

Vessel or Not?

Ichikawa Toru, Kimura Moriyasu, Matsui Toshio, Matsumura Jun, Michikawa Shozo

Exhibition Dates: February 23rd – April 2nd, 2022



Ichikawa Toru

N/A, N/A

Ceramic

H10 x W10 x D10 cm

(ikt161012-7)

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Kimura Moriyasu
Tenmoku Andromeda, 2019
Ceramic
H4.8 × W10.3 × D10.2 cm
(kimums0043)

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Matsui Toshio
girasole, 2017
Ceramic and Lacquer
H8 x W13.1 x D12.4 cm
(matsts0061)

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Matsumura Jun
Shifting Qualia, 2020
Porcelain
H9 x W13.8 x D13.8 cm
(matsjn0087)

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Michikawa Shozo
Sculptural Form Kohiki Pot, 2019
Ceramic
H16.5 x W31.5 x D25.5 cm
(michsz0025)

Sokyo Lisbon presents its new group exhibition, *Vessel or Not?*, an intimate gathering of five Japanese ceramists sharing the same space and harmoniously exploring the same material with their different approaches.

Ceramic artworks frequently float in between functional and sculptural concepts. If, on one side, we have objects created to be used with a particular function, on the other we have pieces which value is mostly aesthetic and symbolic. But is there a line that separates both environments? Can an artist work in both universes? Can we find features from both concepts in one artwork? How do we separate one from another? The exhibition features five artists with the purpose of bringing up that duality and inviting the viewer to reflect on this matter.

Tradition can be easily found in the works of Kimura Moriyasu. He is one of the few Japanese masters still working with Tenmoku wares, which refers to the teabowls originally imported from China, brought to Japan by Japanese priests to drink tea. They became a valued part of tea ceremonies and the Japanese people started making their own. Carefully working on each step of the process, Kimura has mastered this centuries old technique and the result are unique and outstanding works of art.

Michikawa Shozo's works do not give away their purpose that easily. Moving between contemporary references and heritage, Michikawa works with ceramic at the intersection between sculpture and functionality, bringing a contemporary look on traditional shapes. A deep influence of volcanic activity and surrounding nature is recognized in the natural earthy hues of his creations.

“In the 21st century, with everything changing, I want to express contemporary feelings. We have a typical idea of what makes pottery good: it should be light, easy to use and feel nice to hold – but there is freedom in getting outside of the rules.” - Shozo
Michikawa

Duality is very much present in Matsui Toshio's work. The irregular outside surface of his works hides hypnotic patterns inside, coated with the ancient technique of urushi lacquer. Past the uneven surfaces and through the smooth lacquered interiors, the viewer always finds familiar shapes in his work.

The shapes created by Ichikawa Toru are also familiar but his process is just as experimental as it is daring. In the artist's constant search for beauty, he combines tradition and modernity, imprinting his contemporary perspective in the practice of Bizen ware.

Matsumura Jun's works are also influenced by tradition but reflect on contemporary society. His shapes live in an equilibrium. The delicacy of the porcelain is emphasized by its whiteness, only occasionally glazed, however, there is movement in his creations. They are graceful and elegant but also undoubtedly powerful.

About the artists

Ichikawa Toru was born in 1973 in Tokyo, Japan. He studied under the renowned ceramic artist Ryuichi Kakurezaki and in 2015 established his own studio in Okayama. Working mostly with Bizen clay and mixing it until he reaches the best material for his

creation, Ichikawa's work process features a contemporary depth by using traditional shapes combined with a bold use with of glaze and texture, resulting in creations that stands softly balanced between tradition and contemporary crafts.

Kimura Moriyasu was born in 1935 in Kyoto. Growing up in a pottery family and fascinated by the National Treasure "yuteki tenmoku tea bowl", Kimura studied ceramic in Kyoto Municipal Industrial Arts Research Institute and devoted his whole life to Tenmoku ware. Today with almost 90 years old he is one of the most important artists who still creates new tenmoku in Japan, mastering the kiln and the glaze and unique tones and textures. Kimura is represented in collections all over the world, including the British Museum, London, UK; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, U.S.A.; Dallas Museum of Art, TX, U.S.A.; National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan; National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan; among others.

Matsui Toshio was born in 1955 in Osaka, Japan. He studied Art at the University of Kyoto and completed his studies in ceramics in Faenza, Ravenna, Italy, where he won a scholarship in 1989.

The artist work is commonly described as a collaborative work between nature and the artist himself. His ceramic works carry an experimental feeling that arises from a managed balance of the nature spontaneous forces present in the clay material as it is, with little or none modification, accepting the natural expression of the material or any accidental changes, and the emphasis on the original concept imprinted by the artist, maintaining his initiative. His work is represented in the collections of The International Museum of Ceramics, Faenza, Italy; The Sougetsu Museum in Tokyo, Japan; The Ariana Museum in Geneva, Switzerland; Musee National de Ceramique, Sevres, France; among others.

Matsumura Jun was born in 1986 in Chiba, Japan. He studied in the Tajimi City Ceramics Design Institute and the Kanazawa Utatsuyama Kogei Kobo, in 2015 and 2018, respectively. He lives and works in Saitama, Japan. Matsumura's works are influenced by the Japanese philosophy and subcultures, and are based in the practice of Kogei (traditional Japanese arts and crafts). By using porcelain, the artist represents the delicacy of modern culture.

Michikawa Shozo was born in 1953 in Hokkaido, Japan. He studied at Aoyama Gakuin University where he completed his studies in 1975. He lives and works in Seto, Aichi. As one of the most acclaimed and international contemporary Japanese artists, Shozo Michikawa has developed a very unique approach to ceramic and sculpture, building from the negative space out, never touching the outside. The colours are generated from the process, as during their time in the kiln, natural earthy hues will develop or melt with applied glazes such as silver, or tanka, the process of smoking the ceramic with charcoal. Balancing both the traditional ceramic heritage and innovation of form, Michikawa's work are often imbued with a strong sculptural presence but they always fulfil some form of function.

Shozo Michikawa's work has joined museum collections worldwide including the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK; International Museum of Ceramic in Faenza, Italy; Los Angeles County Museum, L.A, USA; Philadelphia Art Museum, USA; Modern Glass & Ceramic Museum of Coburg, Germany and the China-Japan Exchange Center, Beijing, China.

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About Sokyo Lisbon

Sokyo Lisbon is a contemporary art and ceramics gallery based in Portugal in partnership with Sokyo Gallery in Kyoto, Japan. Sokyo Lisbon's aim is to present the highest quality of Japanese contemporary ceramics and works of art to an European audience including works by artists such as Machiko Hashimoto, Mishima Kimiyo, Osamu Kojima, Moriyasu Kimura, Toshio Matsui, Eiko Kishi, Toru Ishii, Heechang Yoon, Satoru Hoshino and Kazuhito Kawai, among others.

Atsumi Fujita is Sokyo Lisbon and Sokyo Gallery's Director. Founded in 2013, Sokyo Gallery represents over sixty artists working in ceramics, lacquer, textiles, glass and metal. The gallery participates regularly in international art fairs such as Artissima, ART021, Collect London, Dangdai, Design Basel, TEFAF Maastricht. Sokyo Gallery works closely with prestigious museums and institutions worldwide.

For further information please contact:

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