



Standing sculpture

1995

By Miyashita Zenji (Japanese, 1939–2012)

Stoneware with glaze

Gift of Mrs. Hideko Miyashita, 2014.21

Miyashita Zenji was an artist who innovated in both ceramic sculpture and functional wares. Beginning in the early 1980s, he became known for his signature method called *saidei*, “colored clays.” This technique involved layering paper-thin sheets of colored clay over one another to create a low-relief effect along the body of the vessel. Son of the ceramist Miyashita Zenju (1901–1968), Kyoto-based Miyashita was trained by Kiyomizu Kyubey (1922–2006) and Kusube Yaichi (1897–1984), a founder of the early twentieth-century Sekido ceramic art group.



Untitled

1993

By Takiguchi Kazuo (Japanese, b. 1953)

Stoneware with glaze

Gift from the Paul and Kathleen Bissinger Collection, 2016.112

Takiguchi Kazuo’s signature technique involves forming extremely thin sheets of clay into hollow, balloon-like forms. Once these forms have dried enough to retain their shape, the artist makes a slit in the top, providing a small opening that reveals the hollow interior and the fragility of the sculpture. He studied with several significant ceramic artists including Yagi Kazuo, whose focus on nontraditional sculptural forms was particularly influential to Takiguchi’s practice.

Sodeisha

Sodeisha (Crawling through Mud Association) was created in 1948 to forge a new artistic vocabulary in postwar Japan. It was formed in direct opposition to the concurrent Mingei movement that promoted rustic simplicity. Leader and spokesperson Yagi Kazuo described Sodeisha’s work using the French Surrealist term *objet*: “No matter how much one might intend to make something new, if one makes it on the wheel, it will be round and symmetrical. . . . We realized we had to create our own alphabet in terms of how we made our work, and thus we began making *objets*.”* The Sodeisha group remained active for five decades and disbanded in 1998.

*Yagi Kazuo, “Watashi no jijoden” [My autobiography], 17–18.



Foreigner (Kojin)

1987

By Suzuki Osamu (Japanese, 1926–2001)

Showa period (1926–1989)

Stoneware with glaze

Gift from the Paul and Kathleen Bissinger Collection, 2018.72

Suzuki Osamu, a founder of Sodeisha, escaped the predictability of clay vessels thrown on a potter’s wheel by creating *objets* from slab construction and eliminating a hole or mouth. Suzuki found inspiration in Neolithic Jomon tomb figures, among many other diverse ceramic sources. The title of this abstract work, *Kojin*, is a Japanese term historically used to refer to Westerners from Central Asia. These foreigners were depicted in Chinese ceramics as figures wearing pointed hats. One such ceramic figure, Standing Figure of a Westerner, from the Eastern Wei dynasty (534–550), is currently on view on the museum’s third floor in Gallery 15.



Vessel with design of alphabet letters

Approx. 1970–1975

By Yagi Kazuo (Japanese, 1918–1979)

Stoneware with glaze

Gift from the Paul and Kathleen Bissinger Collection, 2018.74

Yagi Kazuo created works that straddled the line between functional and sculptural ceramics. In many of his pieces, he included a hole or mouth, although the shape resists designation as a bowl, vase, or cup. The irregularly stamped Latin alphabet decoration—a jumble of letters that don’t come together as words—and an overlay of white slip here is typical of his decoration.

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Mingei

The Mingei movement—an influential exploration of Japanese folk crafts that began in the 1920s—promoted the rustic simplicity found in everyday ceramic vessels. Mingei potters, several of whom were based in Mashiko, north of Tokyo, made new works inspired by anonymous artisans from past centuries. This created an interesting paradox—key Mingei artists became renowned, and their ostensibly humble, everyday creations were appreciated as particularly fine works of studio craft.



Vase with calligraphic design

1950–1960

By Shoji Hamada (Japanese, 1894–1978)

Stoneware with slip inlay under glaze
Gift of June and William Vredenburg, 1991.96

Shoji Hamada was one of the most significant Japanese artists of the twentieth century and a key figure in the founding and promotion of the Mingei movement. He created elegant calligraphic designs in harmony with the simple rustic character of the stoneware that they decorated.



Bottle with flowing-water design

1950–1960

By Tatsuzo Shimaoka (Japanese, 1919–2007)

Stoneware with slip inlay under glaze
Gift of June and William Vredenburg, 1991.104



Bottle

Approx. 1950–1970

By Tatsuzo Shimaoka (Japanese, 1919–2007)

Stoneware with rope-impressed slip inlay under glaze
Gift of William S. Picher, B86P2

Tatsuzo Shimaoka was an important Mingei potter—the favorite student and longtime neighbor of Shoji Hamada. His signature decorative technique involved using braided rope to make an impression in wet clay, filling the design with white slip, and finishing with glaze.

Dramatic Departures

These two works showcase dramatic departures from the traditional forms and glazed surfaces of many of Japan's contemporary masters.

Akiyama Yo focuses on the material properties of clay in his ceramics. He considers his works' primordial connection to the earth and the chemical changes that occur when clay meets a kiln's fire.

Ogawa Machiko's artistic connection to raw natural beauty and geological forms is linked to her time living in West Africa as well as to the seaside landscape of her hometown of Sapporo, Hokkaido.



Untitled MV-1014

2010

By Akiyama Yo (Japanese, b. 1953)
Stoneware with distressed surface
Gift from the Paul and Kathleen Bissinger Collection, 2016.96



A Fragment of the Moon (Tsuki no kakera)

2013

By Ogawa Machiko (Japanese, b. 1946)
Porcelain with glass
Gift of Dr. Phyllis A. Kempner and Dr. David D. Stein, 2018.71

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Yakishime

These two vessels are examples of contemporary interest in the longstanding traditions of *yakishime* — high-fired unglazed stoneware with warm reddish undertones derived from iron-rich clay. This type of stoneware has a history that dates to at least the sixth century. It is appreciated for the unpredictable colors and surface patterns that emerge during firing. Its rustic and imperfect qualities are particularly valued by tea practitioners.

Harada Shuroku studied ancient kiln sites, ceramic shards, and the shapes of historic vessels for more than forty years to learn how his predecessors brought out the natural characteristics of ruddy stoneware clay from Bizen province.

Mihara Ken creates sculptural works in the tradition practiced in his home city of Izumo in Shimane prefecture. “Clay leads, and my hands follow. I do not know what shape my work is going to end up even while I am making it.”*

*Interview with Mihara Ken, Robert Yellin Yakimono Gallery, Kyoto, 2002.



Pouring vessel

2007

By Harada Shuroku (Japanese, b. 1941)
Stoneware with natural ash glaze
Gift from the Paul and Kathleen Bissinger Collection, 2016.97



Beat (Kodo)

2011

By Mihara Ken (Japanese, b. 1958)
Stoneware
Gift of Dr. Phyllis A. Kempner and Dr. David D. Stein, 2015.15

Global Feminists with Roots in Japanese Clay

Futamura Yoshimi and Katsumata Chieko (featured in a nearby video) are female artists who have spent significant portions of their careers abroad and who expanded their followings outside of Japan. This allowed them to be introduced to the male-dominated world of Japanese ceramics as established artists. Along with Ogawa Machiko (also featured in a nearby video), they have each created new territory in the world of Japanese ceramics. They push the boundaries of their materials and challenge tradition with respect to their methods of working, their forms, and their approaches to creating work that resists classification by geography or culture.



Black Hole

2015

By Futamura Yoshimi (b. 1959)
Stoneware with porcelain slip
Gift of Dr. Phyllis A. Kempner and Dr. David D. Stein, 2018.152

Futamura Yoshimi uses a blend of stoneware and porcelain to create collapsed sculptural forms with a rugged, almost volcanic appearance. Begun on a potter's wheel as a cylindrical form, works like *Black Hole* are then covered with white porcelain slip. This slip dries, then — as the artist continues to expand, tear, and perforate the object's shape — it cracks. Futamura trained at the Seto School of Ceramics, a center associated with the lineage of one of Japan's Six Old Kilns. She has lived and worked in Paris since 1986, a choice she made in part to avoid the gender biases in Japan that might have restricted her career.



Tentacled Sea Flower

2013

By Katsumata Chieko (b. 1950)
Chamotte-encrusted stoneware with glaze
Gift of Dr. Phyllis A. Kempner and Dr. David D. Stein, 2019.19

Katsumata Chieko creates ceramic forms inspired by sea life, plants, and minerals. She trained in France where she studied industrial design and ceramics in the 1970s. After returning to Japan, she honed her signature application of colored glaze painted on the ceramic's surface through thin, gauzy cloth, leaving no trace of brushwork. She also layers these applications of glaze through multiple firings. In *Tentacled Sea Flower*, a coral-like form is glazed in black and then covered with white chamotte (also known as “grog” or “fire sand”), coarse particles of ground fired clay.

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Porcelain

Porcelain, renowned for its lustrous white color, hardness, thinness, and resonance when struck, is a notoriously difficult clay body for potters to work with. It requires specific weather conditions for optimal firing and a very hot kiln (around 1,400° Celsius). Celadon glaze (*sekihakuji*), with a color that combines gray, blue, and green, is similarly difficult to achieve; it requires iron-oxide-based glaze fired in an oxygen-poor (reduction) environment.

Porcelain wares with celadon glaze were originally produced in Song dynasty (960–1279) China and have a long history in Korea as well. In Japan, porcelain was first made in the Arita region in the early seventeenth century and exported to global markets in Southeast Asia and Europe from the port city of Imari.

These four works of art are examples of the wide variety of approaches to this material and color in the world of contemporary ceramics.



Jade Green (Sui)

Approx. 2000

By Fukami Sueharu (Japanese, b. 1947)

Porcelain with celadon glaze

Gift of the Menke family in memory of their parents and grandparents Betty and John Menke, 2014.24

Fukami Sueharu was born into a Kyoto family of production potters specializing in Chinese-style blue-and-white porcelain. He developed his own method of working with porcelain clay, producing slender, elegant, and blade-like sculptures like this one through slip casting. He injects pressurized liquid clay into a plaster mold to achieve a sleek surface.



Bowl

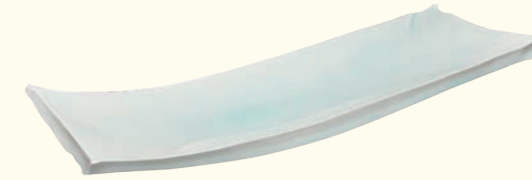
2011

By Kawase Shinobu (Japanese, b. 1950)

Porcelaneous stoneware with celadon glaze

Gift in honor of Dr. Laura W. Allen, 2013.48

Kawase Shinobu began his training in a studio near Tokyo where his grandfather and father made Chinese-style blue-and-white and polychrome enamel porcelains. He is particularly inspired by the Song dynasty celadon-glazed porcelain wares that he studied at the National Palace Museum in Taiwan.



Celadon oblong dish

Approx. 2011–2012

By Kato Tsubusa (Japanese, b. 1962)

Porcelain with celadon glaze

Gift of Dr. Phyllis A. Kempner and Dr. David D. Stein, 2016.154

Kato Tsubusa works in porcelain with imported fine, white kaolin clay from New Zealand. He combines the technical challenges of the clay body with the unpredictability of a wood-fired kiln and a large amount of glaze, which he allows to pool and drip to create unexpected effects.



Cornucopia 05-VIII

2014

By Tashima Etsuko (Japanese, b. 1959)

Porcelain and glass

Gift of Dr. Phyllis A. Kempner and Dr. David D. Stein, 2018.64

Tashima Etsuko acknowledges the influence of modern Japanese potters. But she is also inspired by the conceptual art and feminist activism of 1980s Japan. Her experimentations connect to the strains of Pop art and conceptualism taking shape in the global art world during that time.

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