WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

All works in the exhibition are from the permanent collection of the Mills College Art Museum.

Yuasa Atsuyuki
Cup for soba (buckwheat noodle) sauce with blue underglaze and blue decoration, circa 1945-58
Porcelain
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Kanyo Tomimoto (1880-1963)
Plate with red enamel and gold decoration, circa 1945-58
Porcelain
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Mashiko kiln
in iron and copper, circa 1945-58
Glazed cup with painted decoration
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Shin Fujisawa (1922-1997)
Glazed covered bowl, circa 1945-58
Stoneware
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Kiyohiko Hara (1930-1987)
Vase with glazed upper half, circa 1945-58
Stoneware
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Gen Murata (1901-1968)
Oblong, rectangular bottle with long, green body with green and brown splashes, circa 1945-58
Gift of M. William S. Picher

Shiho Harada (1894-1978)
Glazed bowl, circa 1945-58
Stoneware, Manji-kin
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Genji Shimaoka (1919-2007)
Glazed sake cup with iron decoration, circa 1945-58
Stoneware, Tenba-kin
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Kitaoji Rosanjin (1889-1959)
Glazed Chawan (tea bowl), with raku glazed black with brown flash, circa 1945-58
Earthenware
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Togen
Shudei (tea bowl) with impressed tenmoku
Stoneware, Tenka-kin
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Kancoki Tomimoto (1880-1963)
Plate with red enamel and gold decoration, circa 1945-58
Porcelain
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Shoji Hamada
Rectangular mold made stoneware vase

Oribe dish, landscape with trees
Unknown artist;
Gift of Mr. William S. Picher

Suemasa Suemasa
Glazed Chawan (tea bowl), circa 1945-58
Stoneware, Karatsu-kin
Gift of Dr. Herbert H. Sanders

Koya Sasaki (1901-1959)
Glazed Shinno sake cup white with pink and red brown decorations, circa 1945-58
Gift of M. William S. Picher

Kanjiro Kawai (1910-2007)
Rectangular mold made stoneware vase

Photography: David W. Johnson

The Chancellor's Committee on Art, Honors, and Recognition of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Lynne Baer, Art Advisor to the Committee, are pleased to present this exhibition. A Journey from Earthware to Porcelain: Early 20th Century Japanese Ceramics from the Mills College Art Museum, Oakland, California. In the context of exploring the humanistic relationship between art and science, the Committee has as its mandate the enhancement of the public spaces of the campus, including the library.

The Chancellor's Committee on Art, Honors, and Recognition wishes to thank Patrisia Spazarelli, curator of the exhibition, an Art History student intern under the guidance of Dr. Mary-Ann Milford, Professor of Art History and Carver Professor of Far East Studies; Dr. Stephanie Hnur, Director of Mills College Art Museum; and Stacie Daniels, Manager of Collections and Exhibitions at Mills College for contributing their expertise as well as loaning the objects to the exhibition.

Art exhibitions have become an integral part of the library both with large freestanding works on pedestals and smaller works displayed in museum quality cases. The library also has a growing permanent collection of paintings and sculpture including works by California artists Nathan Oliveira, Fred Reichman, Robert Cremean, and internationally recognized artists Bill Woodrow and George Mathieu.
A Journey from Earthenware to Porcelain

EARLY 20TH CENTURY JAPANESE CERAMICS

A Journey from Earthenware to Porcelain features thirty-five ceramic objects from the early 20th century, including works by the world famous Japanese potter, Kitaöji Rosanjin, and nine designated Living National Treasures recipients. The ceramic objects in this exhibition are drawn from the Mills College Art Museum in Oakland. The collection was a gift to Mills in the 1970s from William S. Picher, a prominent San Francisco patron of the arts, and from Dr. Herbert Sanders, a Bay Area teacher, writer, and collector. This exhibition looks at Japan’s ceramic journey from earthenware to porcelain demonstrating the technical brilliance, refined aesthetics, and feeling for nature that lies at the heart of Japanese ceramics.

BRIEF HISTORY OF JAPANESE POTTERY

The production of unglazed earthenware in Japan goes back to the Neolithic Jomon period (10,000 to 300 B.C.E.). Wheel-turned pottery vessels were produced in the following Yayoi Period (400 B.C.E. to 300 C.E.). Pottery became an art form in the 13th century with the introduction of Chinese and Korean ceramic techniques at Seto in Aichi by the artisan Toshikin. In the 14th century, five more kilns were established in Tokoname, Shigaraki, Bizen, Echizen, and Tamba, and became known as the “Six Ancient Kilns.”

Porcelain in contrast has a shorter history. In 1510, the potter Shononzui learned the craft at the Chinese imperial porcelain factory at Jing de Zhen; he also studied Korea’s advanced technologies for glazing stoneware and porcelain. In 1616, a kaolin source discovered in Arita in Saga Prefecture on the southern island of Kyushu allowed Japan to produce its own Chinese style porcelain. Although Imari was produced in Arita, it derived its name from Imari, a port city from where porcelain was shipped to Europe that was later copied in Germany, France, and Britain.

Japanese pottery blossomed during the Momoyama Period (1575-1600), when it was developed as an art form due to the popularity of the tea ceremony. Oribe and Shino tea ceremony ceramics were made under the guidance of the tea masters Sen no Rikyo and Furuta Oribe. The master potter Chojiro developed the raku-yaki style of earthenware pottery that is fired, glazed and then immediately fired again leaving a darkened distinctively varied pattern.

POTTERY MAKERS

During the Meiji period (1868-1912) interest in pottery declined. A rebirth occurred during the revival of mingei, the popular folk arts movement, led by Yanagi Soetsu (1889-1961), who is known for generating interest not only in pottery but all traditional crafts during the early 20th century. Resurrecting the craft after its near demise during the Industrial Revolution, the potter, Shoji Hamada, (1894-1978), along with the British potter, Bernard Leach, were by far the most famous and influential artists of the mingei movement in the 20th century, who influenced generations of artist-potters in England, the United States, and Japan. Using the local clay from Mashiko and available organic material such as salt and cinder for his glazes, Hamada produced utilitarian wares in strong, simple shapes brushed with abstract designs for ordinary use. The rectangular bottle by Hamada is coated with a thick glaze that produces the natural pebbled texture characteristic of salt glazing. His influence can be seen in the square bottle of his student Gen Murata (1904-88).

Kitaöji Rosanjin’s (1883-1959) shino type stoneware plate combines traditional Momoyama aesthetics with refined modern sensibility. The warm, cream white bodied shino ware that is usually covered with a rich feldspathic glaze often with simple underglaze design in iron slip, is typical of the Momoyama period. The rosy tone of the body glows from beneath the glaze.

Kenkichi Tomimoto (1886-1963) was one of Japan’s finest and most influential ceramic artists. In 1915, he built his own kiln in Yamato producing low-fired raku wares. Without a doubt, Tomimoto’s greatest contribution to the art of pottery was his discovery of a way to combine gold and silver in decorative designs; by mixing silver with platinum, the melting point of silver was raised and allowed both gold and silver decorations to be fired at the same time. The wall plaque in gold on red enamel is an excellent example of his technical brilliance.

The Imari underglazes on blue and white porcelain represent the quiet, subdued side of the Imari production. True porcelain consists of a mixture of kaolin, silica and feldspar. Although porcelain is worked like clay, when fired it is like glass. Potter Abe Yuko’s soba cups used for buckwheat noodles, display underglazes of blue decoration that are examples of Tobe ware from the Ehime Prefecture.

A Journey from Earthenware to Porcelain highlights Japanese technical brilliance, refined aesthetics, and a feeling for nature in Japanese ceramics. This exhibition aims to ignite a desire to take a journey into the world of Japanese ceramics and hold in one’s hands, the bowl, or the dish that speaks directly to the heart rather than the mind—for this sensitivity can be found only in the pottery of Japan.