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TRANSFORMATION

CERAMICS BY Ken Matsuzaki

Pucker Gallery • Boston





Vase
Yohen soda glaze
7 x 7 x 7"
MK1252



KEN BEYOND KEN

CERAMICS BY Ken Matsuzaki

by Andrew Maske

Pottery makes plain the transformation of nature. Clay from the earth blends with water from the sky. The amorphous takes form in the hands. The wet becomes dry in the air. The soft becomes hard... in the fire... (and) the useless becomes useful.

— HENRY GLASSIE
The Potter's Art (1999)

In a professional career approaching half a century, Ken Matsuzaki continues to expand the amazing diversity of his work. Living in Mashiko, known for its folk ceramic tradition and as the longtime home of the famed mingei potters Shōji Hamada (1894–1978) and Tatsuzō Shimaoka (1919–2007), Matsuzaki has created his own versions of a wide range of Japanese stoneware types, especially those of the Momoyama period (1568–1615), a source of inspiration for generations of Japanese potters. This is not because of his lack of reverence for the traditional ceramics of Mashiko or other folk production areas, but rather because of

Matsuzaki's pursuit of particular dynamic aspects of the ceramic medium that are not often found in the quieter everyday wares of Japan's folk traditions. Nevertheless, he has remained true to the vessel-focused lineage of his forebears.

The guiding light of most of Matsuzaki's career has been what is known as "Oribe style" (*Oribe yōshiki*). Based on the aesthetic preferences concurrent with the activity of the warrior tea master/designer Furuta Oribe (1544–1615), Oribe style refers to vessels that display dynamic distortion of form, colors that strongly contrast in hue and value, and surfaces that are often irregular or



Toukaiseki Vase
Hakuji glaze
Porcelain with metal base
7.5 x 3.25 x 7.25"
MK1265

textured in nature. Matsuzaki's enthusiasm for exploring Momoyama period ceramics echoes that of some of the greatest Japanese artists in clay of the twentieth century, including Kitaōji Rosanjin (1883–1959), Arakawa Toyozō (1894–1985), and Kaneshige Tōyō (1896–1967), among others. Despite the profound influence that Oribe style has had on Japanese ceramics over the past four hundred years and on world ceramics since the 1950s, no Japanese potter has ever accepted a designation as a Living National Treasure for their mastery of Oribe style. This may be due to the conservatism of Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkachō) and the narrowness of the categories for which the designation is awarded. It can be asserted that no other living Japanese potter has achieved Ken Matsuzaki's breadth of mastery in ceramics of the Oribe style, whether or not one considers him a specialist in the more limited types of Oribe ware, specifically.

Inspired by Momoyama ceramics and the Oribe aesthetic, Ken Matsuzaki has made textured surfaces a

hallmark of his work. Among his thousands of pieces made over the past twenty years, only a tiny percentage display a uniformly smooth glazed exterior. This can be traced back in part to the influence of his teacher, Tatsuzō Shimaoka, who developed the *jōmon hakeme* technique featuring a cord-impressed texture combined with slip inlay. In recent years, Matsuzaki's focus on texture has only intensified. Using surface effects on clay such as carving, faceting, impressing, molding, stippling, scoring, stamping, and scraping, glazing techniques including finger-wiping and use of textured glazes like Shino, firing techniques such as ash build-up (*haikaburi*) and soda firing as well as the usage of rough clays whose coarse grain remains at the surface of his unglazed wares, Matsuzaki's oeuvre is remarkable for the wide variety of textures that it encompasses.

No longer content to use surface effects to alter the profile of his thrown vessels, most recently Matsuzaki has begun to dispense with the potter's wheel altogether, instead carving his vessels out of blocks of clay, in



Vase
Yohen shirogake glaze
11.25 x 7 x 7"
MK1245

a method he calls *toukaiseki* or *tōkaiseki* (literally, “ceramic-slab-stone”). Originally born out of a collaborative experiment with the porcelain potter Taizo Kuroda, Matsuzaki’s first *tōkaiseki* works were of unglazed, dark gray clay, made to contrast with Kuroda’s white porcelain works. The cutting and hand-forming process of creating *tōkaiseki* is a reductionist approach to making ceramics: the potter engages directly with the clay on an elemental level, without the centrifugal force of the wheel to generate or influence their results. Matsuzaki’s pieces made in this manner display the rugged character of the wilderness in their sharp crags, plunging valleys, and rounded hillocks. These new works represent a departure from Matsuzaki’s earlier work in terms of the technique he uses to address his raw material, but they display the same vibrant energy and complex surfaces evident in his other pieces, and in that sense are simply an extension of his earlier work.

Despite their strongly sculptural character, Matsuzaki’s *tōkaiseki* pieces maintain his career focus on the vessel as an art form. Prominent among them are flower vases, some vertical, such as MK1218, some more horizontal, like MK1224, or even circular, in the Zen *ensō* format (MK1264). Other new works in that format include tea ceremony water containers (*mizusashi*, MK1275), sake flasks (MK1269), *yunomi* tea cups (MK1322), and even sake cups (MK1316). To many of these works, Matsuzaki has added new glazes: his *yuugen* (*yōgen*, “deep and mysterious”) glaze, and his *hakuji*, or white porcelain, glaze. Both of these can be fired in his woodburning *anagama* kiln to create *yōhen* (kiln-change) *yūgen* or *yōhen hakuji* incarnations.



MK1218



MK1316



MK1224



MK1235



MK1264



MK1239



MK1275



MK1249



MK1269



MK1252



MK1322



MK1287

In addition to his *tōkaiseki* wares, Matsuzaki has continued to expand both his shapes and firing technique. A new shape for him is the lobed melon form known in Japan as *akoda* (MK1235 and MK1239) which is in fact very old in Japan, dating back to at least the fifteenth century. The rounded contours of the form strike an interesting contrast to the sharp edges characteristic of Matsuzaki’s *tōkaiseki* works.

Recently, Matsuzaki has begun to produce some wares using the soda method, in which soda ash is introduced into the kiln during firing. This technique is a successor to salt-glazing, a method that was developed in Germany in the fifteenth century. Salt glazing spread to England, where it became popular in the seventeenth century. The technique was introduced to Japan by Bernard Leach (1887–1979), who taught it to Shōji Hamada. Hamada in turn taught it to his pupil Tatsuzō Shimaoka, who was mentor to Ken Matsuzaki. Like potters throughout much of the world, Matsuzaki has abandoned salt glazing because of its toxicity and the pollution it causes in favor of the much less harmful soda glazing. Like his *yūgen* glaze, soda firing has been combined with his ash-generating *yōhen* technique to create *yōhen* soda glaze effects firing (MK1249, MK1252, MK1287).

Despite reaching the age of seventy, Ken Matsuzaki continues to explore new avenues in ceramic art. Seemingly never content to rest on his many past achievements, he continues his energetic efforts to not only express his vision in new ways, but to carry on modes he developed in the past. Where will the future lead? No one can say for certain, but for the moment, it is evident that Ken Matsuzaki has once again surpassed himself.



Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
12.5 x 9.5 x 9"
MK1244



Square Plate
Oribe glaze
1.75 x 6.75 x 6.75"
MK1297



Toukaiseki Vase
Yohen shino glaze
6 x 6 x 10.5"
MK1224



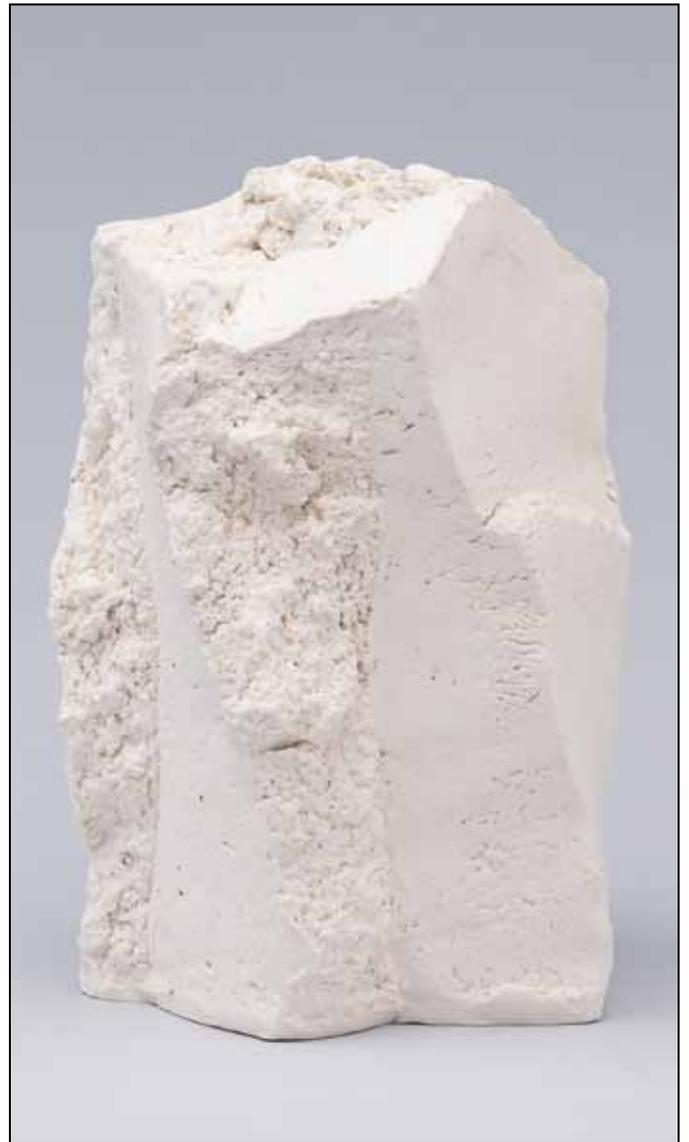
Tea Bowl
Shino glaze
4 x 4.75 x 4.75"
MK1356



Tea Bowl
Testu shino glaze
4.25 x 4.5 x 5"
MK1353



Toukaiseki Vase
Shiroyuu glaze
9.25 x 6 x 6"
MK1221



Toukaiseki Vase
Kohiki glaze
Porcelain
9.25 x 7 x 6.5"
MK1222



Toukaiseki Box
Yohen hakuji glaze
Porcelain
6 x 7 x 7"
MK1225



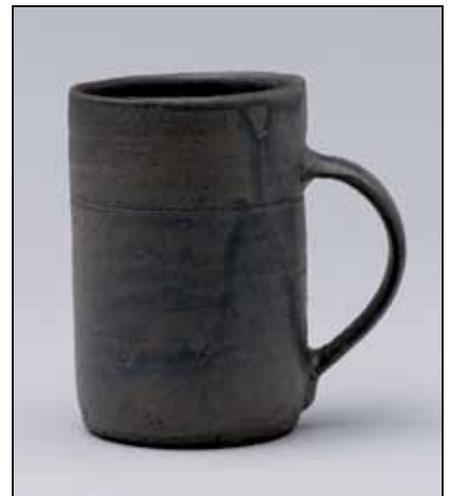
Square Vase
Yohen shino glaze
9.75 x 4.5 x 4.5"
MK1246



Mug
Oribe glaze
4.25 x 3.25 x 4.5"
MK1345



Mug
Hakuji glaze
Porcelain
4.25 x 3 x 4.25"
MK1352



Mug
Yuugen glaze
4.25 x 3 x 4.25"
MK1351



Toukaiseki Vase
Yohen glaze
12.75 x 6 x 6"
MK1233



Toukaiseki Sake Bottle
Yuugen glaze
7 x 3 x 3.25"
MK1269



Toukaiseki Vase
Yuugen glaze
12 x 7 x 7"
MK1229



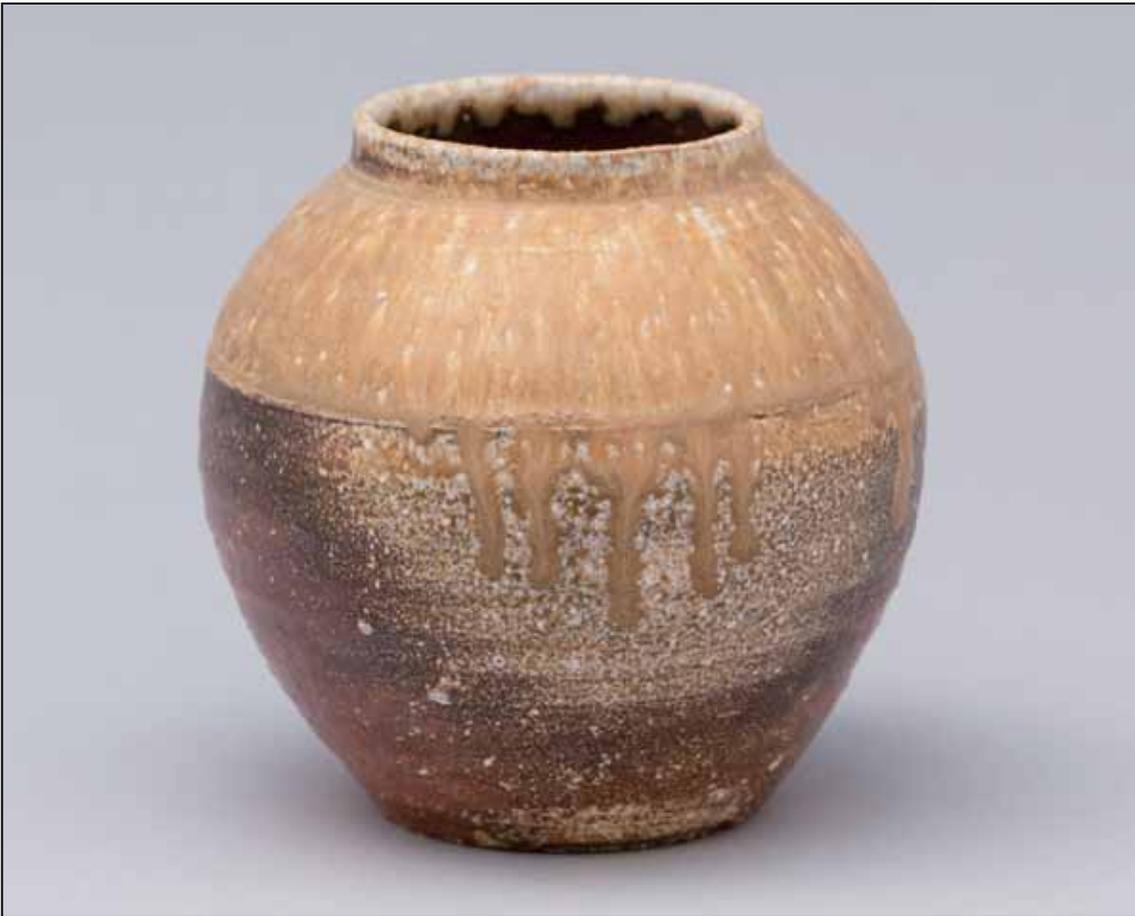
Toukaiseki Vase
Kohiki glaze
10.5 x 6.5 x 6.5"
MK1219



Sake Bottle
Yohen gold shino glaze
5.5 x 3.5 x 3.5"
MK1283



Sake Bottle
Setoguro glaze
6 x 3.25 x 3.25"
MK1281



Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
6 x 6 x 6"
MK1259



Cup
Yohen shino glaze
4.25 x 3.5 x 3.5"
MK1328



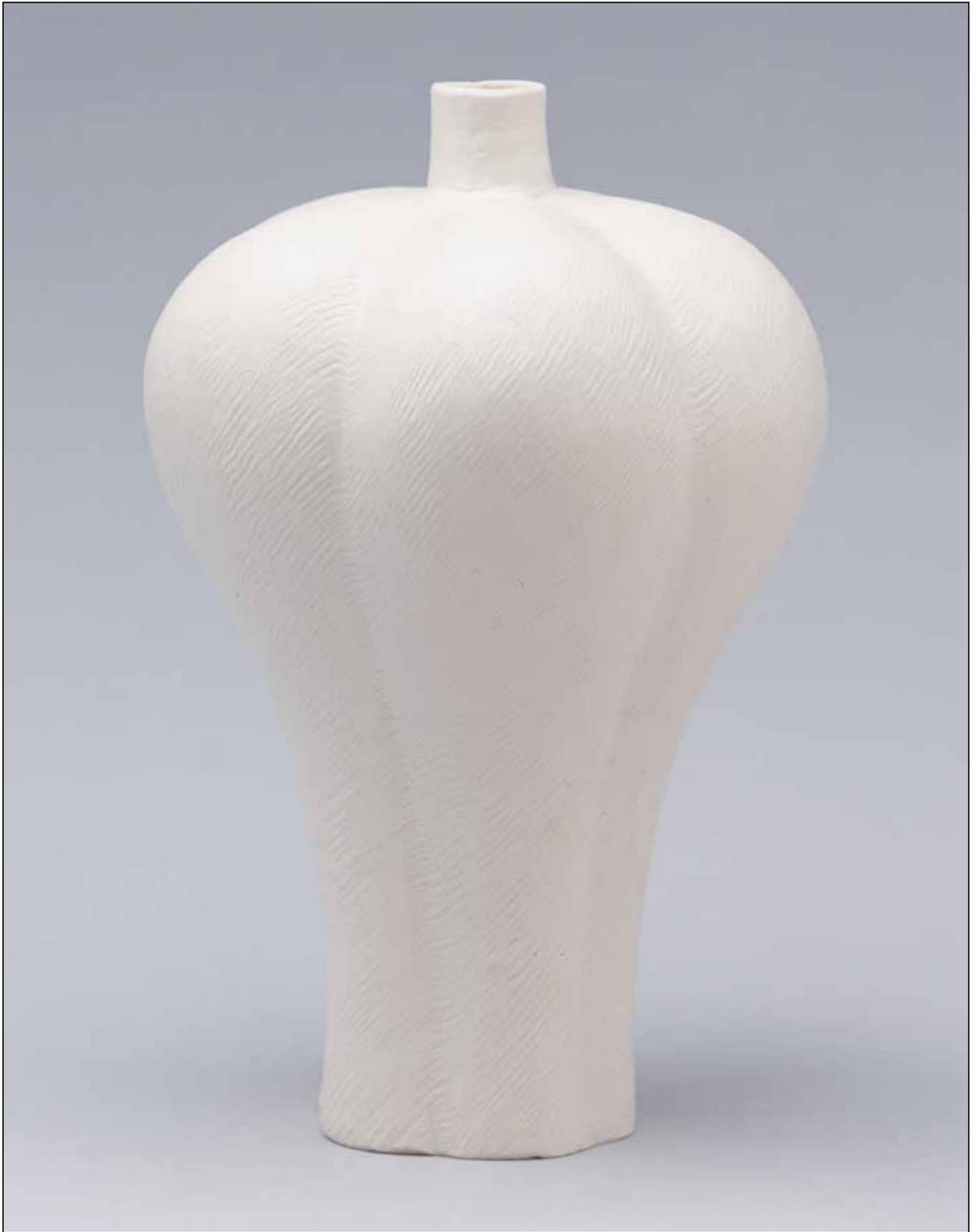
Cup
Yohen shino glaze
4.25 x 3.25 x 3.25"
MK1324



Toukaiseki Cup
Hakuji glaze
Porcelain
4.5 x 3.25 x 3"
MK1323



Toukaiseki Vase
Yohen yuugen glaze
6.75 x 6 x 11"
MK1227



Vase
Hakuji glaze
Porcelain
13 x 9 x 9"
MK1226



Square Plate
Oribe glaze
1.75 x 6.75 x 6.75"
MK1299



Rectangular Vase
Oribe glaze
6.75 x 2.25 x 3.5"
MK1272



Toukaiseki Teapot
Oribe glaze
9 x 6 x 8"
MK1276



Sake Cup
Yohen natural ash glaze
2.25 x 3.25 x 3"
MK1307



Sake Cup
Yohen soda glaze
2.75 x 2.75 x 2.75"
MK1306



Sake Cup
Yohen shino glaze
2 x 3 x 3"
MK1305



Rectangular Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
10 x 5 x 9.5"
MK1236



Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
10.5 x 8 x 8"
MK1237



Toukaiseki Cup
Hakuji glaze
Porcelain
4 x 3 x 3.5"
MK1322



Toukaiseki Cup
Yuugen glaze
4.5 x 3.5 x 3.5"
MK1320



Toukaiseki Cup
Yuugen glaze
4.5 x 3.5 x 3.5"
MK1321



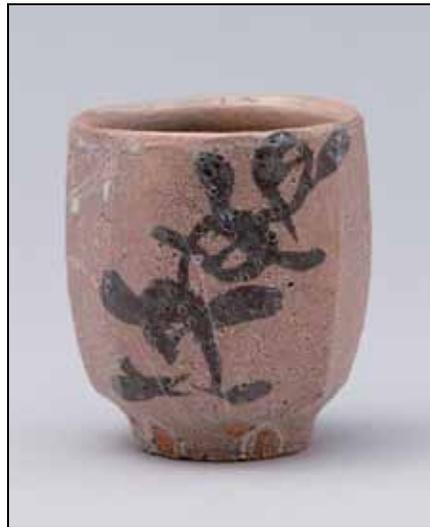
Toukaiseki Water Container
Oribe glaze
7 x 7 x 7.5"
MK1275



Toukaiseki Vase
Kohiki glaze
Porcelain
5.25 x 4 x 10"
MK1223



Cup
Mashiko testu-e glaze
4 x 3.25 x 3.25"
MK1343



Cup
Mashiko tetsu-e glaze
3.5 x 3 x 3.25"
MK1342



Cup
Oribe glaze
3.75 x 3.25 x 3.25"
MK1338



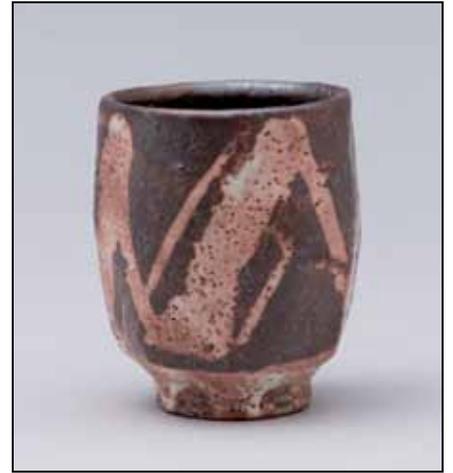
Vase
Yohen soda glaze
10.5 x 5.5 x 5.5"
MK1251



Vase
Yohen soda glaze
10 x 5.5 x 5.5"
MK1250



Cup
Yohen shino glaze
4.5 x 3.75 x 3.75"
MK1326



Cup
Tetsuji shino glaze
4 x 3.5 x 3.5"
MK1335



Rectangular Vase
Oribe glaze
8.25 x 2 x 7"
MK1270



Toukaiseki Vase
Yuugen glaze
11 x 7 x 7"
MK1230



Square Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
10.25 x 4.5 x 4.5"
MK1247



Toukaiseki Vase
Yuugen glaze
10.25 x 5 x 5"
MK1232



Cup
Oribe glaze
3.75 x 3.25 x 3.25"
MK1337



Cup
Yohen soda glaze
4 x 4 x 3.5"
MK1333



Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
8.75 x 7 x 7"
MK1238



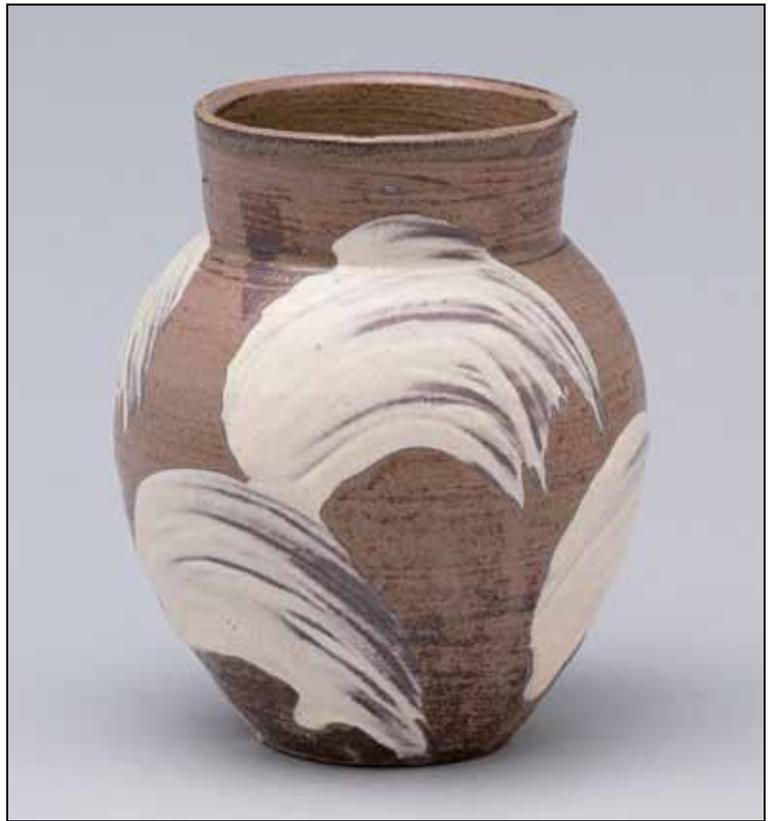
Sake Bottle
Yohen soda glaze
5.5 x 3.75 x 3.75"
MK1287



Vase
Yohen gold shino glaze
5.5 x 5 x 5"
MK1262



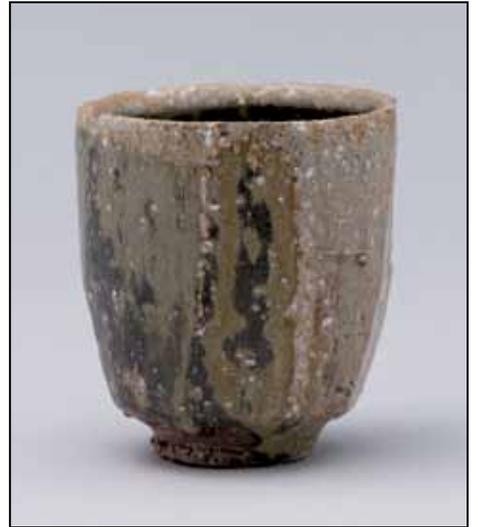
Sake Bottle
Yohen shino glaze
6.25 x 3 x 3"
MK1284



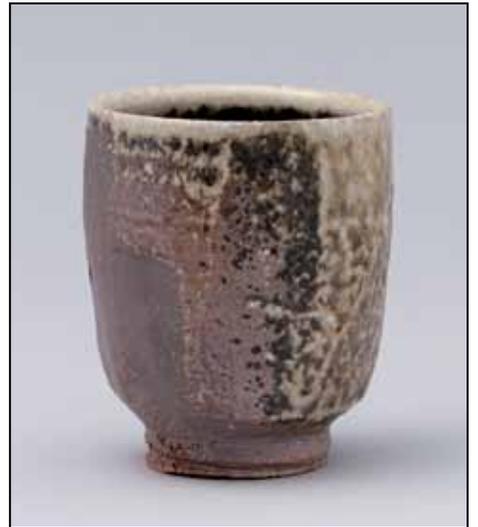
Vase
Tetsuji hakememon glaze
6.5 x 5.5 x 5.5"
MK1263



Toukaiseki Vase
Shiroyuu glaze
11 x 7 x 6.5"
MK1220



Cup
Yohen natural ash glaze
4 x 3.5 x 3.5"
MK1331



Cup
Yohen natural ash glaze
4 x 3.5 x 3.75"
MK1330



Rectangular Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
11.5 x 6.5 x 8"
MK1242



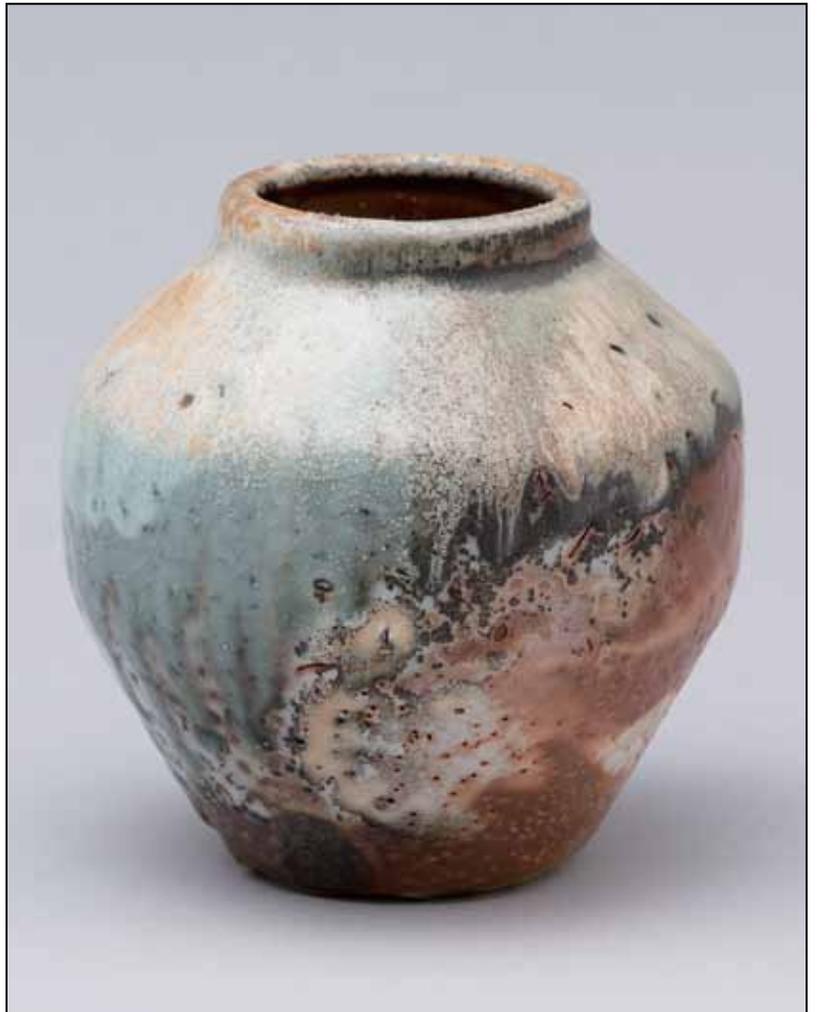
Sake Cup
Oribe glaze
2.75 x 2.5 x 2.5"
MK1313



Sake Cup
Mashiko karatsu glaze
2.75 x 2.5 x 2.5"
MK1318



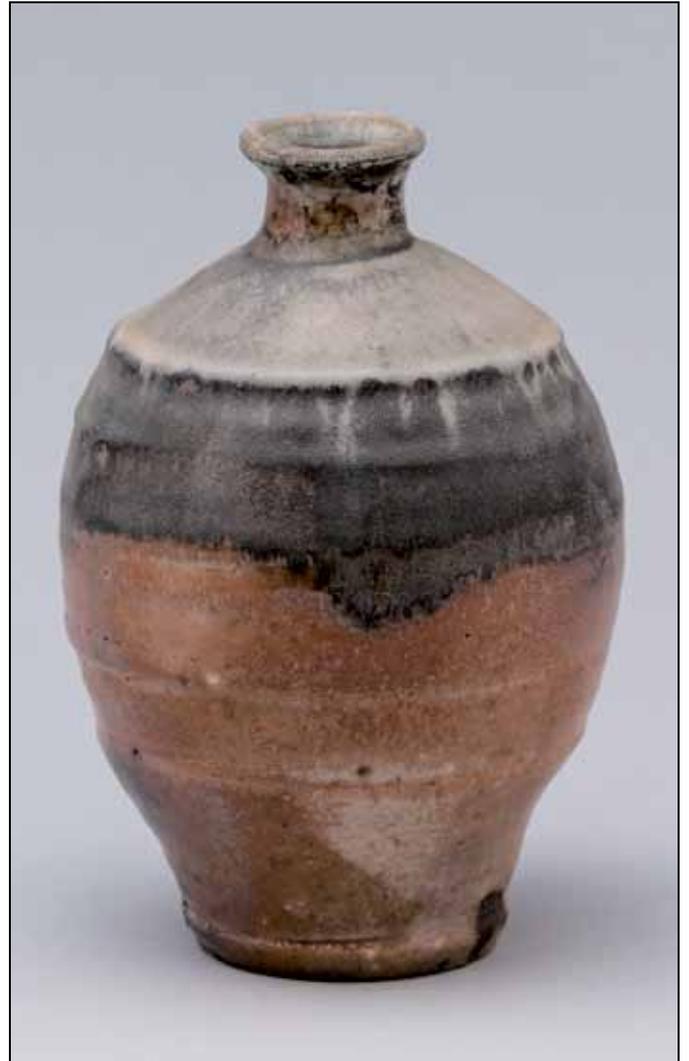
Vase
Yohen yuugen glaze
8.75 x 4 x 4"
MK1254



Vase
Yohen shino glaze
5.75 x 5.75 x 5.75"
MK1261



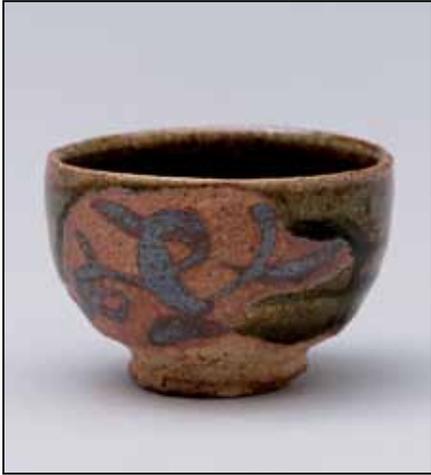
Toukaiseki Box
Yuugen glaze
7.5 x 6 x 6"
MK1234



Vase
Yohen shino glaze
7.75 x 5.5 x 5.5"
MK1260



Rectangular Plate
Shino glaze
2.25 x 8.75 x 12"
MK1289



Sake Cup
Oribe glaze
1.75 x 2.75 x 2.75"
MK1314



Sake Cup
Yohen natural ash glaze
2.25 x 2.5 x 2.5"
MK1308



Toukaiseki Sake Cup
Oribe glaze
2.75 x 2.75 x 2.75"
MK1316



Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
8.25 x 6.5 x 6.5"
MK1239



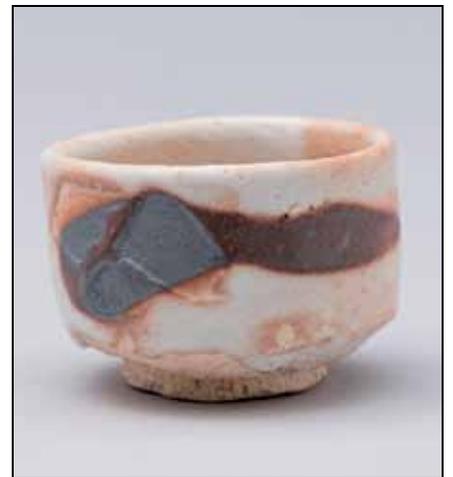
Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
9.5 x 5 x 5"
MK1240



Toukaiseki Vase
Yohen glaze
7 x 3.5 x 3.5"
MK1267



Sake Cup
Shino glaze
2.25 x 3 x 3"
MK1310



Sake Cup
Shino glaze
2 x 3 x 3"
MK1311



Toukaiseki Vase
Yohen yuugen glaze
Stoneware with metal base
9.75 x 4 x 10"
MK1264



Lidded Box
Oribe glaze
4.25 x 5 x 6.5"
MK1294



Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
7 x 9.5 x 9.5"
MK1235



Incense Burner
Yohen shino glaze
5.25 x 4.5 x 5"
MK1278



Incense Burner
Oribe glaze
5.75 x 3.75 x 4.75"
MK1280



Vase
Yohen soda glaze
8.75 x 7 x 7"
MK1249



Vase
Yohen shino glaze
8 x 2.75 x 2.75"
MK1258



Sake Cup
Yohen shino glaze
2.5 x 2.5 x 2.5"
MK1304



Sake Cup
Yohen shino glaze
2.75 x 2.75 x 2.75"
MK1301



Rectangular Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
9 x 4 x 7"
MK1241



Vase
Kiseto glaze
9 x 3.75 x 4"
MK1255



Vase
Yohen natural ash glaze
8.75 x 5 x 5"
MK1257



Vase
Kisetō kinuta glaze
9 x 4.25 x 4.25"
MK1256

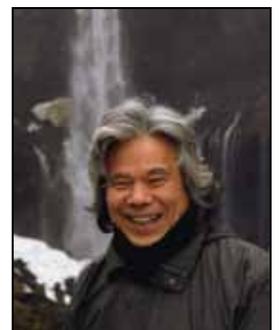


Teapot
Yohen shino glaze
9.5 x 7 x 11"
MK1277

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Ken Matsuzaki was born in Tokyo in 1950 and received a degree in Ceramic Art from Tamagawa University School of Fine Arts, Tokyo. He moved to Mashiko in 1972 to apprentice with Tatsuzō Shimaoka (who himself had moved to Mashiko to study with Shōji Hamada). After a five-year apprenticeship, Matsuzaki established his own kiln, Yuushin Gama, down the road from Mr. Shimaoka. Matsuzaki's works have a strong grounding in the Mingei philosophy though his approach is very contemporary, introducing a focus on the Oribe style with yohen, shino, and oribe glazing.

Matsuzaki's work has been exhibited all over the world, some of which has been accepted into the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art (Ohio), The Worcester Museum of Art (Massachusetts), the Tikotin Museum (Israel), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York).



PUCKER

ESTABLISHED 1967 BOSTON

GALLERY

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240 Newbury Street, 3rd floor
Boston, MA 02116
Phone: 617.267.9473
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CREDITS:

Design:
Leslie Anne Feagley

Editors:
Jeanne Koles and Ellen Buchanan

Photography:
Kan Matsuzaki

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TRANSFORMATION

CERAMICS BY Ken Matsuzaki

DATES:

16 July through 4 September 2022

OPENING RECEPTION:

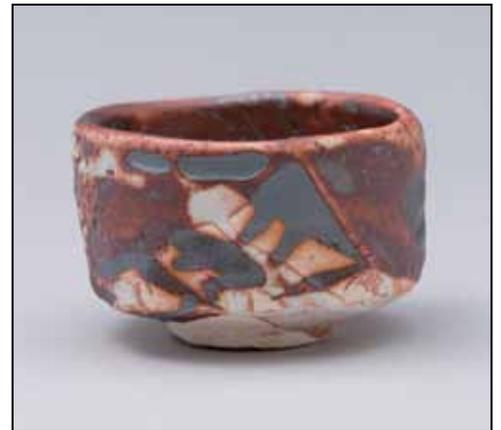
16 July 2022, 3 to 6 PM

ONLINE EVENTS:

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Toukaiseki Tea Bowl
Hakuji glaze
Porcelain
3.5 x 4.25 x 5"
MK1358



Tea Bowl
Tetsu shino glaze
3.25 x 5.25 x 5.25"
MK1354



Toukaiseki Tea Bowl
Yuugen glaze
3.75 x 5.25 x 5.25"
MK1357



Tea Bowl
Shino glaze
3.75 x 4.25 x 4.5"
MK1355

COVER:
Toukaiseki Vase (LEFT)
Kohiki glaze
14.5 x 7 x 7"
MK1218

Toukaiseki Vase (MIDDLE)
Yuugen glaze
14.75 x 6.5 x 7.25"
MK1228

Toukaiseki Vase (RIGHT)
Yohen oribe glaze
11 x 8 x 8"
MK1217

ALL WORKS ARE STONEWARE, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, AND COME WITH A WOODEN BOX.

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