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SHAPING CLAY: Women artists in contemporary Japanese ceramics

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dai Ichi Arts is pleased to present a summer group exhibition presenting contemporary women artists working in the ceramic medium, presenting new works by prominent and established artists alongside new rising voices in the landscape of Japanese ceramic art.

On view: May 21 – June 4, 2026 | Online & by appointment only



New York, NY — Since the 1950s, ceramic artists in Japan have gained increasing recognition, with many devoting themselves entirely to the medium through practices deeply rooted in craft philosophies and the culture of *shokunin*—the lifelong pursuit of mastering craftsmanship. For centuries, however, the field of ceramics in Japan remained overwhelmingly male-dominated, and women were largely excluded from key aspects of production. Deeply ingrained Shinto beliefs surrounding ritual impurity, alongside rigid systems of hereditary apprenticeship and succession, prohibited women from tasks such as kiln firing, limited their participation within traditional ceramic communities, with historically celebrated exceptions.



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Meaningful change did not emerge until the post-war period. While women had historically been confined to decorative roles, the decades following the Second World War opened new possibilities for artistic and professional independence. Female ceramists began to challenge established conventions, moving beyond utilitarian and decorative traditions to pioneer sculptural, abstract, and avant-garde approaches to clay. Since then, and alongside the increasing admittance of co-ed university education in Japan during the postwar period, generations of women artists have transformed the landscape of contemporary Japanese ceramics, using clay as a powerful vehicle for artistic experimentation, personal expression, and critical inquiry.

Building upon this dialogue through the current presentations of Radical Clay—a traveling U.S. exhibition highlighting Japanese women artists working in ceramics from the celebrated Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz Collection of contemporary Japanese ceramics—this exhibition continues and expands that conversation. Alongside new works by artists associated with Radical Clay, the exhibition introduces established, emerging and innovative voices whose practices are reshaping the future of contemporary Japanese ceramics today.

Exhibiting artists:

Hiruma Kazuyo 昼馬 和代
Kato Mami 加藤 真美
Katsumata Chieko 勝間田 千恵子
Kitamura Junko 北村 純子
Koike Shoko 小池 頌子
Koyama Atsuko 小山 厚子
Matsuda Yuriko 松田 百合子
Oishi Sayaka 大石 早矢香
Shigematsu Ayumi 重松 あゆみ
Shingu Sayaka 新宮 さやか
Tanaka Yu 田中 悠
Tashima Etsuko 田嶋 悦子
Usami Shuri 宇佐美 朱理

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