

Below:
Matsuyama Gaie II
White and aubergine branch
pot n.d.
porcelain vase with white
and aubergine glazes
24.5 x 26.5cm

Back cover:
Matsumoto Isami
Bell shaped incense burner n.d.
porcelain with celadon glaze
34.5 x 20.2cm

Cover:
Udagawa Seikoku
Large jar 1987
stoneware with white Hagi glaze
33.5 x 42.0cm



A Japanese Aesthetic

KEITH CLOUTON & JIM DEAS
CERAMIC COLLECTION

A gift to Newcastle



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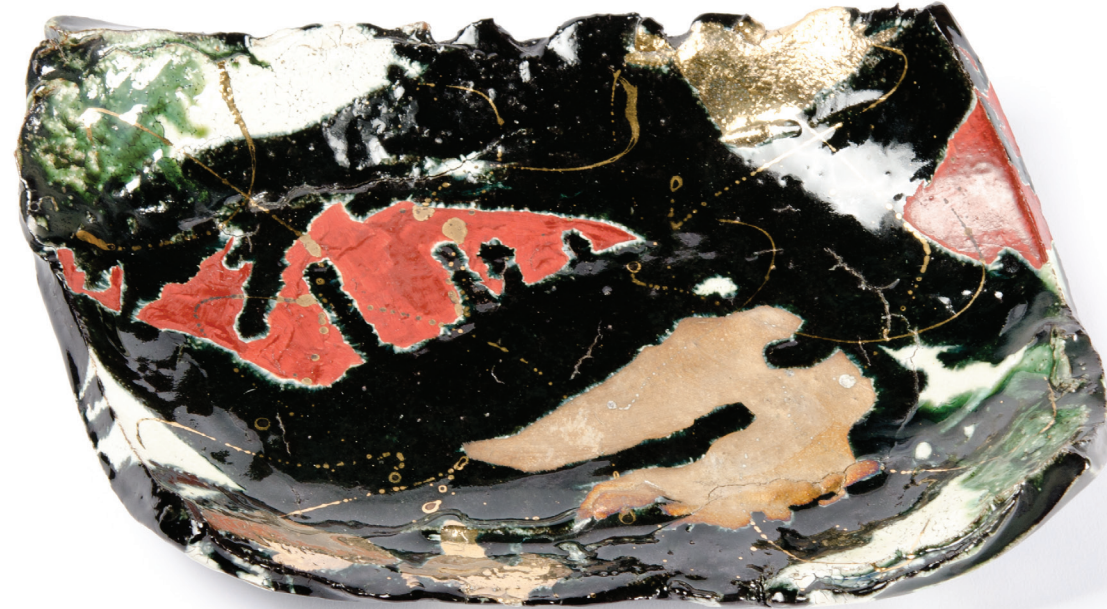
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NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY



Unknown
Yellow and gold flecked bowl n.d.
porcelain with gold leaf decoration
9.3 x 19.0cm



Uno Sango
Pottery dish n.d.
stoneware dish with blue glaze
(irreg) 7.5 x 28.5cm

Foreword

The Japanese ceramic collection at Newcastle Art Gallery is without peer in Australia. This is due to a number of factors: the generosity of individuals (which is also at the core of the whole collection), corporate support, trading links with Japan including Newcastle's sister city, Ube and the initiative of the Directors before me.

This exhibition is a selection of ceramics – gifted and proposed gifts, from two collectors long linked with the region and with Newcastle's collection. Their generosity includes ceramics but extends to include a range of contemporary Australian paintings which display the same careful connoisseurship as the works currently on show. It should also be stated that theirs is an instinctual, aesthetic response to art – often resulting in their purchasing young and emerging artists. They also, through the benefit of years, can draw upon a long and encyclopaedic memory to inform their collecting.

Keith Clouton and Jim Deas bought their first tea ceremony ceramic, an 18th Century Karatsu flower vase from David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney* in 1968. This vase is now in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia. Their interest in Japanese ceramics developed quickly over the years and before long, Clouton & Deas had acquired 'a collection', including thirty ceramic works by the late Japanese master potter and Living National Treasure Hamada Shōji (1894–1978). Thirteen of these works are now in the Newcastle collection.

Their enthusiasm and advocacy for Japanese ceramics, as well as the quality of their collection, especially the Hamadas, inspired the then Newcastle Region Art Gallery Director, David Thomas to create Newcastle's Nagano Collection of Japanese ceramics in 1972. This initiated the Gallery's collection of Japanese ceramics which grew steadily with later spectacular additions such as the Sodeisha collection in 1981.

This exhibition is timely as it is part of a continuum of both local generosity and exhibitions of Japanese ceramics at Newcastle Art Gallery. As we move to an enlarged Gallery with a dedicated ceramic exhibition space, the exceptional Japanese ceramic collection will become more publicly associated with Newcastle. Such timeliness and discernment are entwined in the collecting of Clouton and Deas.

I am very grateful to Daniel McOwan, Director, Hamilton Art Gallery for his accompanying essay and delighted the exhibition will be touring to Hamilton in 2014.

Ron Ramsey
Director

Centre page top left:
Kanu Mitsuo
Large yellow and brown tortoise-shell glazed bowl n.d.
tortoise-shell glazed ceramic
7.2 x 29.8cm

Unknown
Large Mashiko Yaki ware plate n.d.
stoneware with black glaze
6.7 x 39.5cm

Uno Sango
Pottery dish n.d.
stoneware dish with blue glaze
(irreg) 7.5 x 28.5cm

Centre page top right:
Unknown
Large Oribe bowl c1800
stoneware with cream and black glazes
12.5 x 60.0cm

All works of art are gifts to Newcastle Art Gallery by Keith Clouton and Jim Deas through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program 2012, unless stated otherwise.

** David Jones Art Gallery was at the time one of the major commercial art galleries in Sydney due in part to Charles Lloyd Jones who appointed the much respected and astute gallery director Robert Haines.*



A Japanese Aesthetic

In Australia, Newcastle Art Gallery is seen as significant for its fine collection of Australian paintings and for its almost unique holding of Japanese ceramics. The recent gift of paintings and Japanese ceramics from Keith Clouton and Jim Deas has reinforced both aspects of the collection and indeed taken its development further. Newcastle's collection of Japanese ceramics focuses mainly on twentieth century production and in particular the output of two major movements; *Mingei* and *Sodeisha*, that have been extremely influential both within Japan and in the wider world. During the twentieth century Japanese ceramics have been looked upon as the best ceramics produced in the world because of the aesthetic ideas they present and the technical skill with which they have been created.

The *Mingei* (*folk arts* or *arts of the people*) movement formed around the ideas of Yanagi Sōetsu (1889–1961) which were given expression by two potters: Hamada Shōji (1894–1978) and Kawai Kanjirō (1890–1966). Yanagi's ideas grew out of the observation that objects made for functional purposes by anonymous artists had an honesty and practicality about them that made them aesthetically desirable. In real terms this led to a revival of the use of stoneware, a medium never far from Japanese domestic traditions, but now glazed and decorated so that it was easy to use and to clean.

Hamada eventually settled in the small hamlet of Mashiko outside Tokyo in 1930 and provided the focus that caused it to become the centre of the folk crafts movement in Japan. Out of the ten ceramics recently given by Clouton and Deas to Newcastle, four are works that have come from Mashiko-based potters and embody the characteristics of the Mingei movement. These are the works by Kanu Mitsuo, Fukane Takeshi, Uchida Masashi and a superb platter by a potter yet to be identified. Potters are still working in Mashiko and these four works are excellent examples of later production in the Mingei style. Hamada worked with the British potter Bernard Leach for many years and Leach's broadly distributed publication *A Potters Book* brought many of the ideas of the Mingei movement to the West. This laid the foundation for the production of glazed stoneware that, during the 1960s and 1970s, was popular in Australia and elsewhere.

The main trend that grew out of the Mingei movement was what we now refer to as the *studio pottery* movement. This approach by the artist of making the pot, firing it and glazing it – as distinct from these various processes being handled by specialists in a factory environment – continues to be the norm today. Two of Clouton and Deas' pots fall into this category. They are the Hagi-ware pot by Udagawa Seikoku and the pot by Matsuyama Gaie II. Of similar shape and size these two works refer back to *tsubo* or storage jars for their form but through the use of glaze and texture are elevated to works of art in contrast to being purely functional vessels.

Newcastle's holding of works from the *Sodeisha* movement (literally *crawling through mud association*, 1948–1998) are probably the best and most extensive holding outside Japan and consequently are of international importance. Sodeisha came about as a response to the daily grind of

producing functional ceramics by the millions and a wish to see something more artistic done with the ceramic medium. This took the form of abstract sculptural ceramics and the founding figures in this movement were Yagi Kazuo (1918–1979), Yamada Hikaru (1924–2001) and Suzuki Osamu (1926–2001) who are all represented in the Newcastle collection.

There was a slightly earlier, lesser known, movement that also moved towards using clay in an abstract sculptural way called *Shikokai* (*society of the four harvests*, 1947–1958) and whilst Clouton and Deas' gift did not contain works by Sodeisha artists it did contain a dish by Uno Sango (1902–1988) the founder of Shikokai. In 1947 Uno Sango formed Shikokai in conjunction with Hayashi Yasuo (b.1928), Shimizu Uichi (1926–2004) and Kimura Morikazu (b.1922), although these latter two artists had parted from it within a year. Given Newcastle's strong holding of Sodeisha works having Shikokai pieces would seem a natural complement to the existing collection and Clouton and Deas' gift has an unexpected benefit in laying the foundation for this development.

The celadon-glazed *koro* or incense burner by Matsumoto Isami, the vase by Hasegawa Hokuho (d.1981) and a sweets bowl by another yet to be identified artist, all originated from Kyoto. Most Japanese ceramics glazed in celadon reflect a Chinese inspiration based upon the respect that the Japanese had for Song Dynasty Longquan celadon wares (that in turn the Chinese saw as imitating Jade). This *koro* is bell shaped and covered with an almost perfect glaze reflecting the potter's skill, as handling celadon glazes is complex and Matsumoto has obviously mastered its use. Incense is burned in conjunction with the tea ceremony but also as part of a game where the incense being burned has to be identified by its odour. Incense is used commonly in Japan and the burners are always elegant objects, often imitating Chinese historical models. The celadon vase by Hasegawa is based on a Chinese form but exemplifies the development this glaze underwent in Japanese hands. In China celadon normally ranges in the green to brown colour range but the Japanese celadons range from yellow, through various shades of green, to a light blue. Chemically they are all similar but the lack of a celadon tradition in Japan has allowed them freedom to experiment with the possibilities of this glaze. The sweets bowl was probably used for a *kaiseki* or tea ceremony meal and its attribution to a Kyoto origin is based upon the fact that many Kyoto ceramics are richly decorated, albeit in this case in a fairly abstract manner with randomly placed spots of gold leaf. Kyoto was truly the Imperial capital of Japan and the wares from this city often convey the fiscal and intellectual wealth associated with courtly life.

Arita township on the island of Kyushu was the traditional home of porcelain manufacturing in Japan and indeed when porcelain exports to the West were at their zenith c.1700, all the porcelain came from around Arita. Two very different pieces in this gift have come from this area where porcelain production still remains a major industry. These are the pieces by Fujii Shumei (b.1936) and Ono Kozan (1890–1971). Fujii Shumei's vase

follows tradition to a great extent in being underglaze blue decorated porcelain but its form and decorative schema are very 20th Century. The potter's skill is obvious from the small neck that would have required bringing the porcelain clay back in on itself as it was turned at the wheel. The painting utilises this difficult form as a canvas to depict a forest with mountains in the background. The selection of nature as the subject of the decoration also remains true to Japanese tradition. The decorative plate by Ono Kozan, also depicting nature, shares more in common with the rich decoration typical of Kyoto ceramics. Nor are the enamelled Autumnal branches and the extensive use of gold traditional Arita techniques. Nonetheless the Ono family have made these techniques their own and Ono Kozan's daughter Hakuko (1925–1996) continued this tradition and is famous for her gold and silver leaf decorated vases.

In the 19th Century the other great centre for porcelain production, Seto, came into prominence and eclipsed Arita because of the enormous size of the porcelain industry there. *Seto-yaki* (Seto ceramics) became a catch-all description of all porcelain in Japan at this time and indicates the dominance of its production. Seto also continues to be a major source of ceramics today and this vase by Kato Josuke (not dated) is a modern expression using the green Oribe glaze. The Kato family has many members of varying degrees of significance but they are one of the oldest families of the Seto region and strongly tied to the history of Seto ceramics.

The earlier Oribe-glazed bowl dates to around 1800. This work is the only non 20th Century ceramic in the gift but nonetheless an important piece to have in the collection as it is historically important and displays the characteristics that made Oribe ware popular in the past.

Oribe ware is one of the unique Japanese ceramics that grew out of the flowering of the tea ceremony during the 16th Century. The tea ceremony traces its origins back to Sen No Rikyū (1522–1591) but his immediate follower was Furuta Oribe (1543/44–1615) who popularised this glaze and after whom it is named. Oribe ware was one of four unique Japanese ceramic types that initially originated in Mino Province and was the first Japanese ceramic to be actively decorated as distinct from just relying upon the glaze. The iron-black drawing on this bowl is a slightly later expression of that original decorative urge.

Japan's ceramic tradition is old and rich and we still have a great deal to learn from it. Exposure to these original pieces is a rare privilege in Australia and we have much to be thankful for, particularly in having patrons like Clouton and Deas who had the foresight to acquire these works as well as the generosity to donate them to Newcastle Art Gallery.

Daniel McOwan
Director, Hamilton Art Gallery

In Japan the family name is given before the individual's name and this practice has been adhered to in this brief essay.