

Hiroyuki Yamada

Using the Spirit of the Old as Inspiration for the New

Article by Hiroko Miura



Tea Pot. 2006. Clay, glaze over glaze, silver enamel. 13.3 x 9.5 cm. Sake cups. 2006. Clay, glaze. 5 x 6 cm.

HIROYUKI YAMADA IS AN ARTIST WHO MAINTAINS A balance between two kinds of work: functional vessels and sculptural forms. In college he started out being fascinated by industrial design, but eventually became attracted to ceramics, where he could express his images directly in clay. After graduating, he undertook an apprenticeship in Tamba ware pottery near his birthplace in Hyogo Prefecture. In this traditional pottery town, he undoubtedly learnt the severity and difficulty of making pottery as a way of earning a living. Later, he applied for and was accepted to the artist-in-residence program at the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park. At the time, Yamada was the only one making functional vessels there; all of the other artists, both from Japan and abroad, were creating sculptural forms.

Influenced by these fellow artists and their free ideas, Yamada began to experiment with sculptural forms in addition to his functional work. In his ceramic sculpture from 1997 and 1998, we can see his focus on the material and process of ceramics. He would make a slab from porcelain clay with pulp mixed in, place sawdust on top, and fire it. He tried this technique with a variety of materials, creating ceramic 'paintings' and installations. For example, on the surface of a work he would spread soft clay paste with a knife; by firing this action, freezing it into a permanent material that could never return to clay, he attempted to express one aspect of the dynamism of ceramic art.

In 1999, he received the Grand Prize in the Shigaraki Ceramic Art Exhibition for his work *Water Vessel*, in