

Ceramic as Contemporary Art

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Abstract

I have tried to create artworks by employing new ceramic technique or ideas that is developed from the basic and traditional way from craft.

In Japan many ceramic artists are showing their works as contemporary arts. Recently, showing contemporary artworks in Japanese traditional spaces has become a trend. I would like to introduce the latest ceramic arts in Japan through my works.

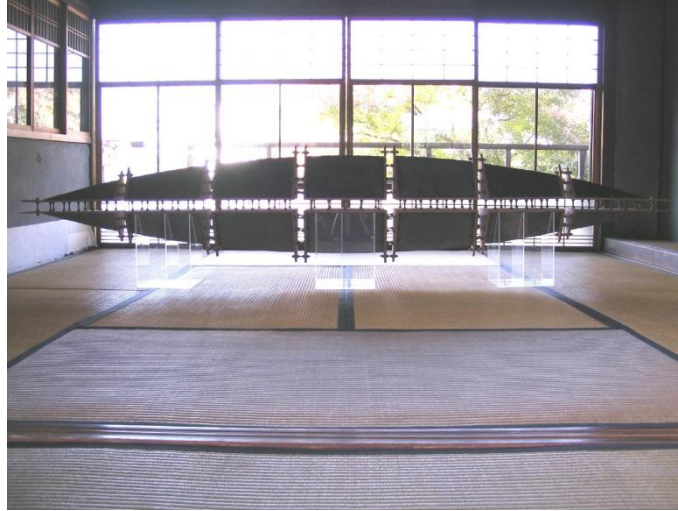


Fig. 1. Tanaka Tetsuya, 空 (QOO)-KINMIRAI Nostalgia, 2007, mixed media, clay, bolt, nut, acrylic plate,
 70 x 320 x 33 cm

My first series are QOO series.

For over ten years I am making ceramic works that were combined with metal.

Though these works look like genuine metallic products, the main material is ceramics and only a few parts are real metal.

Fig. 1 is 空 (QOO)-KINMIRAI Nostalgia. This work is over 3 meters. It was exhibited at the BIWAKO international contemporary art biennale in an old Japanese house. In recent Japan, exhibiting contemporary artworks in traditional space became a trend. I think that contemporary art pieces fits well in Japanese traditional space. Japanese traditional architecture is based on the ZEN spirit. There are no decorations. There are only comfortable spaces made of natural things such as light, wind, and so on. ZEN spirit is a similar concept to minimal art that was fashioned in the 20th century in U.S.A. and Europe. This may be the reason why I feel that contemporary art can combine with traditional spaces.



Fig. 2. Tanaka Tetsuya, *Thinking on the Wall No.31-Sound Kept Secret*, 2009, mixed media clay, bolt, nut, motor head, 24 x 41 x 9 cm

Fig. 2 is one of *Thinking on the Wall* series. *Thinking on the Wall* series combine ceramic and metal thing also. This part is motor head of a grinder. Sometimes I use scraps to create things.



Fig. 3. Tanaka Tetsuya, *BASARA Tea Wares*, 2007, mixed media, clay, bolt, nut, iron plate, aluminum plate

This is a set of tea wares (see Fig. 3). I also make functional works too. Many Japanese ceramic artists develop both sculptural and functional art. There is almost no border between arts and crafts in Japanese ceramic arts.

Japanese craft is called "KOUGEI." KOUGEI is slightly different from Western craft. In the West, art is considered to be higher than craft. In Japan, KOUGEI and arts are the same, sometimes KOUGEI can be higher than art. Please imagine a tea bowl that can be traded for 30 thousands euros. These tea bowls are not antique. Japanese contemporary ceramic art grows from this KOUGEI.



Fig. 4. Tanaka Tetsuya, *ARK No5*, 2006, mixed media, clay, bolt, nut, 27 x 30 x 12.5 cm

This is flower vase (see Fig. 4). Japanese modern ceramic artists developed ceramic sculpture from functional art like flower vase. In our generation, there are ceramic sculptures already. Sometimes I divert ideas from sculpture to functional works like this. It can also be influenced the other way around as well.

Next are recent works.

I try to approach contemporary art from a ceramic art perspective. We ceramicist or potters makes vessel. I make invisible or formless vessels, such as, vessel for sounds, vessel for time, vessel for light or rays.



Fig. 5. Tanaka Tetsuya, 響器 *HIBIKI-Vessel of sounds*, 2010, mixed media, clay, bolt, nut, microphone, amplifier, speaker, infrared sensor, 50 x 286 x 41 cm

Fig. 5 is a *HIBIKI* vessel for sounds. You can stand in front of this work and hear the sounds that come from the inside of the works.



Fig. 6. Tanaka Tetsuya, 輝器 *KAGAYAKI- Vessel of light*, 2012, mixed media, semitransparent clay, acrylic bolt, fluorescent material, solar panels, brightness sensor, black light fluorescent tubes, batteries, 288 x 36 x 36 cm

KAGAYAKI (see Fig. 6) is vessel of lights or rays. I make the body of the *KAGAYAKI* with translucent clay. I have illuminated it with LED light from inside.

My work can be categorized as contemporary art and also as KOUGEI craft. I have tried to create artworks by employing new ceramic technique or ideas developed from the basic and traditional way of KOUGEI. I challenge myself to create work that can fuse the KOUGEI art with contemporary art. I hope be an artist who will expand a new style or area with this type of fusion, which will greatly contribute to the ceramic culture.