



artscene

January–June 2011

Collection Growth: Contemporary Japanese Ceramics

One newer area of collection development is contemporary Japanese ceramics, an art form that complements our significant and well-respected Van Vleck Collection of Japanese Prints. Japan has a centuries-old ceramics tradition, renowned for both beauty and innovation, and potters there continue to produce some of the most striking and influential pottery in the world. Joan Mirviss, an alumna of the UW–Madison's Department of Art History, is an expert and dealer in Japanese art; one of her specialties is contemporary ceramics. The Joan B Mirviss LTD gallery in New York City presents exhibitions and represents Japan's top ceramics artists. The Chazen has worked with Mirviss for

several years to acquire new pieces representing the finest work contemporary Japanese ceramics has to offer.

Japanese ceramics will be displayed prominently in museum expansion galleries; among them will be pieces by Matsui Kosei, Kakurezaki Ryuichi, Fukami Sueharu, Kawase Shinobu, and Nagae Shigekazu. Shigekazu casts shapes out of liquid porcelain and then fires nested eggshell-thin forms suspended in a kiln, resulting in graceful and delicate fused ceramic sculpture.

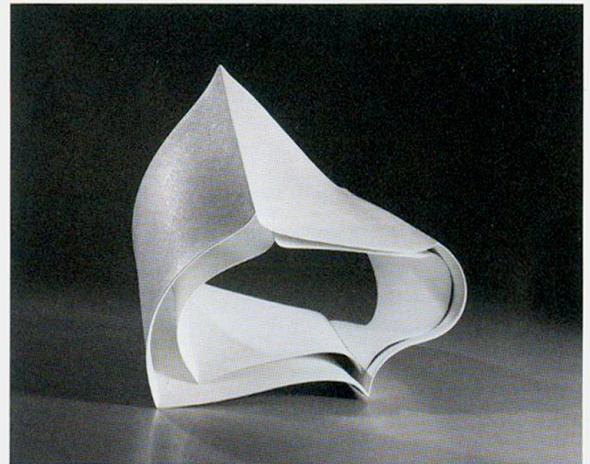
"As one of the world's leading sculptors working in porcelain, Nagae Shigekazu (b. 1953) has literally recast the commercial concept of slip-casting into an art form. After decades of experimentation, Nagae has mastered his unique adaptation of this traditional method for mass-producing porcelain wares and creates elegant, sensuous white sculptures, transforming a plebian functional process into the realm of the avant-garde" (from the gallery press release).

Kakurezaki Ryuichi creates functional stoneware in the Bizen tradition, Japan's oldest pottery technique, notable for unglazed iron-rich clay that is wood-fired over a long period. The iron and other minerals impart dramatic effects in earthy tones, usually a reddish-brown. Ryuichi's forms are fresh and distinctive, and he is a ceramics superstar in Japan where his exhibitions sell out in hours.

The museum values its relationship with talented, knowledgeable, and discerning connoisseurs like Joan Mirviss and is pleased to share such distinctive artwork from a tradition that shows a remarkable ability to reinvent and refine itself.



Kakurezaki Ryuichi (Japanese, b. 1950), *Untitled*, 2002, stoneware, 19 ¼ x 8 x 6 ¾ in. John H. Van Vleck Endowment Fund purchase, 2010.8. Photo: Joan B. Mirviss Ltd.



Nagae Shigekazu (Japanese, b. 1953), *Forms in Succession #10*, 2010, porcelain with glaze, 16 x 19 ½ x 15 in. John H. Van Vleck Endowment Fund purchase, 2010.12. Photo: Joan B. Mirviss Ltd.