



# EMBODYING TRADITION

*Ceramic Works by* Miraku Kamei XIV and XV

Pucker Gallery | Boston



MIRAKU KAMEI XV  
*Water container (mizusashi), with sendanmaki incising and yellow glaze*  
7.5 x 7 x 7"  
XV9

ALL WORKS ARE STONEWARE.

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*Ceramic Works by Miraku Kamei XIV and XV*

For over half a century, millions of Japanese people have gathered around the television each Sunday night at 8:00 PM to watch the NHK Television historical drama series known as *Taiga drama* (Great River Drama). Since 1963, each calendar year has featured weekly episodes depicting the life of a different East Asian historical personage or movement. This year, 2014, the drama's subject is the sixteenth century warlord Kuroda Yoshitaka, who founded the ceramic type known as Takatori ware.

In 1591, Yoshitaka and his son, Kuroda Nagamasa, were part of a huge expedition of Japanese warriors commissioned with conquering Ming dynasty China by way of Korea. During the time they spent in Korea, the two warlords encountered potters who were able to make vessels of high-fired ceramic – a technology that did not exist in their home province in Japan. Understanding the potential benefits that would result from starting and controlling a workshop and kiln in a part of Japan that lacked fine ceramics production, Yoshitaka and Nagamasa arranged to bring back a family of Korean potters with them to Japan. Although records indicate that most of the ceramic artisans who were taken to Japan around the same time went as prisoners, documents kept by the Takatori potters indicate that the Kuroda lords did not force the craftsmen to return with them to Japan. Indeed, once they arrived in Japan, the craftsmen were made official potters of the domain, awarded samurai status, and given appropriate stipends and logistical support. The potters maintained this status until the abolition of the domain system in 1871.

Modern Takatori ware carries on the proud tradition established more than four hundred years ago. Miraku Kamei counts himself as the fifteenth generation descended from the ware's founder, who, after his arrival in Japan, was given the name Takatori Hachizō. Mr. Kamei's works are inspired by those made by his first generation ancestor in the 1620s and 1630s. At that time, the Kuroda lord sought the assistance of Kobori Enshū, the most highly respected tea master in Japan, to help his potters develop refined ceramics for Tea that fit the most current taste. After receiving Enshū's direction, the Takatori craftsmen began to make pieces that were thinner and more elegant than before, and to use more complex and brightly-colored glazes. The ceramics bodies became denser and harder as well. This style, known as Enshū Takatori, became the hallmark for most succeeding Takatori tea wares.

One of the most intriguing aspects of early Takatori ware was the highly restricted nature of its production. Because they held warrior class status and received stipends, the potters were not allowed to sell the ceramics they made. Every piece that came out



MIRAKU KAMEI XV  
*Tea bowl (chawan), ridged decoration and yellow glaze*  
2.75 x 5 x 5"  
XV27



MIRAKU KAMEI XV  
*Tea caddy (chaire), shouldered jar (katatsuki) form*  
3 x 2.5 x 2.5"  
XV10

of the kiln instantly became the property of the lord and his agents, who controlled its distribution. Any misfired or unsatisfactory pieces had to be destroyed. As a result, the only way a Takatori piece could be acquired was as a gift from the Kuroda domain. Indeed, historical records indicate that the major function of Takatori ware prior to 1871 was one of gift-giving. Tokugawa society (during the Edo Period, 1603-1867) operated on an elaborate system of obligatory gift-giving, none as intricate or costly as that of the upper warrior class. Through this system, Takatori ware found its way into warlord collections throughout Japan, with some examples presented to even the Shogun himself. Because Takatori ware was not sold to the general public, and because its production has mainly centered on tea utensils, decorative sculptures, and other expensive items, today it is less known by the general populace than many other Japanese ceramic types.

After the domain system was abolished in 1871, following the Meiji Restoration, the restrictions on the Takatori style were lifted. Strangely, most of the potters who had made Takatori ware for the Kuroda lords gave up potting at that time and turned to other professions. It seems clear that the Takatori potters were proud of their status as samurai and as domain craftsmen, and many could not bring themselves to use their skills to make pieces that they would then have to sell to ordinary people.

At the same time, there were other potters who made utilitarian wares not far from the Takatori workshop. Since the early 1700s, these potters had also worked for the Kuroda domain, but their wares were sold to provide income for the lord and his supporters, with the craftsmen allowed to keep a portion of the profits. Occasionally, the potters of this much larger operation had received permission to make luxury wares for the lord in the Takatori style. In some cases, male children of these potters were adopted as heirs into branches of the Takatori family and became Takatori potters. When the domains were abolished and the Takatori style was liberalized, these utilitarian ware potters were able to transition to making sleek and fashionable elite ceramics like their Takatori neighbors without missing a beat. The most successful of these families, named Nakagawa, even adopted a child from one of the Takatori branches, and thus was able to trace its roots back to the first Takatori potter, Hachizō. In 1903, the thirteenth generation changed the family name to Kamei. Today, the workshop led by Miraku Kamei is the only traditional ceramics operation in the area where the Takatori potters last served the Kuroda lords.

Maintaining a 400-year-old artistic heritage is a heavy responsibility. Even so, success in the family specialty is not guaranteed simply because one's ancestors have practiced it for centuries. Miraku Kamei XV and his father, Miraku XIV, have had to meet the challenge of creating ceramics that appeal to contemporary audiences. As a young man, Miraku XIV was faced with learning his craft during the difficult period following Japan's defeat in World War II. He trained under his grandfather, Miraku XIII, who was known as one of Japan's foremost makers of tea caddies (*chaire*, XV10), the tiny jars that hold powdered tea (*matcha*) in the tea ceremony. Miraku XIV had to find a way to market his traditional skills in a way that appealed to the New Japan of businessmen



MIRAKU KAMEI XV  
Sweets tray (kashiki), with bridge handle and glazing-in-halves (kakewake)  
6 × 8.75 × 8.75"  
XV40

in suits, growing industrialization, and democracy. Fortunately, his assumption of workshop leadership in 1959 coincided with the beginnings of Japan's "economic miracle," which enabled traditional pastimes like tea ceremony to flourish. Miraku XIV became particularly well-known for his fresh water jars (*mizusashi*, XIV2), the source of water for replenishing the kettle during a tea ceremony gathering.

In 2001, the fourteenth generation relinquished the name Miraku and took the name Yushouan. His son, Masahisa, took the title Miraku and became head of the workshop in western Fukuoka City. Following the collapse of the "bubble economy" in the early 1990s, the challenge for Miraku XV has been to create innovative products that appeal to a wider audience, while still maintaining the established links to tea ceremony practitioners, local supporters, and galleries. His innovations in form and technique were spurred in part by the training he received while a student in Ceramics at Kyoto Saga University of Arts. In particular, he has refined his use of decorative carving and incising to create striking pieces unlike any previously seen in Takatori ware (XV3, XV6). Such work is possible because of the extremely fine quality of the clay body, a characteristic of Takatori ware since the time of Kōbori Enshū.

A distinguishing feature of Takatori ware even older and more prominent than the fine clay body is the corpus of striking, multi-hued glazes. The emphasis on beautifully mottled glazes began at the very first kiln, which was founded on the slopes of Mt. Takatori near modern Nōgata City shortly after 1600. Throughout history, the Takatori glaze recipes and the methods for firing them have remained the most closely-kept secrets of the Takatori potters. Undoubtedly, few ceramic artists anywhere have mastered the subtle variations of flowing glaze to the extent that Miraku Kamei XV has (XV27, XV10).

Miraku Kamei XV embodies the four hundred year tradition of Takatori ware. Although that tradition continues without the warlord patronage that sustained it for most of its history, the Takatori heritage maintains its legacy of beauty, vibrancy, and relevance. With his father, who, sadly, passed away as this exhibition was in preparation, Mr. Kamei has played a critical role in conveying one of Japan's most elegant and distinctive ceramic styles into the twenty-first century, and, with the current exhibition, to the world beyond Japan as well.

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Note: In this essay, the names of historical figures are given in Japanese order, with surname first, while contemporary Japanese names are given with the surname last.

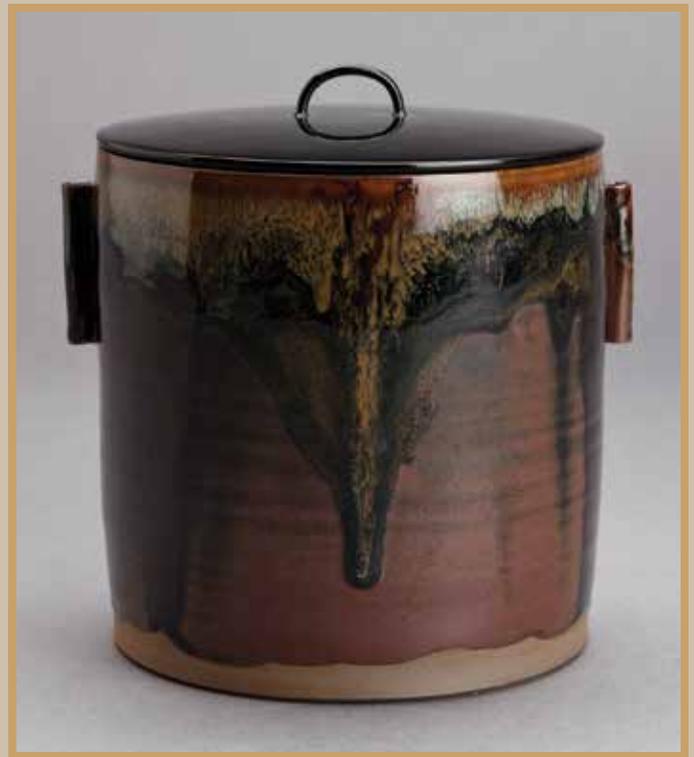
ANDREW L. MASKE is Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Studies at the University of Kentucky. His principal research focuses on aspects of ceramics and their cultural context in Asia. His book, *Potters and Patrons in Edo Period Japan: Takatori Ware and the Kuroda Domain* (Ashgate, 2011), provides the most extensive investigation of Takatori ware production history published to date.

# XIV

**M**iraku Kamei XIV was born Genpachiro Kamei in 1931 to Miraku Kamei XIII. He trained with his father from the age of fifteen, and became the 14th generation family head at age twenty-eight. In 1977, he was named Holder of an Intangible Cultural Asset of Fukuoka City (*Fukuoka-shi mukei bunkazai hojisha*) and in 1999 was awarded the title of Contemporary Famous Craftsman (*Gendai no meikou*) by the Japanese government. In 2001, he ceded family leadership to his son and took the name Yushouan. He passed away in 2014.



*Tea bowl (chawan), with glazing-in-halves (kakewake)*  
3 x 5 x 5"  
XIV3



*Water container (mizusashi), with cylindrical handles*  
7.25 x 6.75 x 6.25"  
XIV2



*Flower vase (hanaire), with bridge handle and white glaze*  
10 x 4.5 x 4.75"  
XIV1

# XV

**M**iraku Kamei XV was born Masahisa Kamei in 1960, the eldest son of Miraku Kamei XIV, master potter of Takatori ware. He completed his university degree in Ceramics at Kyoto Saga University of Arts, and took the title of the fifteenth generation in 2001. Mr. Kamei has been carrying on the tradition of Takatori ware for more than thirty years. In addition to exhibiting and promoting Takatori ware around Japan, he is an active teacher, training students in ceramics at a number of institutions around his home city of Fukuoka. He is also president of the Fukuoka/Hakata branch of the Japan Ceramics Association and a member of numerous arts organizations.



*Flower vase (hanaire), Old Takatori style*  
10.25 × 4 × 4.75"  
XV4



*Dish, ginkgo leaf form with white glaze*  
2.5 × 9.75 × 12.25"  
XV44



*Flower vase (hanaire), with shippo design openwork and cylindrical handles*  
10.5 × 5 × 5"  
XV3



*Flower vase (hanaire), gourd form with white glaze*  
10.5 × 3.75 × 3.75"  
XV39



*Tea bowl (chawan)*  
3 × 4.75 × 4.75"  
XV21



*Lidded dish, with shippo design openwork*  
6.25 × 7.5 × 7.5"  
XV43



*Tea caddy (chaire), eggplant (nasu) form*  
3 × 2.75 × 2.75"  
XV12



*Tea bowl (chawan), with glazing-in-halves (kakewake)*  
3 × 4.5 × 4.5"  
XV20



*Jar (tsubo), with net design and black glaze*  
7.5 × 7.5 × 7.5"  
XV11



*Flower vase (hanaire), with shippo design openwork*  
10 × 5.25 × 5.25"  
XV34



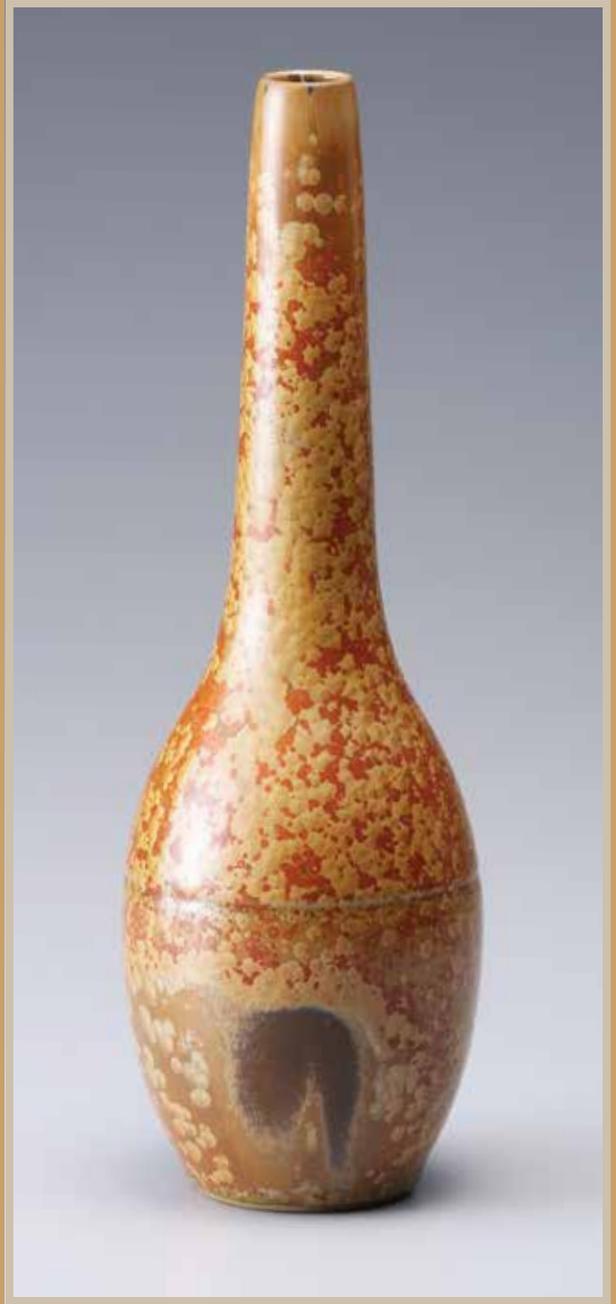
*Water container (mizusashi), with sendanmaki incising and yellow glaze*  
6.25 × 6.75 × 6.75"  
XV14



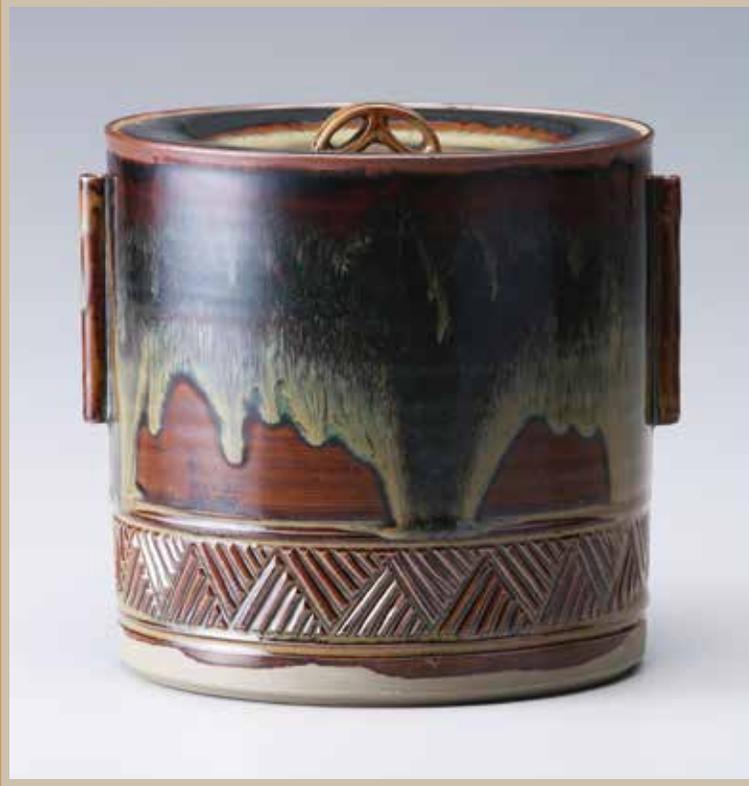
*Tea bowl (chawan), Old Takatori style*  
3 × 4.5 × 4.5"  
XV25



*Tea bowl (chawan), gold flower (kinka) glaze*  
3 × 4.75 × 4.75"  
XV23



*Flower vase (hanaire), crane's neck form and gold flower (kinka) glaze*  
11 × 3.5 × 3.5"  
XV33



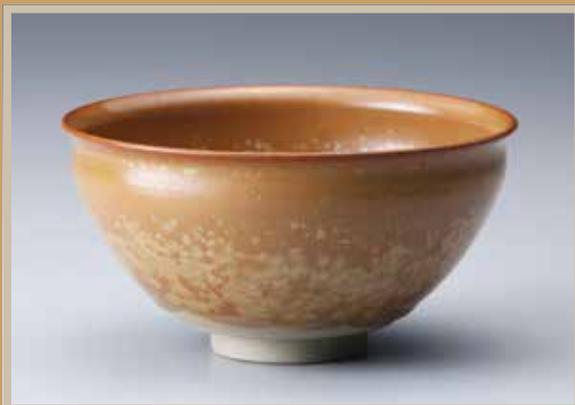
*Water container (mizusashi), ame-yu glaze*  
6.5 × 6.75 × 6.75"  
XV13



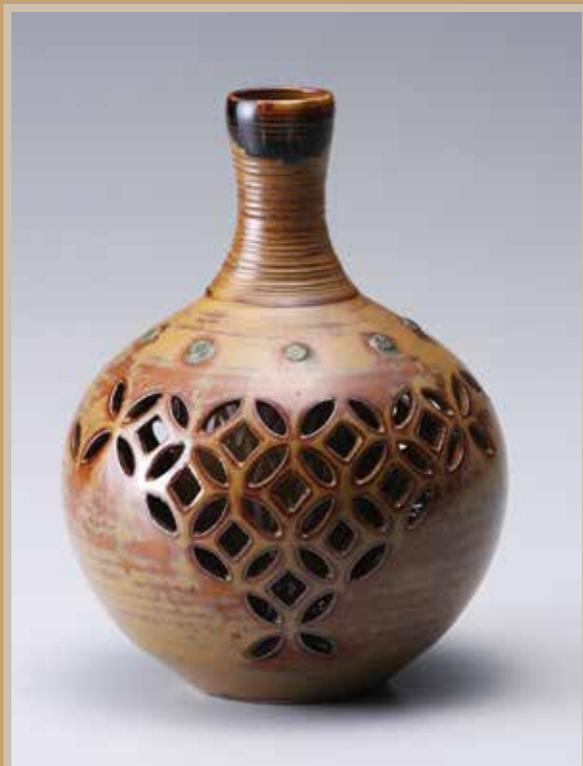
*Incense burner (koro), helmet form*  
6.25 × 6 × 6"  
XV2



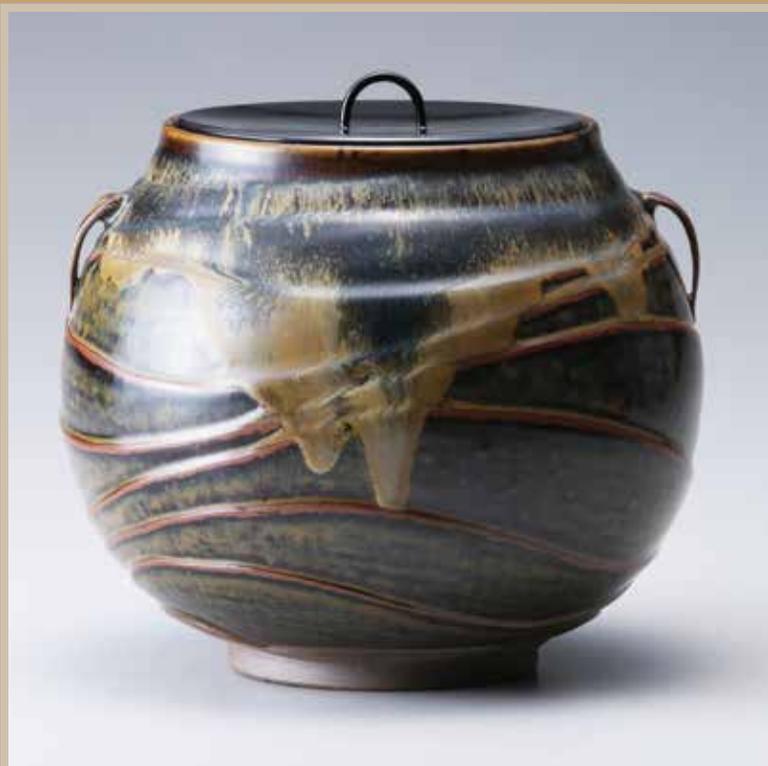
*Footed tray (takatsuki), with shippo design openwork*  
3.75 × 8 × 8"  
XV48



*Tea bowl (chawan), gold flower (kinka) glaze*  
2.5 × 5 × 5"  
XV26



*Bottle (tsubo), with shippo design openwork and yellow glaze*  
6.75 × 5.25 × 5.25"  
XV45



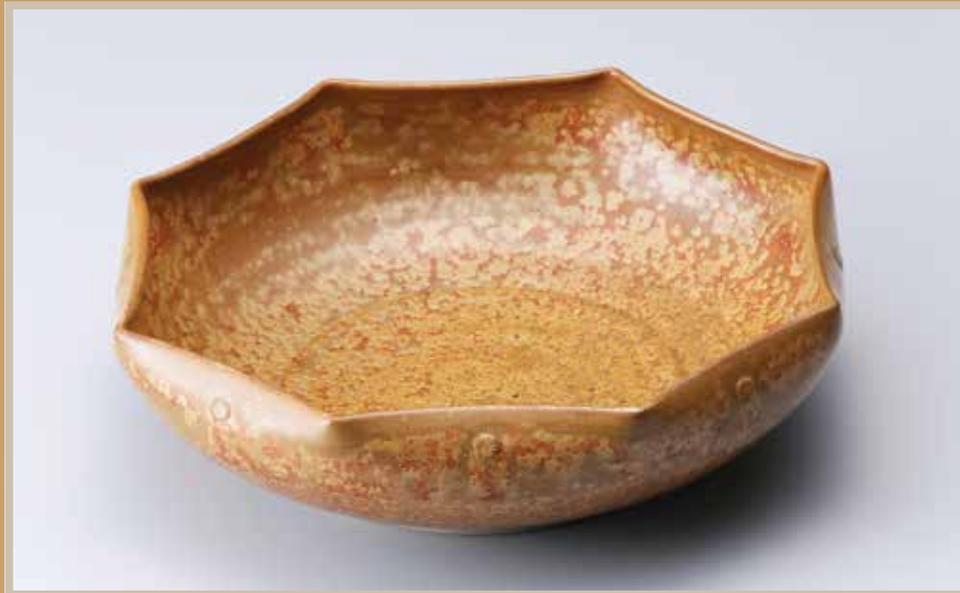
*Water container (mizusashi), with wave decoration in raised relief and lacquer lid*  
6.75 × 7.75 × 7.75"  
XV17



*Flower vase (hanaire), with fish-shaped handles and black glaze*  
10.75 × 3.75 × 3.75"  
XV32



*Flat flask (henko), with carved decoration and glazing-in-halves (kakewake)*  
3.75 × 6.5 × 6.5"  
XV46



Sweets tray (kashiki), octagonal form with gold flower (kinka) glaze  
2.75 × 8.75 × 8.75"  
XV41



Sweets tray (kashiki), with shippo design openwork and glazing-in-halves (kakewake)  
2.75 × 8.75 × 8.75"  
XV42



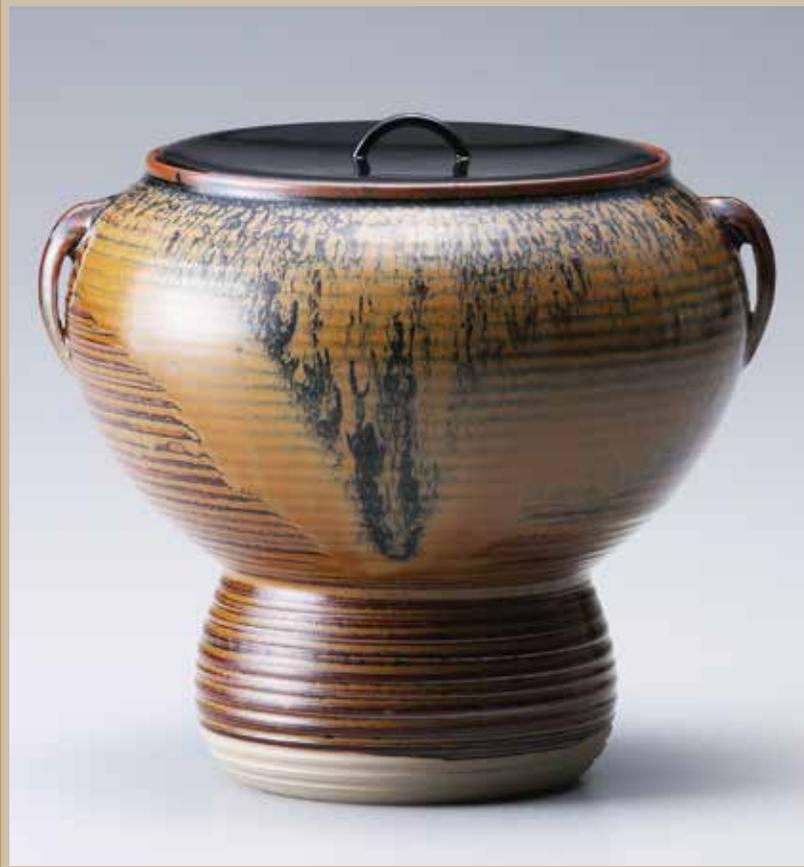
*Flower vase (hanaire), Old Takatori style*  
8.75 × 4.25 × 4.25"  
XV38



*Incense burner (koro), helmet form with chatter-mark pattern*  
6 × 5.75 × 5.75"  
XV30



*Water container (mizusashi), flower form with lacquer lid*  
5.5 × 7.25 × 7.25"  
XV16



*Water container (mizusashi), inverted gourd form (tanpyou) with  
lacquer lid*  
6 × 6.5 × 6.5"  
XV15



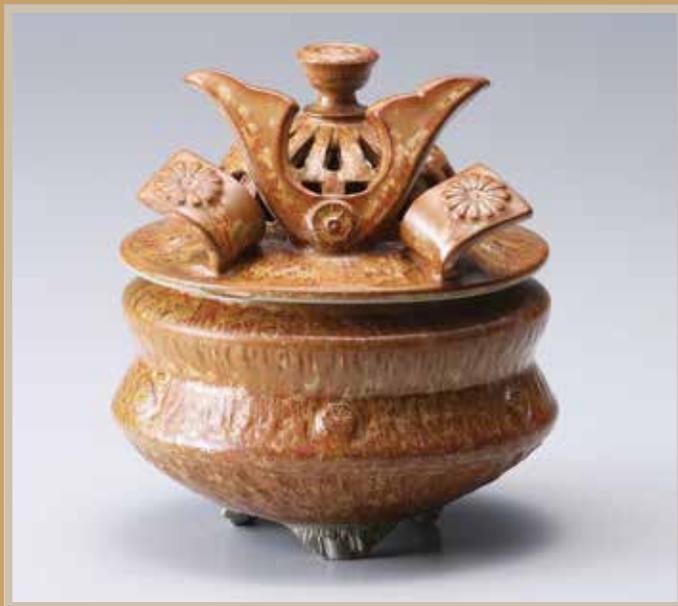
*Flower vase (hanaire), bamboo node form with  
cylindrical handles*  
10.75 × 4 × 4"  
XV35



*Flower vase (hanaire), with cylindrical handles and globular base*  
10.75 × 3.75 × 3.75"  
XV31



*Bottle (tsubo), with shippo design openwork and ame-yu glaze*  
3 × 3 × 3"  
XV28



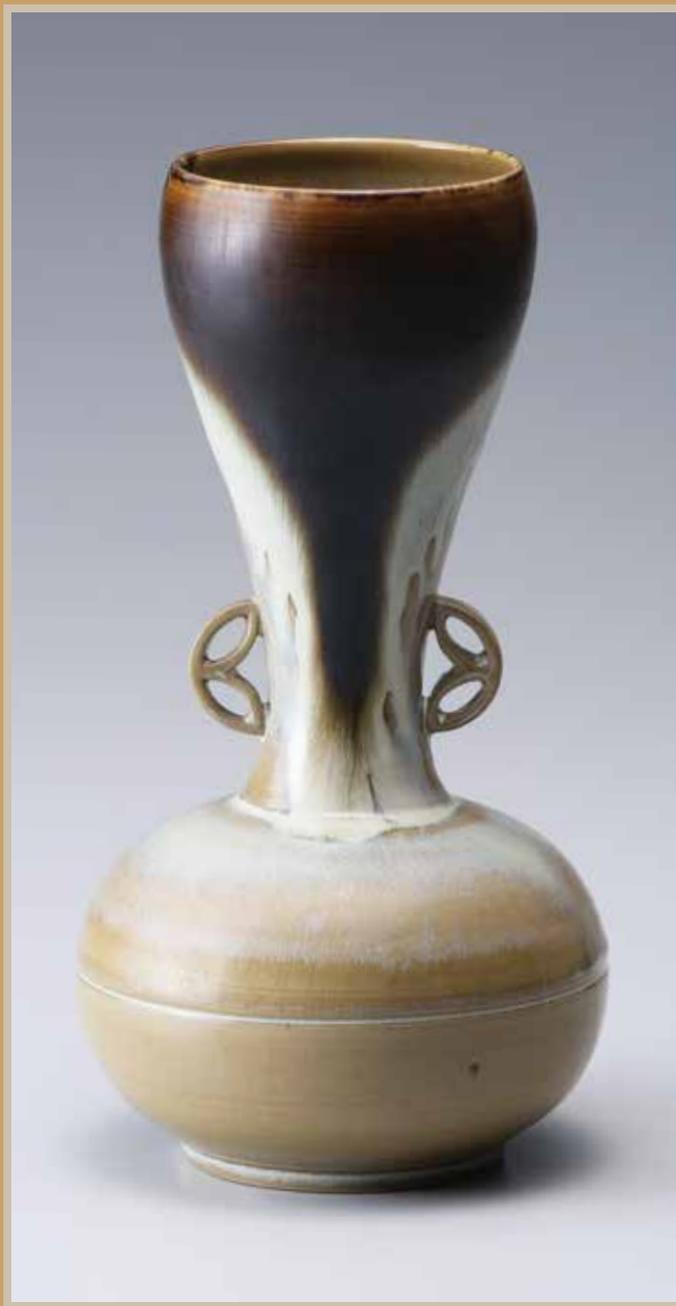
*Incense burner (koro), helmet form*  
6 × 5.5 × 5.5"  
XV29



*Lantern, with shippo design openwork*  
6 × 5 × 5"  
XV47



*Flower vase (hanaire), yellow glaze*  
9.25 × 4.75 × 4.75"  
XV36



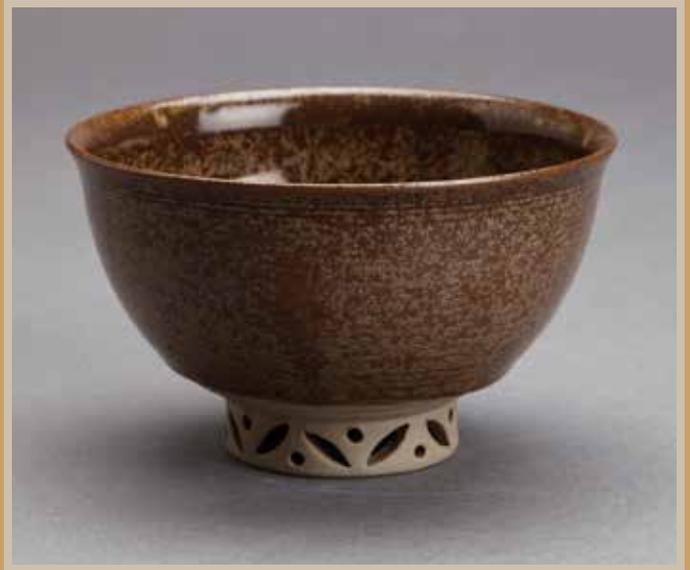
*Flower vase (hanaire), with handles and shippo design openwork*  
9.75 × 5.25 × 5.25"  
XV37



*Doll form lantern, with shippo design openwork*  
8.75 × 4 × 4"  
XV49



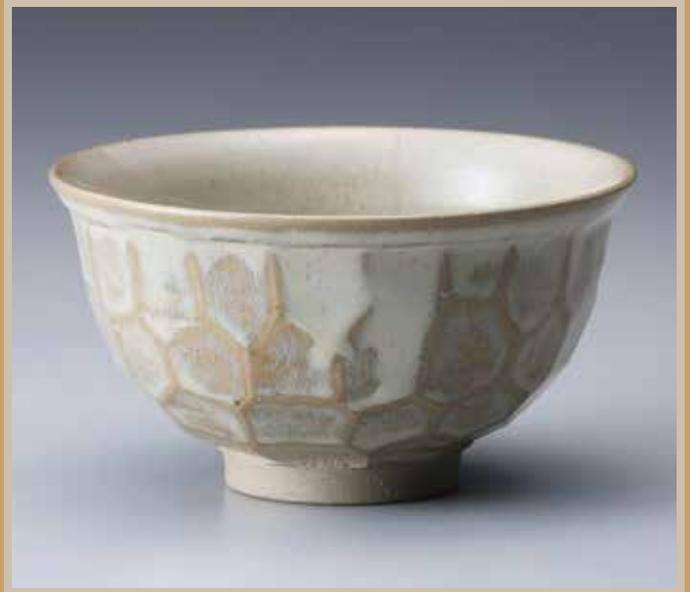
*Tea bowl (chawan), incised dragon decoration*  
3.25 × 5 × 5"  
XV6



*Tea bowl (chawan), gold flower (kinko) glaze and shippo design openwork foot*  
3.25 × 5 × 5"  
XV7



*Tea bowl (chawan), silver flower (ginka) glaze*  
3.5 × 5 × 5"  
XV5



*Tea bowl (chawan), with faceted surface and white glaze*  
2.75 × 5 × 5"  
XV18



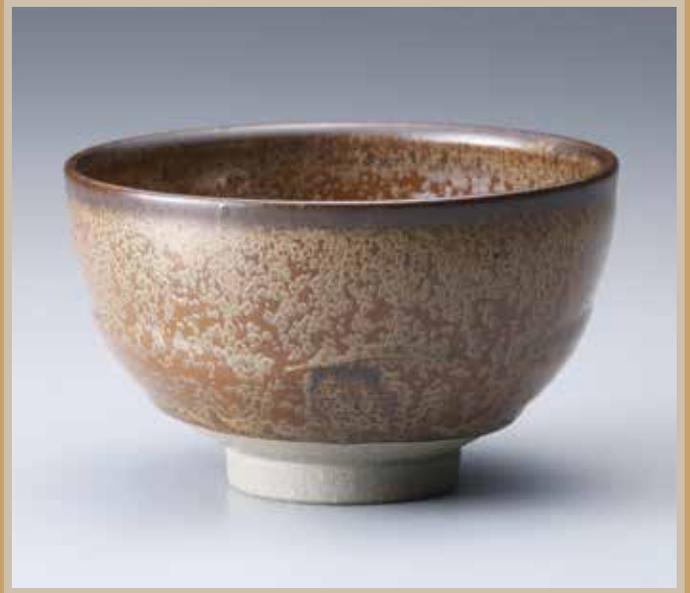
*Tea bowl (chawan), Old Takatori style with glazing-in-halves (kakewake)*  
2.75 × 5 × 4.75"  
XV8



*Tea bowl (chawan), with shippo design openwork foot*  
3 × 4.5 × 4.5"  
XV24



*Tea bowl (chawan), with faceted surface and black glaze*  
2.75 × 4.75 × 4.75"  
XV19



*Tea bowl (chawan), silver flower (ginka) glaze*  
3 × 4.75 × 4.75"  
XV22

# PUCKER GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1967 BOSTON

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### GALLERY HOURS

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Sunday 10:30 AM to 5:00 PM

We offer one free hour of validated parking at the 200 Newbury Street Garage. The garage driving entrance is located on Exeter Street between Newbury and Boylston Streets. The nearest MBTA stop is Copley Station on the Green Line.

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# EMBODYING TRADITION

*Ceramic Works by* **Miraku Kamei XIV and XV**

### DATES:

6 September through 5 October 2014

### OPENING RECEPTION:

6 September 2014, 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM

*The public is invited to attend.*

*Miraku Kamei XV will be present.*



Front and back cover:  
MIRAKU KAMEI XV  
*Water container (mizusashi), with cylindrical handles,  
yellow glaze and lacquer lid*  
7 × 6.25 × 6.25"  
XV1