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Ceramic modernisms: New perspectives on 20th century Japanese ceramics

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dai Ichi Arts is pleased to present an exhibition of post-war ceramics by Yasuhara Kimei, Miyanohara Ken and Kusube Yaichi: three masters of Japanese ceramic vessel art on the occasion of Asia Week New York 2026.

On view: March 19 – 27, 2026 | Opening reception: March 19, 2026 4-7PM



Image: Group of works by Miyanohara Ken

New York, NY — Dai Ichi Arts is pleased to present ***Ceramic Modernisms: Perspectives on 20th-Century Japanese Ceramics***. The works in this exhibition trace the development of modern Japanese ceramic vessel expression during the postwar period through the works of three key artists: Yasuhara Kimei (1906–1980), and Miyanohara Ken (1898–1977), Kusube Yaichi (1897–1984). They were among the few pupils of the iconic 20th century potters Itaya Hazan and Miyagawa Kōzan II, inheriting not only a refined technical command shaped by rigorous standards and deep historical awareness, but also a spirit of innovation— championing new forms of ceramic expression that helped lay the groundwork for contemporary artists today. The presentation of these three artists together in this exhibition positions Tokyo alongside Kyoto as a vital site of modern ceramic expression in the early 20th century. While Kyoto is widely recognized as a leading school of ceramic art, comparatively little attention has been given to the development of a Tokyo-based ceramic movement in the postwar period.



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These artists were primarily engaged in the technical advancement of ceramics—particularly in glaze innovation and structural construction—and played pivotal roles in establishing key institutions such as Nitten and other major award-granting bodies in Japan. Beyond their institutional contributions, they were accomplished individual artists whose work significantly advanced the status of vessel expression as a fine art form. Notably, they contributed to the emergence of the “Obuje-Kaki” (“Object-Vase”), a concept that redefined the vessel as an autonomous artistic expression.

Yasuhara Kimei (also known as Yoshiaki, 1906–1980) was an avant-garde ceramic artist of the 20th century. His ceramic work inspired the innovative floral artists of the famous Ikebana Sogetsu school and produced a transcendental impact on modern potters and Ikebana artists alike in Japan that has lasted generations. In particular, his conceptualization of the “Object Vase” inspired the founders of the important Sodeisha school, Yagi Kazuo & Kumakura Junkichi. Trained under the celebrated Miyagawa Kōzan II and Itaya Hazan, he combined classical discipline with modern experimentation, creating a new language of vessel expression that balanced function, abstraction and tradition. From early porcelain works shown at alternative venues like the Shiseidō Gallery to stoneware vases with incised surfaces and archaeological textures (Sekki vessels), Yasuhara’s work exemplifies the spirit of individualist mid-century modernism in Japanese vessel art.

Miyanochara Ken (1898–1977) was born in Kagoshima but was active in Tokyo during his ceramics career. Though relatively unknown in western Defined by scholarship in archaeological materials from Korea, China, and Japan, he demonstrated a high level of technical rigor and a modern design sensibility in vessel art. While apprenticing under the celebrated master Itaya Hazan, he excelled in slip inlay, carving, and complex glazes, bridging continental ceramic traditions with contemporary forms. His works earned him major recognition at the Nitten exhibitions and the Japan Art Academy Award, and was occasionally influenced by European art movements, particularly the French Art Nouveau of the early 20th century. He served as the director of Nitten in his later years.

Kusube Yaichi (1897–1984) was born into a Kyoto pottery family known for export wares. During his life, he developed an avant-garde ceramic practice in the 1920s and 1940s. Early international exposure led him to exhibit abroad, winning awards at the 1924 and 1936 Paris World’s Fairs. His practice spanned white porcelain to overglaze painting, reflecting both technical command and a forward-looking vision. His modern forms, as appreciated in flower vases and incense containers, water droppers, and other classical ceramics, in the later years are particularly coveted. With slender forms that carry an aerodynamic quality, his affinity for graceful forms were ahead of his time, capturing the spirit of Kyoto expression.

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