

Message

Kuroda Taizo was born on January 1, 1946. After attending Osaka City Kogei High School, he moved to Paris in 1966, where he met potter Shimaoka Tatsuzo. He studied pottery in Canada through Shimaoka's introduction and began to pursue a career as a potter. Returning to Japan in 1980, Kuroda set up a studio in 1991 in Ito City, Shizuoka Prefecture. Since then, he has been producing unique, tranquil white porcelain inexhaustibly. In 2019, a gallery was built adjacent to the studio by his esteemed friend Ando Tadao.

The white porcelain works by Kuroda, now a world-renowned artist-potter, are characterized by their simple modeling through which he attempts to express his original view of the universe. Starting from traditional forms of ceramic vessels such as bowls, vases and dishes, he eliminates decorative elements to the utmost limit, achieving a minimalist expression of the eternity of existence. Kuroda's white porcelain works open an original world which gives a feeling of tranquility and timelessness. While maintaining the forms of bowls or vases to a certain extent, they transcend the field of craft works, liberating themselves from functionality and purely focusing on formation.

This exhibition introduces Kuroda Taizo's world of white porcelain, his recent culmination of artistry, mostly from the collections of the Ise Cultural Foundation and The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka.

We are extremely grateful to Mr. Ando Tadao and Mr. Kuroda Taizo for their wholehearted cooperation as well as the Ise Foundation for their tremendous support and sponsorship. We would also like to express our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Obayashi Takeo, Mr. Son Taizo and Mr. Toda Hiroshi for understanding our museum's mission and activities and generously donating their valuable works, as well as all the individuals and institutions for making this exhibition possible.

Degawa Tetsuro, Director
The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka
November 2020

Notes

While the item numbers given on the captions correspond with the catalog numbers, they do not indicate the order of the display.

The caption of each work is given in the order: title of the work, production date, material, measurements (in centimeters, “h” for maximum height, “w” for maximum width), name of owner, accession number.



14.

Kuroda Taizo

TSUBO (Vase)

2019

White porcelain h: 26.9 w: 21.2

The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka (Gift of Mr. SON Taizo)

Accession No. 05655

At around the age of forty-five, when he began to produce white porcelain, Kuroda Taizo determined the essential elements needed in his white porcelain works: the work must be “wheel-thrown”, must have a “vessel” form and must be “monochrome.” As a lump of clay is formed on the potter’s wheel, it autonomously becomes a rotating body with walls standing upright—a form to be called a “vessel.” In Kuroda’s view, though, a vessel is not necessarily a practical container but is an artistic, abstract form. This work, having a small mouth and a swollen shoulder, its body tapering toward the bottom, is known as Kuroda’s meiping vase. The carefully burnished, smooth surface and the well-proportioned body having an elegant, generous curve well exemplify the characteristics of Kuroda’s works.



24.

Kuroda Taizo

TSUBO (Vase)

2018

White porcelain h: 30.5 w: 27.1

The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka (Gift of Mr. OBAYASHI Takeo)

Accession No. 05648

Kuroda Taizo, who had moved to France in 1966 at the age of twenty, happened to meet potter Shimaoka Tatsuzo (designated Important Intangible Cultural Property in folk pottery [Jomon inlay], 1919–2007) who casually visited the Japanese restaurant for which Kuroda had been working. Later, Kuroda began to study pottery under Gaétan Beaudin (1924–2002), a Canadian potter living in Quebec, who Shimaoka had introduced to Kuroda. Initially, he was not aiming to become a potter but when he sat in front of the potter’s wheel for the first time, he recollects, he instantly began to devote himself to it, thinking, “This may be my lifework.” When he temporarily returned to Japan, he stayed at Shimaoka’s studio in Mashiko, Tochigi Prefecture, and studied pottery. Kuroda moved back to Japan in 1980 and built his own kiln in Izu Peninsula, Shizuoka Prefecture the following year, securing a base for his creative activities in Japan. From 1992, when he presented his white porcelain works to the public for the first time, he began to focus on producing white porcelain.



29.

Kuroda Taizo

HACHI (Bowl)

2015

White porcelain h: 8.3 w: 22.5

Ise Cultural Foundation

Kuroda Taizo's works are based on the symmetrical form produced by the rotation of the potter's wheel. On the other hand, he also made vessels with deliberately disproportioned forms or tea bowls with warped mouth rims, reminiscent of coarse Chinese blue-and-white porcelain produced in private kilns of the Ming dynasty.

Kuroda's works have often been used in tea gatherings. The form eliminating anything unnecessary, delivering a feeling of tension, as well as the white color that creates a sacred atmosphere was probably preferred by tea masters.



40.

(Center)

Kuroda Taizo

TSUBO (Vase)

2003

White porcelain h: 34.0 w: 6.5

Ise Cultural Foundation

At the time Kuroda Taizo began to focus on white porcelain, he covered the works with a transparent glaze. From around 1997, however, in order to maintain the freshly-formed sharpness even after firing, Kuroda attempted to fire his work unglazed in oxidizing atmosphere, then burnish the surface with sandpaper of several different grit sizes.

One of the ways Kuroda exhibits his works, which is to skillfully arrange multiple works into a single display, can be found in the images in *White Porcelain: Kuroda Taizo hakuji sakuhinshu* [Collected works of Kuroda Taizo] (Amus Arts Press, 2001), the first collection of his works. Such display recalls to one's mind the installation by Edmund de Waal (1964–), which is an arrangement of a large number of cylindrical ceramic vessels. It inspires the viewers to imagine the works interacting with one another.



16.

Kuroda Taizo

TSUBO (Vase)

2019

White porcelain h: 28.7 w: 17.8

Ise Cultural Foundation

Kuroda Taizo has been naming his works after the terms expressing traditional forms, such as *meiping*, and inscribed them on the storage boxes of the works. As a name for the flower vase, he replaced the term *hanaire* (vase to insert the flower) with *hanaike* (vase to keep the flower alive). On the other hand, he mentions that recently he feels some doubt about adopting names that reminds people of traditional vessels, as the artist has always been having “modernity” in mind whenever producing his works. He says, “Even though the work is made by me today, it must be similar to how it will look many years later, being beautifully changed over time,” describing them as “a work inhabited by true words.”



45.

Kuroda Taizo

TSUBO (Vase)

2005

White porcelain h: 29.8 w: 12.6

The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka (Gift of Mr. TODA Hiroshi)

Accession No. 05659

This work has a cylindrical body with a conical top, a unique form producing a sharp impression. The thin mouth rim, producing a gentle undulation, has been delicately potted. Kuroda mentions that he has been fascinated by “the material with which I can draw a line in the air like magic, by using my own hands, fingers and the potter’s wheel.” He compares the act of throwing to “creating a one-time-only abstract painting in the air.” Although at first glance this work seems to have a geometric, minimalist form, the wheel marks and traces of burnishing on the surface make one realize the rich texture and the subtle nuance embedded in the body.



6.

Kuroda Taizo

ENTO (Cylindrical Vessel)

2013

White porcelain h: 9.5 w: 8.5

Ise Cultural Foundation

“Ento” or cylindrical form is one of the major forms of Kuroda’s works. The cylinder is a simple form consisting of circles and straight lines produced by raising the walls vertically, using the rotary motion of the potter’s wheel. The extremely thin mouth rim was made by low-speed rotation of the potter’s wheel. The unglazed surface was carefully burnished. It can be said that this is an appropriate size of a wheel-thrown, handmade work that enables maintenance of the atmosphere of tension. The “ento” is embedded with Kuroda’s determination to fulfill his responsibilities as an artist to “represent the invisible by a visible work.” The elegant “ento” is a beautiful embodiment of the artist’s ideal.



64.

Kuroda Taizo

ENTO (Cylindrical Vessel)

2012

White porcelain h: 9.5 w: 12.5

Artist Collection

It is said that Kuroda began to produce “ento (cylindrical vessel)” in around 2012, when he displayed his works in the exhibition “Gendai no zahyo—Kogei wo meguru 11 no shiko” [New footing—Eleven approaches to contemporary crafts] held at the Craft Gallery of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. Since he began to focus on white porcelain, he had been mentioning, “I even think that the ultimate goal for white porcelain is ‘not to make it.’” By working on “ento,” however, it seems that he is about to overcome this emotional turmoil. Although the form of a cylinder is commonly found in daily life, Kuroda’s thinly-potted, pure-white “ento” is a heterogeneous object in a living space. Its ambiguous use or purpose also makes it difficult to place his works in a certain category or draw a clear line between his works and others. As long as it is an object, though, it can simply “exist.” As one of Kuroda’s notes about “ento” describes, “(‘Ento’ is) an expression of the people’s minds which will not or cannot be verbalized (such as the thought between ‘yes’ and ‘no,’ or ‘presence’ and ‘absence’),” the artist accepted the contradiction and sublimated his struggle by realizing the possibility of expressing the subtleties of mind, which cannot be put in words, into forms of objects.



4.

Kuroda Taizo

ENTO (Cylindrical Vessel)

2016

White porcelain h: 8.5 w: 9.5

Ise Cultural Foundation

In an interview, Kuroda Taizo described his idea of holding an exhibition showing only one “ento” work as follows: “On a table that is said to have been used by Georges Braque (1882–1963), I would place a fine knife and fork, and my ‘ento’ would be placed in the center. The knife and fork symbolize tools, the ‘ento’ symbolizes vessel, and somewhere on the table I would like to place Galileo Galilei’s *Letters on Sunspots* (1613) symbolizing wisdom.” He mentioned about this idea when he recollected his attempt to acquire the *Letters on Sunspots* in an antiquarian bookstore in Italy (which he failed to obtain).



51.

Kuroda Taizo

WARE-DAIZARA (Cracked Stand)

2018

White porcelain h: 22.5 w: 35.6

Ise Cultural Foundation

This work has a small foot from which the walls make a gentle, elegant curve as they open widely upwards, raising its center of gravity and producing a sense of lightness and a floating feeling. A large crack was deliberately made into the top section before firing. While it reminds one of particular Iga water jars known as *Yaburebukuro* ('burst bag') that display bold cracks, it is also in line with the idea of Lucio Fontana, who sought "to create a new dimension in art and connect with the universe" by producing his series of works *Concetto Spaziale* ('Spatial Concept'). The sharp, powerful slash made as if breaking through the tranquil atmosphere of the work may be an attempt by the artist to seek an approach contrary to his other works.



47.

Kuroda Taizo

TSUBO (Vase)

2007

White porcelain h: 30.0 w: 37.3

Ise Cultural Foundation

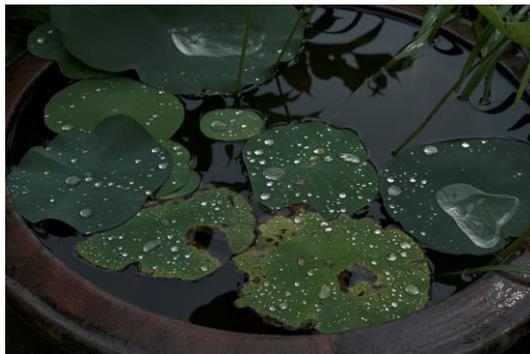
Although this conical work with a hollow interior and a small mouth at the top may be categorized as a “vessel”, it is a rare wheel-thrown form. While a cone is triangular when viewed from the side, it is a three-dimensional object consisting of a curved surface. The vessel, made of simple components, interacts with the space and anything adjoining it, encouraging unfettered interpretation to the viewers. Kuroda says, “I want to pursue truth from the methodology called ‘white porcelain’.” Unlike the approach of contemporary art, which reflects social phenomena, Kuroda’s creative activities may be an attempt to express his “quest for truth” using a visual form.

In 1991, Kuroda Taizo built his own kiln in Futo, Ito City, Shizuoka Prefecture, which became the base of his creative activities. Also built on the vast grounds are his studio with the potter's wheel, the workshop, the gallery designed by Ando Tadao, his present residence as well as the building which had been his previous home. The studio's garden, which is abundantly blessed with nature, gives a splendid view of Izu Oshima in the front and the lighthouse of Jogasaki beneath one's eyes.

When I moved to Futo, my artistic activities were coming to a standstill. While building a studio and laying out a garden, however, I was able to “find” white porcelain. For me, the process of building a studio or making a garden was perhaps something like a practice of meditation which cleared up my brain.

(Kuroda Taizo, *Kuroda Taizo Hakuji-e* [Kuroda Taizo: His path toward white porcelain] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2017), 26.)

As suggested in the above words by the artist, one can experience his aesthetic sense and worldview from the space well-prepared by the artist himself.





Ando Tadao
Drawing: “Gallery of Water”
2018
Private Collection

In 2019, Kuroda Taizo built a new gallery adjacent to the workshop to display his works. It was architect Ando Tadao who designed this gallery. Kuroda and Ando became acquainted with each other in 1997, and Ando took the charge of exhibit design of Kuroda’s works at the “Design Miami/Basel” (at Switzerland) held in 2008. This gallery was designed so that the floor could be filled with water, and Kuroda’s works were displayed in a way as if they were floating on the water. To the eyes of the viewers, Kuroda’s works, reflected on water surface, were blended into the space as they slightly sway along with the rippling of the water.



Photograph: T. MINAMOTO