

Makoto Hatori's Ceramics: Embracing Non-Color and Tradition in Artistic Evolution

My artistic journey and philosophy are deeply rooted in a profound exploration of ceramics and its connection to nature, materials, and the human experience. Through various subtopics and insights, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of my unique approach and vision:

Subtopic 1: "The Aesthetics of Non-Glaze"

My commitment to unglazed pottery and natural glaze stems from a philosophy that celebrates the natural beauty of clay in its untouched state. I focus on non-glazed ceramics to emphasize and honor the inherent charm of clay in its raw form. By rejecting glazing, I allow the clay's raw textures, earthy colors, and organic shapes to radiate with authenticity. This approach challenges traditional perceptions of ceramic art, prioritizing simplicity, purity, and harmony. My philosophy centers on capturing the essence of things "as they are," embracing the imperfections and uniqueness of the natural world.

Subtopic 2: "Unveiling My Creative Mind"

This subtopic provides insight into the sources of inspiration that shape my artistic creations. Whether influenced by the natural world, Japanese aesthetics, or personal experiences, my art is a reflection of deep contemplation and emotional expression. By delving into the motivations behind my artistic choices, you gain a glimpse of the profound meaning and significance embedded in my ceramic art.

Introduction:

In 1968 and 1974, I embarked on an apprenticeship under the guidance of a Master Potter in Traditional Ceramics, establishing the foundation for my lifelong journey in the world of Japanese ceramics. This quest aimed to unlock secrets where human design harmonizes with nature's unadulterated beauty. Little did I know that this path would lead me to convey nature's essence, recognize the spiritual connection to the external world, and embrace my presence as an artist, ultimately reshaping my artistic ethos.

Artistic Evolution:

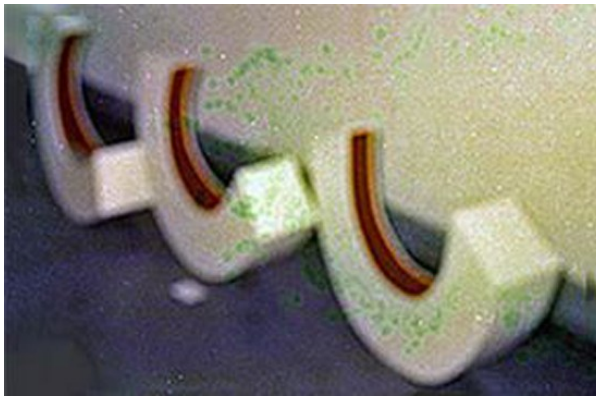
Since my training days, my relentless pursuit has been to merge the subject with the external world, following the philosophy of "mui-shizen (unconditioned spontaneity)," or "as

it is." This awakening to the unaltered universe has been nurtured by nature's sacred natural glaze, which transforms the impure into the sublime. This journey has bestowed profound humility, reverence for the uncorrelated interplay of events, and an awareness of the disharmony between body and mind, all of which form the core of my artistic creed.

Solo Exhibition: Looking back on the trajectory of 1969, 1993, 1995, and 2012

1969 - "L'espoir: Makoto Hatori" Suruga-Dai Gallery, Kanda, Tokyo (Japan)

In 1969, I unveiled my sculptural works at the Surugadai Gallery in Tokyo. These works, composed of materials such as wood, cloth, plaster, and rebellious sand, disrupted equilibrium and invited viewers into the unknown, external, seeking undifferentiated forms. These early pieces marked the beginning of a journey that would lead me to explore the boundaries of traditional and non-traditional materials in art.



Left: "Phase" Three semicircular vessels, each filled with different amounts of sand. Right: "Relation" A cloth bag filled with sand is placed in a crisscross pattern on a cylindrical shape made of plaster. Thus, the exhibition featured abstract works made of plaster, wood, cloth (canvas), and sand. Makoto Hatori's intention was to express a "state" of expanding physicality through "sand," a material that causes accidental displacement. The idea of the state of physicality and materiality behind this work continues to exist in my work. The solo exhibition "L'espoir: Makoto Hatori" was held at the former Surugadai Gallery in Kanda, Tokyo, in **1969**.

1993 - "Makoto Hatori: English Experience of a Bizen Potter" Leigh Gallery, London (U.K.)

In 1993, I ventured beyond the borders of Japan to share my unique perspective on Bizen pottery (natural glaze) with an international audience. The exhibition in London, titled "Makoto Hatori: English Experience of a Bizen Potter," was a testament to the cross-cultural dialogue that has always been at the heart of my artistic journey. It was an opportunity to showcase the rich heritage of natural glaze pottery while embracing the global stage.

1995 - "Makoto Hatori: Facing Tradition" Galerie d'Art Le Coin Ginza, Tokyo (Japan)

In 1995, I delved deeper into the exploration of tradition and its interaction with contemporary art. The exhibition titled "Makoto Hatori: Facing Tradition" challenged the boundaries of conventional

ceramics. It was a reflection of my commitment to engaging with the past while pushing the boundaries of what ceramics could be in a modern context.



Above: "Signpost," "Afternoon Sun," "Circle to Cube," "Bite," "Cluster," "Territory," and "Heaven, Earth, and People" only seven pieces. As shown in the photos, they were exhibited either on wooden tables or supported by wooden trunks, with these wooden supports being an integral part of the artworks. The ceramic section comprised a collection of vessels ranging from 5 to 10 cm in diameter. These vessels are fired without glaze, except for the natural glaze created from ash using the traditional Bizenware technique. The very fine clay known as "hiyose," used to attach the constituent parts of each piece, melts during the firing process, imparting a unique and indescribable texture (clay taste) to the surfaces. The solo exhibition "Makoto Hatori: Facing Tradition" Galerie d'Art Le Coin Ginza, Tokyo, in 1995.

2012 - "Makoto Hatori: Ceramics Meet Non-ceramic Materials" Art & Design Gallery, Nihon University College of Art, Tokyo (Japan)



In 2012, I embarked on a new artistic journey that blurred the lines between ceramics and non-ceramic materials. The exhibition, "Makoto Hatori: Ceramics Meet Non-ceramic Materials," held at the Art & Design Gallery of Nihon University College of Art, was a pivotal moment in my career. It showcased my exploration of the relationship between the artist and materials, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the essential otherness of both.

On the occasion of this exhibition, I gave a lecture to the students. The purpose of the lecture was to explain how to translate the intended image into a tangible form, emphasizing the diversity of different materials and focusing especially on the malleability of clay as a material in the realm of ceramics as an art form. In doing so, students would have gained a deeper understanding of the creative process and expressive possibilities of working with clay.

These exhibitions represent significant milestones in my artistic evolution. They illustrate my ongoing quest to challenge conventions, embrace diversity, and navigate the complex interplay between tradition and innovation. Each exhibition has contributed to the narrative of my artistic journey, allowing me to share my unique perspective on ceramics and the creative process with the world.

Engaging with Tradition and Modern Perspectives:



Above: Cloth Texturing, Autumn Grass Pattern Vase," (w)39.0 -(d)39.0 -(h)34.0 cm, stoneware (non-glazed with slip), wood-fired and charcoal smoked, traditional way fired to 1250 degrees C., eight-day firing. Exhibited at the Traditional Crafts New Exhibition, Nihon Kogeikai, Tokyo, Japan, **1989.**

The juxtaposition of traditional ceramics and contemporary art is a vital aspect of my work. By focusing on traditional non-glazed ceramics and contrasting them with modern pieces, I underscore the harmony between traditional and contemporary perspectives. Traditional works have significantly influenced my creative process, providing crucial insights into the balance between harmony with nature, values, and the essence of art.

One challenge I have encountered in inheriting tradition while incorporating modern viewpoints is striking the right balance between tradition and innovation. While I deeply respect the beauty and philosophy of traditional non-glazed ceramics, I also need to integrate new ideas and materials to maintain the appeal of my work as contemporary art. Additionally, harmonizing traditional values with those of contemporary society presents its own set of challenges.

However, these challenges also present opportunities. By blending the aesthetics and philosophy of traditional non-glazed ceramics with modern artistic perspectives, I can create new viewpoints and approaches. Juxtaposing traditional works with my most recent creations encourages viewers to contemplate the relationship between tradition and modernity, fostering the development of new values. Such comparisons contribute to the evolution and growth of my art.

While I may lack philosophical historicity derived from tradition, I have adopted modern perspectives on nature, values, and the art of creation. My spirituality aligns with the connection to nature found in traditional non-glazed pottery, where my being was forged during the fires of transformation. Traditional works based on such principles are in the collections of prestigious institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum.



Left-above: "Bizen-style Faceted Mizu-sashi," 19.5 centimeters in height, wood-fired stoneware with natural wood ash, fire change, traditional way fired at 1280 degrees C., eight-day firing. Right: "Ring," 33.0 centimeters in height, stoneware and slip painting, traditional way fired at 1300 degrees C., oxidation, eight-day firing. Both works were exhibited in the exhibition 'Makoto Hatori' at the former Lee Gallery, London, June 15 to 27, 1993, and were acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum, UK, **1993**.



Left-above: "Bizen-style Wide-mouthed Bulbous," (w) 21.0, (d) 21.0, (h) 31.0 cm, wood-fired stoneware with natural wood ash, fire change, traditional way fired at 1280 degrees C., eight-day firing. Right: "Bizen-style Cylindrical Lidded Pottery Mizu-sashi," (w) 19.0, (d) 19.0, (h) 17.0 cm, thrown and altered stoneware with

natural wood ash, sesame seed-fired decoration, Bizen traditional way fired at 1300 degrees C. oxidation, eight-day firing. Both of the works, included in the collection of the British Museum (U.K.) in **1996**. It is also featured in Amedeo Salamoni's "Wood-Fired Ceramics: 100 Contemporary Artists," with a foreword by Jack Troy (Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 2014), pp. 90–91.



Above: "Vessel: Otherness," (w)58.0 -(d)16.5 -(h)18.5 cm, wheel-thrown and altered stoneware, with natural glaze, fire change, traditional way fired to 1250 degrees C. reduction, eight-day firing, 2nd International Ceramic Triennial UNICUM. Exhibited at European Cultural and Technological Center Maribor (EKTC), Manor Betnava, Slovenia, May 15- September 30, **2012**.

Embracing Unconventional Aesthetics:

In my career as a ceramic artist, I have embraced unconventional aesthetics, drawing inspiration from concepts like “arugamama” (as it is), ‘ituki’ (Steadiness/Solidity) and ‘kata’ (Model/Form), to transcend conventional notions of ceramics. My art engenders dynamic entities that evolve and interact with the external realm, imbuing them with a profound sense of harmony and purpose. Additionally, I incorporate the concept of 'ituki' (In this case, release from the restraint of change) from traditional Japanese martial arts, which plays a significant role in shaping my creations, much like it does for martial artists, ensuring effective technique execution and balance.

Recognition and Boundary-Pushing:

"Vessels: Otherness," exhibited at the International Triennial of Silicate Art in Hungary 2014, was a collection and arrangement of 12 traditionally fired vessels. For me, the encounter between the flame and human beings in the firing process had to be a retroactive

search for the unobstructed. I wanted to question self-containment, which is the fate of traditional vessels, and I wanted to seek the probability of transformation into an event, incorporation of the outside world, and disclosure of the state of being. It was to liberate the conceptual "vessel" and push it back to "material" for the time being.



Above: "Vessel: Otherness," as a whole of the installation (w) 76.0- (d) 27.0- (h) 20.0 cm, wheel-thrown, stoneware with natural glaze, fire change, traditional way fired at 1260 degrees C., in reduction. The work was exhibited at the 4th International Triennial of Silicate Arts in Hungary at the Kecskemét Cultural and Conference Centre from August 3 to September 7, **2014**.



Above: "Vessel; Otherness," (w)75.0- (d)12.5- (h)19.5 cm, wheel-thrown and altered stoneware , with natural glaze, fire change, traditional way fired to 1280 degrees C. reduction, eight-day firing, the 5th Biennial International Competition for Artistic and Traditional Ceramics. Exhibited at the Museo dell'Arte Ceramica in Piazza San Tommaso n ° 11, in Ascoli Piceno, Italy, December 14, 2017- February 5, **2018**.



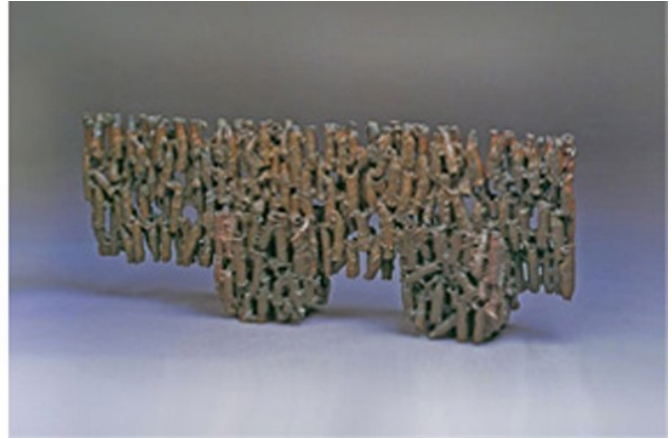
"Vessel: Otherness, " (w) 40.0 cm - (d) 18.0 cm - (h) 17.5 cm. Wheel-thrown and altered stoneware with natural glaze. Traditional firing at 1280 degrees C in reduction, eight-day firing. The work 'Vessel: Otherness' became part of the permanent collection of the Manchester Art Gallery, England, in May 2022.



Above: "Chawan; Otherness," (w)33.0- (d)12.5- (h)8.7 cm, wheel-thrown and stoneware, with natural wood ash glaze showing dark brown glass "fingers" and "dragonfly eye", traditional way fired to 1280 ~1300 degrees C. reduction, eight-day firing. The International Tea Bowl Competition, MALGORZATA MATERNIK, Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław Traugutta, Poland, in June **2023**.

Delving into Material Essence:

My journey in ceramics has led me to reject artificial glazes, instead focusing on the essence of the medium (clay). My work at international exhibitions in Lithuania and South Korea aims to evoke new perceptions through the interaction between ceramics and other materials. These works delve into how self-contained representations fall short of capturing the essence of objects.



Left-above: "On the Impulse of Curiosity," (w) 99.0- (d) 39.0- (h) 44.0 cm, stoneware and slip painting, with aluminum cable additions, traditional way fired at 1250 degrees C., oxidation, eight-day firing. The 1st World Ceramic Biennial 2001. Exhibited at the World Ceramic Center, Ichon, Korea, August 10 to October 28, **2001**. Right: "Barley Field," (w) 102.0, (d) 16.5, (h) 38.5 cm, stoneware and slip painting, traditional way fired at 1250 degrees C., oxidation, eight-day firing. World Ceramic Biennial 2003. Exhibited at the Ichon World Ceramic Center, South Korea, September 1 to October 30, **2003**.



Left-above: "Mizu no Hamon: Water Ripples," consists of stoneware (non-glazed with slip,) with wood additions, and a sprayed solution of salt, fired in a gas kiln at 1380 degrees C., over two days in an oxidized atmosphere. The piece in the back "Mu," also made at the 1996 Panevezys International Ceramic Symposium in Lithuania, exhibited at the Panevezys Civic Art Gallery from August 2 to October 6, **1996**. Right: "5-7-5," approximately 170 cm in height, created at the 1988 Panevezys International Ceramics Symposium and exhibited at the Panevezys Civic Art Museum from July 31 to October 4, **1998**. This work is featured in Emanuel Cooper's book *Contemporary Ceramics* (Thames & Hudson, 2009) and is also used as a resource for ceramics education in the UK.

The Art of 'Non-Color' ceramics:

For my innovative approach to ceramics, which I refer to as 'natural glaze' or 'unglazed ceramics,' I draw inspiration from the traditional Japanese concept of natural glaze and its

inherent aesthetic values. Departing from the conventional practice of applying glazes to pottery and firing them to completion, I aspire to challenge the prevailing notion of how ceramic artworks come into being.

In the realm of traditional Japanese natural glaze, there exists a profound artistic worldview, rooted in a sense of beauty that I seek to explore and reinterpret. I aim to shift the paradigm from the idea that ceramics are perfected by applying glazes and firing them, to a new perspective that embraces the essence of 'non-color.'

As exhibited in my work at the 35th International Ceramic Competition L'Alcora, themed 'Non-color,' I contemplate the color white as a medium for expressing the enigmatic duality of co-embodiment and decolorization. I perceive it as a means to represent the underlying disparity between the mind and the body. In this context, I regard 'white' as a symbol of the uncharted and the unknown, which I've come to refer to as '非色 (non-color).' My creative philosophy is deeply intertwined with this concept.

Makoto Hatori, the artisan behind this innovative approach, constructed his concept of the 'self' upon this foundation. By layering 'white' upon his creations and his own identity, he embarked on a journey to purify the mind and transform preconceived notions. In our culture, white holds a significant place, often associated with divinity, even as the broader populace has shifted its focus from religion to entertainment. White encapsulates a paradoxical blend of unwavering purity and transcendent ecstasy, as well as the dichotomy of life and death (with the tradition of white as a color of mourning originating from the larger continent and peninsula of Asia).

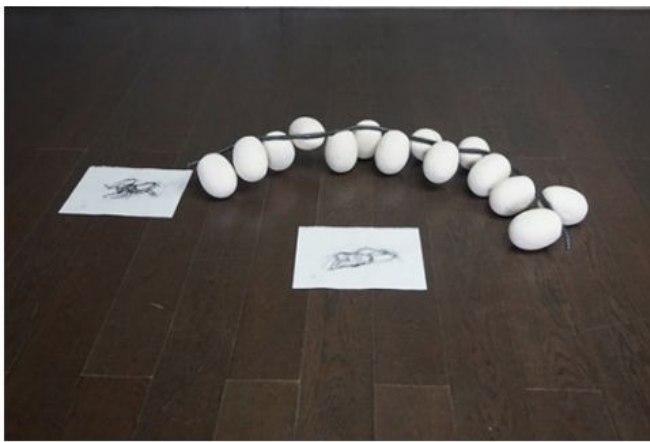
Rather than providing an explanation, I believed in presenting an open state of existence, one that encompasses externalities and transcends the boundaries of conventional art. I considered it essential to employ physical techniques that manifest the intricate relationship between ceramics and other materials, transforming them into physical components of his artistic vision.



Left-above: "Non color," as a whole of the installation (w) 95.0- (d) 53.0- (h) 9.0 cm, stoneware (non-glazed with slip,) with aluminum board, the electric kiln and charcoal smoked, fired at 1250 degrees C., reduction;

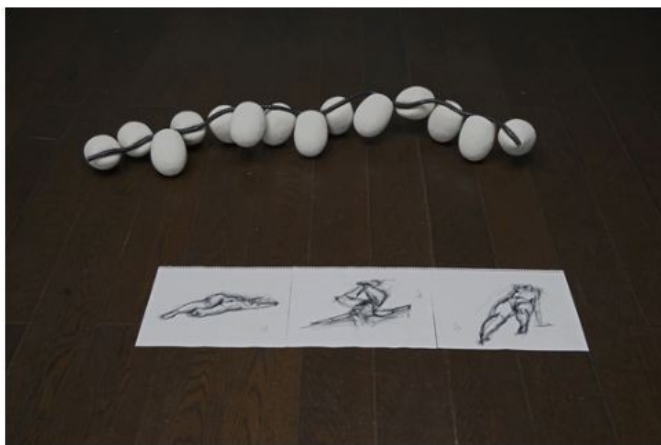
exhibited at the Ceramic Museum of L'Alcora, Spain, June 26 to September 6, **2015**. Right: "Non color; Otherness," as a whole of the installation (w) 122.0- (d) 75.0- (h) 13.5 cm, stoneware (non-glazed with slip,) assembled through thin iron road, with silicon tube, electric kiln and charcoal smoked, fired at 1250 degrees C., reduction; exhibited at the 8th Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennial 2017, Republic of Korea, Icheon World Ceramic Center 263, Gyeongchung-daero 2697 beongil, Icheon, Republic of Korea, 17379, Gyeonggi-si, April 22 to October 9, **2017**.

Exploring Intellectual Expression:



Left: "A State (02-31-2)," installation dimensions (w)142.0- (d)70.0- (h)15.0 cm. Object (pottery and iron part), (w)105.0- (d)58.0- (h)15.0 cm. Paper (drawing), 2 sheets. Hand-built stoneware (non-glazed, high-fired), electric kiln, charcoal smoked, fired at 1250 °C in reduction, mixed media. 4th International Cluj Ceramics Biennial. Exhibited at the Cluj Museum of Art, Romania, August 15–September 20, **2019**.

Both ceramics and iron, through confronting each other in their physicality, have a living stativity that makes their relationship versatile. Paper (drawing) is a fragmented matter with utility potential and is the “dance” that surrounds the spiritual aspect. Physical worlds of complex structures. Everything is a relationship that extends beyond the intended.



Left: "A State (02-31-1)," installation dimensions (w)120.0- (d)99.0- (h)16.0 cm. Object (pottery and Iron part), (w)120.0 - (d)30.0- (h)16.0 cm. Paper (drawing), 3 sheets. Hand-built stoneware (non-glazed, high-fired), electric kiln, charcoal smoked, fired at 1250 degrees C in reduction, mixed media. 1st Ceramic Art Online Exhibition "Beyond the Borders," 2020. Organized by Bonart Project, an independent Iranian artists' organization. Online publication: August 29, **2020**. Exhibition dates: August 29-September 25, 2020. Since then, it has been open to the public on various social networking sites.

In 2020, a pandemic descended upon us. Our preexisting notions of subject and object collapsed, and we were confronted with the unforeseeable. Seeking to reaffirm the presence

of the subject and object as a unified whole, I looked to traditional sumi-e/suiboku-ga (ink-wash painting) in Japan. By employing brush lines to embody the physicality of my mind and body, I consider this 'Physicality' series to be an intellectual suiboku-ga (traditional landscape painting in water ink) in the realm of ceramic art.



Left: "Sumi-e/ Suiboku Sansui (07-03-2)," (w) 107.0- (d) 51.0- (h) 14.5 cm. Stoneware (with textures resembling lusterless tones, such as Japanese paper), pigment, and iron rod were added. Electric kiln and charcoal smoked, fired at 1250 degrees C in reduction, mixed media. Contest of Unique Piece N.A.CE. 2021. The 13th National Fair of Pottery and Ceramics, NAVARRETE La Rioja, Spain. July 16–18, 2021. On display until August 30, 2021, following the National Exposition.

Non-Color Symphony: Embodying Japanese Glaze and Existential Change

Ultimate, my theme is "non-color," which represents my aesthetic approach. It aims to embody the essence of the traditional Japanese concept of natural glaze (non-glaze) and create artworks that express the memories and continuous changes of the physical body through the control of expressive consciousness. The each materials, combined within a unified form, play a significant role in the manifestation of my art. The unglazed ceramic, with its texture reminiscent of washi paper and a milky white surface, symbolizes the spiritual realm, while the non-ceramic material, which will eventually decay, represents the imperfect perceptual world. All things are in a state of flux, existing within an endless cycle of life, death, and rebirth. This constant transformation exemplifies the existence of "things," and it is within this context that I superimpose my own existence.



Left-above: "Dinner on February 24, 2022," (w)92.0- (d)42.0- (h)14.0 cm. Hand-built stoneware (proprietary mixed clay, non-glaze; textured in lusterless tones akin to Japanese paper, highly fired). Electric kiln and charcoal smoked at 1250°C reduction. Added colored ready-made piece (stainless steel cutlery) and assemble the pottery with thin steel rod. Created in **2023**. Right: "Pulse of Transformation," (w)112.0-(d)61.0-(h)11.0 cm. Hand-built stoneware (proprietary mixed clay, non-glaze; textured in lusterless tones akin to Japanese paper, high-fired). Electric kiln and charcoal smoked at 1250°C reduction. Ceramic plate supported by very thin steel panel (1.6 mm thick). Added paper clay (rectangle in the middle part) coated with 胡粉 gofun artist's chalk, and silicon tube. Created in **2023**.

Conclusion:

My body of ceramic work represents the culmination of a profound exploration into philosophy, existentialism, and the intricate nuances of perception. These works extend an invitation to the viewer, encouraging them to challenge preconceived notions of reality, inevitable change, and the enigmatic nature of existence.

In the realm of contemporary ceramics, there has been a noticeable detachment from the materiality of objects and a loss of the connection between 'thing' and 'form.' It is as though the only focus is on the floating forms without firm support from the materials. This drift away from the essential relationship between objects and forms has become a concern.

Especially in contemporary ceramics, there is a tendency to emphasize decoration without considering the object itself. To reclaim the artistic mission and reaffirm the importance of the 'object' as a material, we must rekindle the will of handwork. With a discerning lens that merges the traditional and the contemporary, my art becomes a means of interpreting and reinterpreting the profound philosophy that underpins Japanese ceramics.

This creative journey is not confined to a single genre; it encompasses both the traditional and the contemporary, allowing me to explore the rich tapestry of ceramics in its entirety. Through my work, I endeavor to infuse these time-honored traditions with a fresh and thought-provoking perspective, ensuring that the art of ceramics continues to evolve and inspire.

October 2023