

ippodo gallery

— For Immediate Release —

Skin and Body: Crazed Vessels by Kodai Ujiie

September 14 – October 4, 2023

Opening Reception: September 14, 6 – 8 pm

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Kodai Ujiie, Oribe Lacquer Large Jar, 2023 (C26222)

New York, NY – Ippodo Gallery presents **Skin and Body: Crazy Vessels by Kodai Ujiie**, the avant-garde artist's first solo exhibition in the United States. Ippodo Gallery is featuring 46 of his newest ceramics, including large jars, vases, and small vessels, on view from **September 14 to October 4, 2023**. Each artwork relishes in the delight of living, converting clay into an analogy of vital flesh—skin, blood vessels, and scales—with a renewed sense of body image. The artist will travel to New York to join Ippodo Gallery for an **opening reception and artist talk on September 14, 2023**.

Kodai Ujiie (b. 1990) wrests from clay an extraordinary vision of the physical body. Ujiie's debut show addresses cataclysm and the value of imperfection, emphasizing the beauty in grotesque abnormality. Channeling a non-traditional spirit of *kintsugi* (mending with lacquer) on hand-built porcelain, Ujiie fuses together branching networks resembling veins and arteries in *kanyuu* (crazed furrows).

Self-reflection in the face of turmoil has guided the trajectory of Kodai Ujiie's career: surviving the 2011 tsunami-earthquake that shook his home in the snow-covered Tohoku region at 20 years old encouraged Ujiie to follow his pottery aspirations. At the climax of his studies, Ujiie faced a great challenge as fissures etched themselves into the ceramic of his final thesis, like scars across flesh. Turning inward, Ujiie embraced the damage and adapted the transformation despite the defects. The discovery became an opportunity for Ujiie to explore *kanyuu* (crazed furrows) as an expressive theme that aligns with his own stigma; born lacking his left ear, he is especially attentive to the structure of cells and their growth. The desire to explore the complexity of life permeates Ujiie's oeuvre.



Kodai Ujiie, Skin - White Glaze, 2023 (C26227)

Erupting in bold forms and colors, Kodai Ujiie draws inspiration from the anatomy of amphibians and other creatures, yet he adheres to the conventions of legendary Japanese pottery. Among the greatest of his classical influences is the Japanese National Treasure, O-Ido Tea Bowl “Kizaemon,” derived from the Korean rice bowl in the sixteenth century. Elegant yet totally plain, a simple question propels Ujiie: what is the allure, which has captured hearts in Japan and worldwide, of such a modest work of art?

Distinguished in both Japan and overseas for his unique forms and technical fusions, Kodai Ujiie has developed into a rising star. Frank Feltens, Curator of Japanese Art at the Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art, says of Ujiie’s *Ofukei and Lacquer Tea Bowl*: “The bowl reminds me that we intuitively look for the familiar in the unknown.” Ujiie’s novel ceramics are a reminder of the complex and sometimes contentious relationship within ecosystems, be that skin and body or people and the environment. Craft curator, author, and art historian Glenn Adamson, who spoke to Ujiie about his artistry, writes: “The ceramics at once convey the seismic, even traumatic quality of natural catastrophes . . . and radiate a delight in the happenstance, the instinctive energy that only an embrace of accident can bring to art.” Glenn Adamson’s full essay will be released digitally alongside the online catalogue for **Skin and Body: Crazy Vessels by Kodai Ujiie**.



Kodai Ujiie, Oribe Lacquer Tea Bowl, 2023 (C26235), Nezumi Shino Lacquer Tea Bowl, 2023 (C26238), Karatsu Lacquer Tea Bowl, 2023 (C26237)

About the Gallery

Ippodo Gallery is committed to creating shared empathetic, craft-oriented experiences through engagement with Japanese art and culture. We continue to showcase work by living artists that adheres to our mission to cultivate beauty with a consciousness of the fragility of nature and the strength of quiet serenity. Ippodo Gallery has worked directly with over 200 artists and held thousands of exhibitions over three decades. We are grateful to continue to bring contemporary Japanese fine art and sensibility to Western audiences. Keiko Aono founded Ippodo Gallery Tokyo in 1996, with two locations in the heart of Ginza and the residential area of Gotenyama. Daughter Shoko Aono opened Ippodo Gallery in New York in 2008, forging new connections with a global audience. Since then, she continues to witness the timeless cross-cultural impact of Japanese *kogei* art that transcends language.

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