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Kōgei: The Art of Japanese Craft

Summer Selections from Ippodo Gallery

August 5 – August 27, 2021



Bussoku, Keiji Ito, 2017

NEW YORK, NY — Ippodo Gallery, New York, is pleased to welcome you to *Kōgei: The Art of Japanese Craft*, a selection of crafts that celebrate summer and the Obon holiday season.

The Japanese festival of Obon traces back to ancient Chinese and Buddhist rituals that honor one's ancestors. During the holiday, from August 13th to 15th, many families visit ancestral graves and float paper lanterns with candles and incense down rivers and streams, representing the passing of the soul into the afterlife. Obon also signifies the season from late July through August when temples, shrines, neighborhoods, and schools hold public festivals and performances to bring communities together.

To mark Obon, Ippodo Gallery has assembled a selection of works that engage with Buddhist practices, and the pursuit of nirvana, the escape from the cycle of suffering, death, and rebirth. The lotus's ascent from the dark, murky water in which it grows to its vibrant, luminescent bloom on the surface symbolizes Buddhism's goal of spiritual awakening. Takashi Tomo-oka's photographic works, showing lotus flowers in full bloom and decay, suggesting the cycle of life and death. Many works in the show are tea bowls, vases, and incense burners used in the tea ceremony, a practice with deep connections to Zen Buddhism. Yukiya Izumita's glazed tea bowls emphasize the humble origins of the clay, connecting the person who drinks from the vessel the timeless materiality of the earth.



Dried Lotus Leaf, wood, Yoshinri Yano, 2021

Ippodo Gallery invites you to our very own Obon festival on August 12

from 5:00 to 6:30 pm (reservation required). We welcome families and friends of all ages to join us for a craft hour where we will write our wishes and goals for the year on paper lanterns.

We encourage you to visit Ippodo Gallery during our regular gallery hours, Monday through Friday 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. We look forward to welcoming you into our space to celebrate summer and the Obon season, and to find inspiration in our artists and their works.



Lotus Byobu Screens (set of 6), Hasu-Byoubu, Takashi Tomo-oka, 2013

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Keiji Ito (1968), ceramicist and sculptor, is well known not only for his minimalist style but also for being an invaluable mentor and inspiration for younger generations or aspiring artists. Ito has won numerous awards for his artistic achievements and has exhibited in countless solo and group exhibitions. He is presently a member of the International Association of Ceramics including Ippodo Gallery, Tokyo and the Pacific Asia Museum.



Hideo Kageyama (1956) believes in making the most of the texture of the material. He creates weaving that are full of sincerity, while drawing out the characteristics of the fibers, such as lustrous silk, soft touch cotton, and firm linen. During the Showa period (1926-1989) Japanese painters in the Kamakura city liked to wear kimonos made by Hideo's Father Toshio Kageyama.



Shin Fujihira (1922) was a Japanese Asian Modern & Contemporary artist who was born in 1922. His work was featured in several exhibitions at key galleries and museums.



Yasushi Fujihira's (1963) studied pottery under his father, Shin Fujihira, he went on to develop his own unique, flowing forms that are finished in a beautiful, soft, matte-silver tone. With close comparison, his forms are that similar to his father's but carry a different sense of spirit as they hold a more metallic, unglazed appearance.



Hiroshi Goseki (1988) studied Bizenware under Living National Treasure, Jun Isezaki, and as a result, his pieces reflect the spirit and spontaneous nature of a Bizen firing. The building method used is a unique combination of hand building and wheel throwing, producing undulating edges and unique silhouettes. Through the wood fire, his pieces retain incredible colors of blue and red.



Jun Isezaki (1936) brings back the anagama traditional kiln form, that is dug into a hillside like a tunnel. Of significance in Bizen pottery production is the yakishime style glaze - glazes that are the results of natural wood ash and burn-products that occur in the kilns during the firing process. Isezaki therefore emphasizes the importance of the placement of his works inside the kiln. Even as an experienced potter, the artist cannot completely predict how the works will turn out; the firing process often brings out unexpected beauty that even the artist does not plan. The finest works are often results of the combination of careful design and fortuity.



Shinobu Kawase (1989) belongs to the third generation of a distinguished family of ceramic artists. Since the early 1970s Shinobu has specialized in celadon wares, which have a green, pale blue, or grayish-green glaze. The effect is achieved by adding a small portion of iron to the glaze and firing the vessels in a reducing atmosphere. The artist draws much of his inspiration from Chinese Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) celadons.



Sho Kishino's (1972) art works represent a release of spirit and modest, spiritual philosophy from beginning to end. Kishino uses old timber found from Japanese temples and shrines he discovers in the mountains and in riverbeds. He communes with the spirit that resides within the wood then abandons self to produce these sculptures. His works embody a feeling of 'emptiness' and can be described as a fusion of Giacometti and Zen Buddhism.



Ken Matsubara (1949) throughout the world from the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum to Paris and Cologne, Matsubara's paintings are serene, drifting, yet contained and dynamic. From intense brush strokes to delicate texture, each painting represents a return to nature, an appreciation and consideration of the earth and natural elements.



Tohru Matsuzaki (1944) carves the basic forms for his work from valuable blocks of solid zelkova or chestnut wood, finishing them in thick coatings of Japanese urushi lacquer. He creates forms that appear simple but are highly refined; the vermilion red lacquer evokes images of the Jomon period (ca 11000 BC - ca 300 BC). These unique works can be said to embody the essence of the Japanese 'Mingei' folk craft movement.



Mitsukuni Misaki (1951) has an urge to create powerful, lifelike works, encapsulating the dual strength and subtlety of beauty in nature. His works have an unnameable sensation, with asymmetrical works conveying the desire for serenity. The works are referred to as Saiyuudeiki, noted by the Japan Ceramic Society Director Koichi Mori for a well-balanced, ample form. Saiyuudeiki loosely translates to ‘colored stoneware vessels,’ with Sai 彩 as color, Yuu 釉 as glaze, Dei 泥 as clay and Ki 器 as vessel. The style stands in marked contrast to Bian-hu, a sleeker, flatter part of his cannon.



Jihei Murase (1957) was born in Tokyo as the grandson of the first generation Jihei who was a craftsman working with the wooden base and lacquer coating under the direction and patronage of Kitaoji Rosanjin. He performs every stage of the production himself, from turning the wooden bases to applying the natural urushi lacquer. He produces unique Negoro-style works that are ideally suited to the twenty-first century.



Akio Niisato (1977) makes tea bowls of a distinctively simple, yet striking aesthetic. His work displays a mastery of ceramic material and innovation in design. Niisato currently lives and works in Toki, Japan.



Katsuya Ohgita (1957) was born in Kawachinagano, Osaka, Japan and graduated from the Kanazawa College of Art in 1980. Since that time he has studied glass working with institutions such as the Tokyo Glass Art Institute and the Gotoh Memorial Foundation. Ohgita has been in numerous museums throughout Japan and Tokyo.



Suikai Saito (1945) is a Postwar & Contemporary artist who was born in 1945. Their work was featured in several exhibitions at key galleries and museums, including the Ippodo Gallery, Tokyo and the Ippodo Gallery, New York.



Takashi Tomo-oka (1971) is a Japanese Asian Modern & Contemporary artist who was born in 1971. Their work was featured in several exhibitions at key galleries and museums, including the Ippodo Gallery, Tokyo and the Pacific Asia Museum.



Kai Tsujimura's (1976) work breathes a new life into the traditional styles of tea bowls. Kai's father, Shiro Tsujimura, has been a mentor to him since the early days. His study of traditional black, Kohiki, and Ido tea ware influence his style of making. All fired in an atmospheric anagama kiln, the works all display a sense of life, as if the process of fire woke up the clay from slumber.



Shiro Tsujimura (1947) began his artistic career studying oil painting; however, he became disillusioned during this process and eventually abandoned the idea. Inspired by a classic Ido teabowl from the Folk Museum in Japan, Tsujimura embarked on the journey of ceramic arts. He is known widely known as a master of pottery as his ceramic works reflect a level of sophistication and return to nature in the various clay bodies and glazes he used. His dedication to the ceramic arts bleeds into his lifestyle. In 1967, Shiro and his wife moved to Mima, Nara, where he currently resides, and built a home, a teahouse, and seven kilns over the years.



Kenji Wakasugi (1941) is a Japanese photographer born in Osaka, Japan. Graduating from Tokyo Technical School of Photography, he started to work at Roppongi Studio in 1970. and also South Pacific Islands and Patagonia between 1997 and 2002. Japanese traditional arts and his photography as the focal point of his expression.



Yoshinori Yano(1973) Born in Tokyo in 1973. In 1999, he studied at Swedish hand craft art school Capellagården. In 2000, he began working under the guidance of a woodworker. In 2003, he moved to Itoshima City in Fukuoka Prefecture to settle his studio.