Ken Matsuzaki Tradition Today



Pucker Gallery, Boston

Ken Matsuzaki entered Tamagawa University as an art student and by 1972 had graduated as a ceramics major. After his graduation, he decided to enter an apprentice program and spent the next five years under my supervision, thus entering the world of "Mingei" with me here in Mashiko.

Before entering his five year apprenticeship, Ken Matsuzaki had already acquired many of the basic fundamental skills of ceramics in high school and at the university.

Upon finishing his apprenticeship, he decided to build his studio and settled in Mashiko to pursue his own style. Ken had studied and experimented with other traditional styles, mainly *yakishime* (high fired, unglazed ware), Shino and Oribe and incorporated its influences upon his new work.

I am sure that it was a great task since all three styles have long "deep rooted" traditions and "local history" and most of all, a deep connection with the Japanese "Tea Ceremony." To come close to capturing the essence of these three styles, much intelligence, knowledge, and courage would be needed.

His success is reflected in his work.

His use of a gas kiln (against the traditional wood firing of Shino and Oribe), and his use of glazes and "trial and error" to obtain the effects of the Oribe and Shino is quite remarkable.



Through designing his own wood burning kiln and the process of long firings, Ken has also successfully obtained the *yakishime* effect and solved the major problems encountered with it.

In the environment of Mingei, he has boldly integrated other styles, freed himself from traditional Mingei and created a new style of his own.

MK9

His new work reflects his devotion, creativity and originality.

Ken Matsuzaki has displayed in the yearly exhibition held at Keio Department store in Tokyo for the 25th time and has gained much admiration. He is also a leading member of the Kokugai-Kai (Art Group.)

It is my sincere wish and hope that the new works by Ken Matsuzaki will be seen and enjoyed by many at the coming exhibition at the Pucker Gallery.

Front Cover:

MK34 Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Vase 11¹/₂ x 14¹/₂ x 14¹/₂"

Left:

MK9

Shino Glaze Vase with Lugs $6^{1/2} \times 5^{1/2} \times 3^{1/2}$ "

Below:

MK1 Reverse View



Ken Matsuzaki

1 June - 6 July, 2002



Natural Ash Glaze Vase 15 x 8 x 4 1/8"



MK41
Natural Ash Glaze
Yohen Rectangle Vase
9 x 6 x 4"

Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Rectangle Vase 10 x 4 x 4¹/₂"

MK42



MK39

Natural Ash Glaze
Yohen Vase $10^{3}/_{4} \times 9^{1}/_{2} \times 4"$

Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Vase 11¹/₂ x 5³/₄ x 3³/₄"

MK40

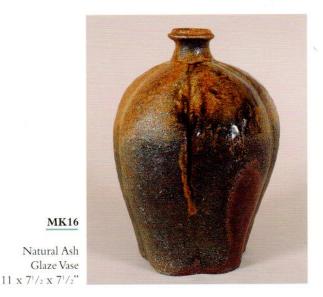
Partner With Flame (Honoo no Tomo) - The Ceramics of Ken Matsuzaki

Andrew Maske

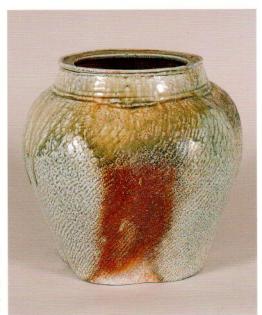
Curator of Japanese Art Peabody Essex Museum

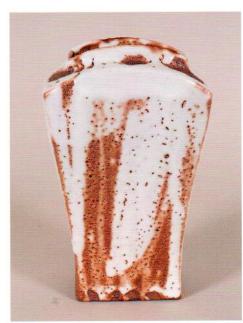
Ken Matsuzaki's more than thirty years of experience in making, glazing and especially firing ceramics comes through clearly in his works. Although his output is diverse, commonalities are evident that reflect his attitude toward ceramics and his approach to making them.

First, like his teachers, Matsuzaki is primarily concerned with ceramic clay as a medium for making vessels. While he uses a variety of techniques and forms, he generally remains true to his own vision of "good ceramics": solid, sturdy forms of restrained coloring, with emphases on silhouette, surface texture, and contrast. This view has its roots in the mingei (people's art) ideal of utilitarian wares, but Matsuzaki pushes the limits of tradi-



MK24 Oribe Vase 7³/₄ x 4¹/₊ x 4¹/₄"





MK21
Shino Vase
12 x 6²/₃ x 4"

Natural Ash Glaze Vase 10¹/₂ x 11 x 11"

MK14

tional mingei aesthetics to include forms beyond those of his artistic forbears. Nonetheless, in common with the best Japanese potters, he demonstrates superior mastery of materials and techniques in his manipulation of clay, glazes and firing.

Second, Matsuzaki is interested in tradition and in traditional ceramics, but only as they suit his own aesthetic objectives. Some of the types that influence his works are the Japanese glazed wares of Shino, Oribe, Shigaraki, Hagi, and Shodai, as well as the proto-historical Sue ware, while he also utilizes

Korean-originated techniques such as kohiki (slip-dipping) and hakeme (brushed-slip). Inspiration has been found in Chinese stonewares of the Han dynasty as well. In some forms, he hearkens back to such ancient ceramics of East Asia, but the overall feel of his work is essentially modern. In his pieces he seeks to create a tension between tradition and innovation, using recognizable aspects of traditional ceramics, but incorporating them in innovative or unexpected ways. At the same time there is a further tension between careful technical control and the



MK3 Natural Ash Glaze Vase 13¹/₃ x 6 x 3³/₄"



MK2 Natural Ash Glaze Vase 14 x 8 x 8"

release of such control to the flame, the spin of the potters wheel, or the slice of a tool. This Matsuzaki shares with his teacher, Shimaoka, and with Shoji Hamada before him.

Third, Matsuzaki is very concerned with texture and the combination of color and texture. While many of Matsuzaki's forms appear sculptural, in many cases the "sculptural" elements are actually more closely related to texture rather than to sculptural (figural) forms. He also mostly eschews "clean" or smooth surfaces on his pots. Even in pieces that have no physically textured surface, Matsuzaki breaks up the uniformity through glaze manipulation.

In addition to the points above,

Matsuzaki's skill in firing is particularly worthy of mention. This skill is most evident in the glazes and the fired surfaces of his pots. Most striking are the incidental deposits of ash that accumulate and eventually vitrify into a "natural" glaze on the surfaces of his yakishime pieces. Yakishime literally means "fired to a waterproof state;" in other words, made impervious to leaking or dampness not by covering with glaze, but by firing the unglazed clay body to a temperature high enough to fuse the clay and result in a piece with surface as hard and watertight as a glazed ceramic. Although firing any unglazed piece to a high enough temperature will result in a yakishime ceramic, to do so in



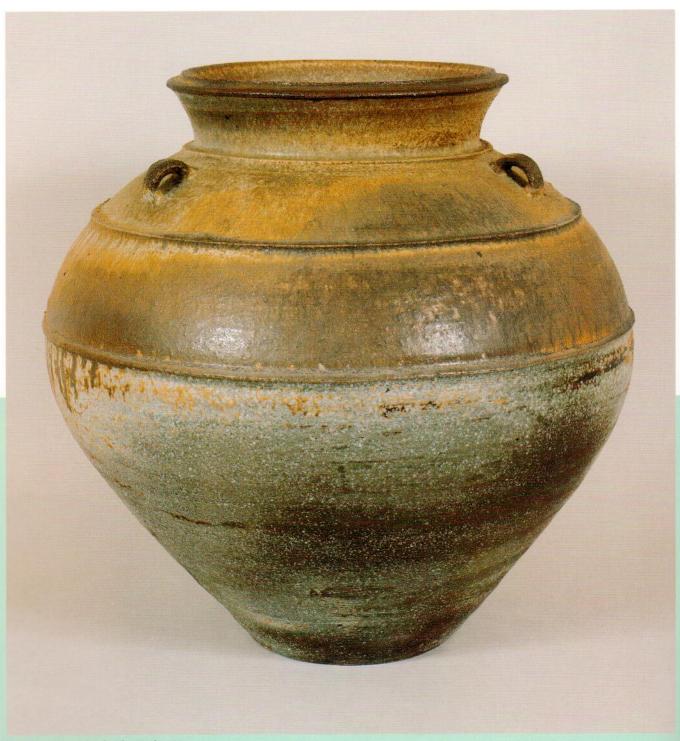
MK4 Natural Ash Glaze Vase 14¹/₂ x 8¹/₂ x 6"



MK5 Natural Ash Glaze Vase 11¹/₄ x 11¹/₂ x 2¹/₂"

a woodburning kiln in a manner that enhances the work's aesthetic appearance takes considerable skill. Examples that exhibit a striking variation in surface color due exclusively to the interaction of the flame with the unglazed clay body are known as yôhen (literally, "kiln change"). The yakishime and yôhen pieces in this collection demonstrate that Matsuzaki is a consummate master of woodfiring technique. Works such as MK18, MK33, MK38, and MK47 reveal deep understanding of the countless variables that make up yakishime firing. Firing a woodburning kiln offers the excitement of unexpected and uncontrollable effects, but carries with it a much higher risk that pieces may be damaged during the process, or otherwise turn out to be unsatisfactory. It is not uncommon for entire firings to fail. In some sense, the woodfiring potter transports himself back centuries, to the time when fuel was added by hand and the temperature was gauged by the color of the flame throbbing within the kiln.

Skillful firing technique is also evident in Matsuzaki's glazed pieces. His white Shino glaze has a depth reminiscent of the best Shino wares of the late sixteenth century (MK6, MK23). Likewise, his copper green Oribe glaze flows deep and dark, with subtle variations in color (henka) that can only come through an extended



MK32 Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Vase 17 x 17 x 17"



MK107

White Water Container 7 x 8¹/₃ x 8¹/₃"



MK45

Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Water Container 7 x 7 x 6"



MK20

Natural Ash Glaze Water Container 7¹/₂ x 8¹/₂ x 7"



MK6

Shino Glaze Water Container 7³/₄ x 7¹/₂ x 7¹/₂" period of wood firing (MK24, MK70). One need only see some of the many poor quality Shino and Oribe style imitations sold in Japan to appreciate how remarkable Matsuzaki's versions of these glazes are.

Glazes are only tools in the hand of an artist; it is the manner of their application that brings out their true beauty. Matsuzaki shows tremendous sensitivity and skill in the glaze application of much of his work. While some pieces are completely covered in gorgeous glaze, others have areas of unglazed reserve, creating a contrast that makes the glazed portions all the more striking (MK71, MK74). His choice of glaze and how to apply it to a particular piece seems to be determined, to some extent, by the clay body used for a specific work. Matsuzaki's clay bodies range from medium-fine to quite coarse and from white to dark gray, adding much to the variety of his oeuvre.

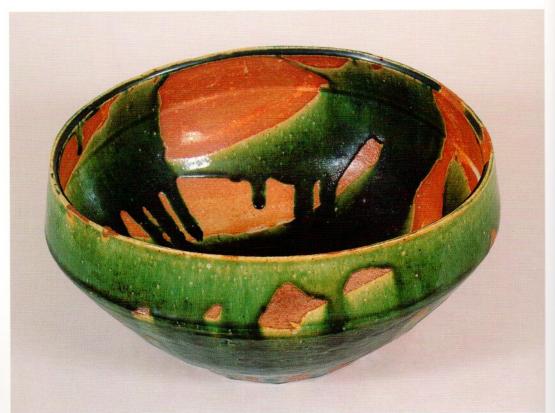
While that variety ensures that an exhibition of Ken Matsuzaki's work will be appealing to a broad range of viewers, it is the craftsman's attention to the individual piece that serves to forge a more intimate bond with a specific person. Matsuzaki's collaboration with the kiln's fire to create his ceramics makes him not only a partner with flame, but for those who appreciate his works, a partner in the search for beauty as well.





MK70

Oribe Bowl 6³/₊ x 13 x 13"



MK71

Oribe Bowl 61/2 x 131/2 x 13"



MK72

Oribe Bowl 4³/₊ x 12¹/₂ x 12¹/₂"



MK85

Oribe Spouted Bowl 3 x 8 x 8"



Oribe Spouted Bowl $3^{1/2} \times 8^{1/4} \times 7^{1/8}$ "



Oribe Spouted Bowl $3^{1/2} \times 8 \times 8$ "





 $\frac{\text{MK88}}{\text{Oribe Covered Box}}$ Oribe Covered Box $3^{1/2} \times 6 \times 4^{1/2}$ "



 $\frac{\text{MK89}}{3^{1/2} \times 6 \times 4^{1/2}}$ Oribe Covered Box



 $\frac{\mathbf{MK90}}{\mathbf{MK90}} \qquad \text{Oribe Covered Box} \\ 3^{1}/_{2} \times 6 \times 4^{1}/_{2}"$



 $\frac{\text{MK91}}{\text{MK91}} \quad \text{Oribe Bowl with Handle} \\ 3 \times 8^{1/2} \times 6"$



 $\frac{\text{MK92}}{\text{MK92}} \quad \begin{array}{c} \text{Oribe Bowl with Handle} \\ 3 \times 8^{1}/_{4} \times 6 \end{array}$



MK93 Oribe Bowl with Handle $3 \times 8^{1/4} \times 6$ "



MK73

Oribe Head Corner Plate $1^3/4 \times 19^1/2 \times 10$ "



MK74

Oribe Square Plate 3³/₄ x 15³/₄ x 14³/₄"



MK59 Tetsu Shino Flower Pots 61/4 x 41/2 x 41/2"

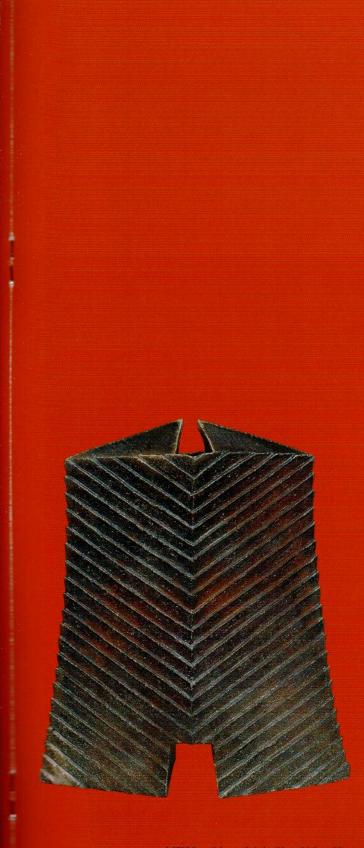


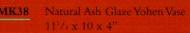
MK75

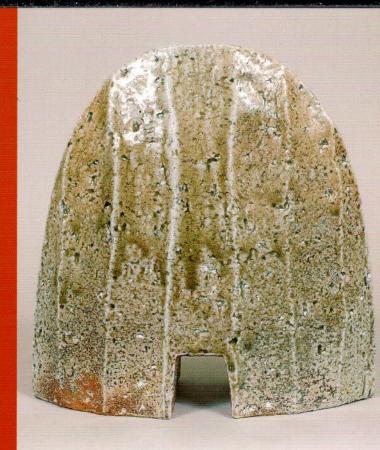
Oribe Flower Pots 81/4 x 4 x 4"



MK33 Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Vasc 17 x 19 x 5¹/₃"







MK37 Natural Ash Glaze Vase 11¹/₂ x 11¹/₂ x 4¹/₂"

 $\frac{\textbf{MK36}}{\textbf{12}^{3/4} \times \textbf{12} \times \textbf{4}^{3/4}}$ Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Vase





MK84 Oribe Spouted Bowl 2³/₄ x 8¹/₄ x 8⁵/₈"



 $\frac{MK82}{3 \times 9^{1/2} \times 9^{1/2}}$ Oribe Bowl



MK83 Oribe Plate

3/+ x 10¹/+ x 10¹/2"



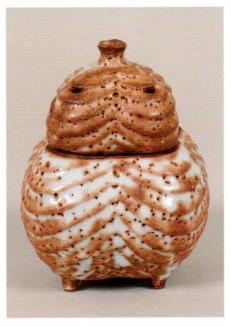
MK67 Nezumi Shino Bowl 3¹/₄ x 10⁵/₈ x 10⁵/₈"



MK69 Tetsu Shino Plate 2 x 8³/₄ x 8³/₄"



MK68 Tetsu Shino Plate 2 x 8³/₄ x 8³/₄"



MK48

Natural Ash Glaze
Yohen Incense Burner
6¹/₂ x 4³/₄ x 4³/₄"

MK23
Shino Incense
Burner
61/4 x 5 x 5"



MK22

Natural Ash Glaze
Incense Burner
6½ x 4 x 4"

MK47

Natural Ash Glaze Yohe
Incense Burner
8 x 5½ x 2¾"



MK102 Kohiki Sake Cup 1¹/₂ x 3 x 3"



MK103 Kohiki Cup 31/2 x 3 x 3"



MK104 Kohiki Cup 4³/₄ x 3 x 2¹/₈"



 $\frac{\text{MK95}}{\text{8}^{1}/_{4} \times 4 \times 4^{1}/_{2}}$



MK96 Kohiki Vase 8 x 4 x 4"



MK94 Kohiki Vase 71/2 x 43/4 x 41/2"



MK99 Kohiki Sake Bottle 5³/₊ x 3³/₊ x 3³/₊"



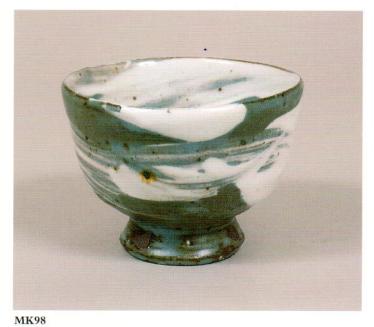
 $\frac{\text{MK100}}{\text{5}^3/_4 \times 3^1/_4 \times 3^1/_4}$ Hakeme Sake Bottle



 $\frac{\text{MK101}}{\text{MK101}} \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{Hakeme Sake Bottle} \\ 6 \times 3^{1}/_{4} \times 3^{1}/_{4} \end{array}$



MK97 Kohiki Tea Bowl 4 x 4¹/₃ x 4¹/₃"



Hakeme Tea Bowl 3³/₊ x 5 x 5"

MK105

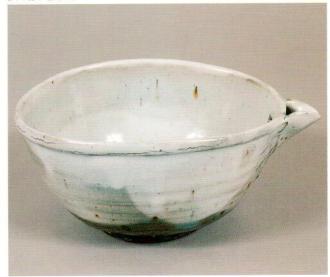
Kohiki Plate

3/4 x 14¹/3 x 8"



MK106

Kohiki Spouted Bowl $3^{3}/_{4} \times 7 \times 6^{1}/_{4}$ "

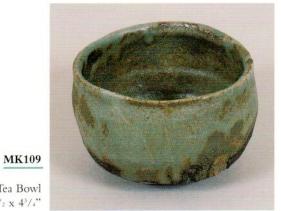




MK58 Nezumi Shino Tea Pot $8 \times 7^{1/2} \times 7$ "



Natural Ash Glaze Teapot 10³/₄ x 10 x 7¹/₂"



MK108 Black Tea Bowl 3³/₄ x 4³/₄ x 4¹/₂"

Yohen Tea Bowl 3¹/₄ x 4¹/₂ x 4³/₄"



MK60

Tetsu Shino Tea Bowl

31/2 x 41/2 x 41/4"





MK25

Natural Ash Glaze
Tea Bowl
3'/2 x 6'/2 x 6'/2"

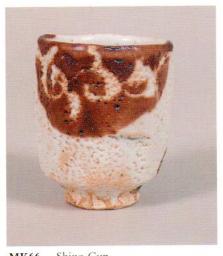
MK51

Natural Ash Glaze
Yohen Tea Bowl

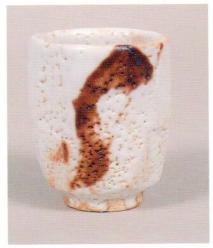
31/2 x 41/4 x 41/8"



MK81 Oribe Cup 4 x 3¹/₄ x 3¹/₄"



MK66 Shino Cup 4 x 3¹/₃ x 3"



MK65 Shino Cup 3³/₄ x 3¹/₃ x 3¹/₄"



MK31 Oribe Cup 3³/₊ x 3 x 3"



MK30 Shino Cup 3³/₄ x 3¹/₄ x 3¹/₄"



MK29 Natural Ash Glaze Cup 3³/₄ x 3¹/₄ x 3¹/₄"



MK28 Natural Ash Glaze Cup 3¹/₄ x 3¹/₄ x 3¹/₄"



 $\frac{\text{MK10}}{3^{3/4} \times 4^{1/2} \times 4^{1/3}}$ Shino Glaze Teabowl

MK62 Shino Sake Bottle $5^{1/2} \times 3^{1/2} \times 3^{1/2}$ "

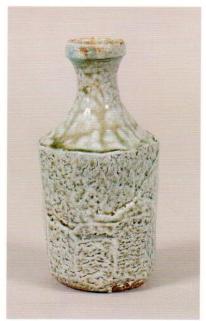


 $\frac{\text{MK61}}{6^{1/4} \times 3^{1/4} \times 3^{1/4}}$ Tetsu Shino Sake Bottle





MK52 Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Sake Bottle 57/8 x 31/3 x 31/2"



MK27 Natural Ash Glaze
Sake Bottle
6 x 3 x 3"



MK26 Natural Ash Glaze Sake Bottle $6^{3}/_{4} \times 3^{3}/_{4} \times 3^{3}/_{4}$ "



MK80 Oribe Sake Cup $1^{1/2} \times 2^{1/2} \times 2^{1/2}$ "



MK64 Shino Sake Cup 1³/₄ x 2¹/₂ x 2¹/₂"



MK56 Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Sake Cup 2¹/₂ x 2³/₄ x 2³/₄"



MK110 Yohen Sake Cup 2¹/₊ x 2¹/₊ x 2¹/₊"



MK63 Shino Sake Cup 2¹/₃ x 2¹/₂ x 2¹/₂"



MK57 Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Sake Cup 33/+ x 3 x 3"



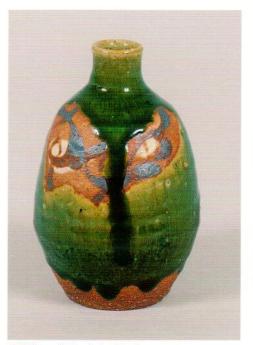
 $\frac{\text{MK12}}{\text{Oribe Sake Cup}}$ $2 \times 2^{1/8} \times 2^{1/8}$



MK13 White Slip Sake Cup $1^{1/2} \times 2^{3/4} \times 2^{3/4}$ "



MK11 Natural Ash Glaze Sake Cup $2^{1/2} \times 2^{1/4} \times 2^{1/3}$ "



MK79 Oribe Sake Bottle 5 x 3¹/₄ x 3¹/₄"



MK77 Oribe Sake Bottle $5^{1/2} \times 3^{1/4} \times 3^{1/4}$ "





 $\frac{\text{MK15}}{10 \times 9^{1/2} \times 4^{"}}$ Natural Ash Glaze Vase



MK49 Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Flower Pot 5½ x 3½ x 3½"



MK78 Oribe Sake Bottle 51/2 x 31/4 x 3"



MK18 Natural Ash Glaze Vase 11 x 9 x 9"



MK44 Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Vase 10 x 5³/₄ x 5¹/₂"



 $\frac{\text{MK111}}{1^{1/2} \times 9^{3/4} \times 9^{3/4}}$ Silver Enamel Decorated Plate

Ken Matsuzaki

out I Imo



MK35 Natural Ash Glaze Yohen Vase 18 x 8 x 5"

1950 Born in Tokyo, the third son of Nihoga Painter Matsuzaki Shuki. 1972 Graduated from Tamagawa University, School of Fine Arts, Tokyo, Ceramic Art major. Began a pottery apprenticeship with Tatsuzo Shimaoka, Mashiko (Toshigi Prefecture). 1977 Built a kiln and established a workshop in Mashiko, where he presently lives. 1980 Received the Kokugakai Arts Association Nojima Award. 1982 Became an associate member of the Kokugakai Arts Association.

1984 Received the Associate Members Award from Kokugakai Arts Association, Prize of Excellence

Arts Association, Prize of Excellence

1986 Became a full member of the Kokugakai Arts Association

1993 Modern Japanese Ceramics Exhibition, Elysium Art, New York

1995 Group Exhibition, Gallery Dai Ichi Arts, New York.
Six Master Potters of the Modern Age Exhibition,
Babcock Gallery, New York,

2002 Exhibition, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA

Ken Matsuzaki has traveled to America and Canada three times. His work is shown yearly at exhibitions in Canada, U.S.A., and China including:

- Fukuya Department Store. Hiroshima
- Hankyu Department Store, Osaka
- Keio Department Store, Tokyo
- Takashimaya Department Store, Yokohama
- Group exhibitions with Tatsuzo Shimaoka
- Matsuzaki Family Exhibitions with father and brother (Painting, Ceramics, Lacquer Ware)

Credits

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Ken Matsuzaki Tradition Today



Exhibition Dates:
1 June - 6 July 2002

Opening Reception:
1 June 2002, 3 to 6 PM
The public is invited
to attend.
The artist will be present.

Gallery Hours: Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 5:30 pm; Sundays 1:00 to 5:00 pm.

Member of the Boston Art Dealers Association. One hour free validated parking is available in the lot on the corner of Newbury and Dartmouth Streets

This exhibition is presented under the honorary patronage of Tadamichi Yamamoto, Consul General of Japan

MK17 Natural Ash Glaze Vase 14 x 8¹/₂ x 6³/₄"

PUCKER GALLERY

and Jun-

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