employs *neriage* technique, a process of merging different colored clays.

YAGI KAZUO (1918–79)

Yagi was a hugely celebrated artist in Kyoto and the standard-bearer for contemporary ceramic art in postwar Japan. After graduating from the sculpture department of the Kyoto City University of Arts, he became a student at the Kyoto Ceramics Research Institute 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. With broad interests in poetry, music and photography, he inevitably became Sōdeisha's spokesman, and focused on the creation of "objets"—neither pure sculpture nor simply vessels.

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Wikimedia for portrait painting of Tokugawa Ieyasu in essay by Andrew Maske.
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Restraint and Flamboyance

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