SUZUKI OSAMU (1926-2001)

Suzuki Osamu has received tremendous recognition throughout Japan including a highly praised, enormous retrospective in 1999 that toured five major Japanese museums. He began his career in 1948 with his co-founding of the Sōdeisha group, dedicated to the creation of works, independent of ancient types, to be created by those artists who refused to exhibit at established studio craft competitions. At the time, this was nearly a heretical philosophy. Suzuki and his colleagues consistently strove to stand apart from traditional works – both stylistically and technically. By the mid-fifties, non-functional work became his focus. Suzuki’s influence then and now remains huge and he has been seen for decades as one of the pioneers of avant-garde ceramic art. He worked both in porcelain and stoneware, the latter for which he is best known. Combining Shigaraki clay, typically with a tooled surface, with iron slip and ash glaze in an oxidizing kiln, he creates remarkable surfaces that change as the light falls across it. His works have entered the collections of museums throughout the world.

1926  Born in Kyoto
1943  Graduated from the Kyoto Second Industrial School
1946  Joined the Young Ceramists Group which was established by Yagi Kazuo, Nakajima Kiyoshi and others
1948  Founding member of the Sōdeisha group
1949  Taught at the ceramic department of a Kyoto high school (retired in 1992)
1954  Worked for the Seven Colors Craft Company
1954  Stopped making functional ceramics
1967  Began executing a series of highly abstract horses
1969  Moved to Kiyomizu Danchi in Yamashina; uses a gas kiln for the first time and begins producing seihakuji pieces
1979  Appointed professor at Kyoto Municipal University of Arts and Music (retired in 1992)

Awards:

1947  First entry to the 3rd Nitten Exhibition
1960  Japan Ceramics Society Prize
1962  Golden Prize, Prague International Ceramics Exhibition
1970  Golden Prize, International Biennial Ceramics Exhibition, Vallaurisi, France
1971  Minister of Trade Prize, Faenza International Ceramics Exhibition, Italy
1984  Gold Prize, Japan Ceramic Society
1987  Cultural Merits from Kyoto Prefecture
1992  Honorary Teacher’s Award from Kyoto Arts High School
1993  Cultural Merits form City of Kyoto
1994  Arts and Culture Award
1998  30th Annual Crafts of Japan Award
1999  Asahi Award of Excellence

Solo Exhibitions:

1961  Temmanya, Okayama (thereafter, solo exhibition, periodically)
1962  Yodo Gallery, Osaka (also in 1965)
1965  Shiseidō Gallery, Tokyo and Beni Gallery, Kyoto  
1967  Tenmaya, Okayama  
1969  Isetan Gallery, Shinjuku Tokyo (also in 1971, 81, 87)  
1973  Itzea Gallery, Kyoto  
1975  Asahi Gallery, Kyoto  
1978  Gallery Nakamura, Kyoto  
1983  Kochukyo, Tokyo  
1988  Gallery Nakamura, Kyoto (also in 1994)  
1989  Kyoto Prefectural Culture and Art Hall, Kyoto  
1989  Gallery Kuro, Osaka  
1992  Isetan Museum of Art, Tokyo  
1996  Isetan Museum of Art, Tokyo  
1994  Shoho-an Gallery at Matsuda-ya, Tokyo  
1997  *The Four Seasons*, Setsu Gatōdō, Tokyo  
1997  Gallery Kochūkyo, Tokyo  
2011  *Tō no Shijin (Poet of Ceramic)*, Marukōtō Center gallery, Okayama  

Group Exhibitions:  

1948  First Sōdeisha exhibition (thereafter annually)  
1949  *New Master Crafts Society Exhibition*  
1950  *Modern Japanese Ceramics Exhibition*, Musée Cernuschi, Paris (also in Faenza, Italy in 1951)  
1952  *Modern Japanese Ceramic Exhibition* (invitational)  
1959  *Contemporary Japanese Ceramics Exhibition*, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (also many similar exhibitions at the NMMA thereafter)  
1971  *Japan Ceramics Exhibition* (invitational, and several times thereafter)  
1972-74  Traveling exhibition in North and South America  
1979  Sōdeisha exhibition in Australia  
1982  *Tradition of Modern Ceramics and the Avant-garde*, Suntory Museum of Art (several times at the Suntory Museum thereafter)  
1985-86  *Pacific Connections*, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma; San Diego State University, San Diego; Arizona State University, Tempe; University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City  
1988  *Sōdeisha 40th Anniversary Exhibition*, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art  


1997 *50th Anniversary Exhibition*, National Art Museum, Kyoto

1998 Retrospective exhibition at Mitsukoshi Étoile in Paris, and Mitsukoshi Department Store Gallery, Nihombashi, Tokyo and Nagoya

2001 *Masters of Clay: Five artists from Kyoto*, the Barry Friedman Gallery, organized by Joan B. Mirviss


2006 *Tōji: Avant-Garde et Tradition de la Céramique Japonaise*, Musée national de céramique Sèvres, France

2008-09 *The Dauer Collection*, California State University, Sacramento, University Library Gallery

2009 *Japan Ceramic Art Exhibition 2009 XX*, Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum, Ibaraki

2011 *Birds of Dawn: Pioneers of Japan’s Sōdeisha Ceramic Movement*, Joan B. Mirviss Ltd., NY

2014 *Tōshin – Yakimono no kokoro (Sprit of Ceramics)*, Shibuya Kurodatoen Gallery, Tokyo

Selected Public Collections:

- Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC
- Brooklyn Museum, New York
- Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum
- Ikenobo Society of Floral Art, Kyoto
- Kitamura Museum, Kyoto
- Kodama Museum of Art
- Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art
- Kyoto Prefectural Sogo-Shiryokan
- Musée Magnelli del la Céramique, Vallauris
- Musée national de Céramique, Sèvres
- Musee Tomo, Tokyo
- Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza
- Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
- National Museum of Art, Osaka
- National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto
- National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
- Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka
- Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
- Polk Museum of Art, Lakeland, FL
- Portland Art Museum, Oregon
- Seattle Art Museum, WA
- Shigaraki Togei no Mori (Ceramic Cultural Park)
- Shiseido Art House
Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence, 
Takamatsu Municipal Museum of Art 
Tokushima Prefectural Art Museum 
Victoria & Albert Museum, London 

Selected References: 


