

KEN MIHARA

Serenity in Clay

16 November – 12 December 2013



Liverpool Street Gallery is pleased to announce the forthcoming exhibition of renowned Japanese ceramicist Ken Mihara, on view from 16 November – 12 December 2013, opening Thursday 21 November 2013, 6-8pm. The exhibition will comprise 15 new ceramic vessels.

Ken Mihara's ceramics are a visual ode to his native land, Izumo, Shimane Prefecture, known as the capital of the gods; a land steeped in ancient Japanese myths and legends. The vessels are a culmination of elegant shapes, soft delicate curves, and ancient forms inspired by the surrounding land. Mihara's striking palette of blues and dark greys intersperses with bursts of beige, gold and orange hues.

Using clay rich in iron from his native Shimane Prefecture, Mihara constructs each work through an organic creative process. Each piece is hand formed using a coil and pinch technique to create a strong linear quality. Mihara states: "I consider it my job to help the clay express its beauty", and likewise, "clay leads, and my hands follow. I do not know what shape my work is going to end up even while I am making it." (**Ken Mihara in conversation with Nishi Keiko, *An interview with artist Mihara Ken*, e-yakimono.net, August 2002**) His most recent series titled *Kei (Mindscape)* generate a sense of movement and vitality through gentle folding and bending. The vessels feature double-walled interiors that swirl and spiral similar to small galaxies. The outer walls subtly embrace a complex interior; whilst at the same time the compositional tension allows the form to unravel.

Mihara's most revered series, *Kigen (Genesis)*, are primordial in formation. The structures are symmetrical and balanced, which create a unique combination of subtlety and solidity. The rough, unrefined and grainy surface texture adds to the ancient ambiance. Mihara repeatedly fires the vessels at high temperatures to

slowly unlock subtle and soft colours ranging from deep grey to peach to misty whites and purples. Mihara states: “The high degree of chance and serendipity in any firing is far beyond my control.” (**Ken Mihara, “Mihara Ken – The power of chance”, *Ceramics Art and Perception*, issue 73, 2008, p84**)

Mihara’s overall aesthetic radiates a Zen-like atmosphere. The *Kodoh (Pulse)* series explore this through organic forms. *Kodoh (Pulse) #1* (2013) (pictured) is a bulbous vessel, with the lip carefully curving in towards itself. The vessel is reminiscent of a living organism, with a sense of movement that breathes in and out.

QUOTE SELECTION

“Mihara’s solemn stoneware can be said to have been borne and influenced from idyllic environs...”
Wahei Aoyama, “Ken Mihara – In silent stoneware, serenity and inner self”, *Craft Arts International*, issue 87, March 2013, p18

“When one looks beyond the ridges of Mihara's stoneware, one can "see" the presence of the artist.”
Wahei Aoyama, “Ken Mihara – In silent stoneware, serenity and inner self”, *Craft Arts International*, issue 87, March 2013, p22

“The evocative gravitas of his work springs not simply from the clay of Izumo and the physical beauty of the landscape but from the spiritual ground where gods still reside.”
Jeffrey Hantover, “Mihara Ken – The power of chance”, *Ceramics Art and Perception*, issue 73, 2008, p83

BIOGRAPHY

Ken Mihara was born in 1958 in Izumo, Shimane Prefecture, Japan. After completing his studies in 1982 with Funaki Kenji, Mihara participated in numerous exhibitions and prizes. In 2005, he received a grant from Tomo Museum to travel for 6 months throughout Italy, from Milan, then south to Florence, Rome and Sicily. Mihara has been the recipient of many prizes and awards, including the prestigious Japan Ceramic Society Award in 2008; Paramita Ceramics Competition, Paramita Museum, Japan in 2006; The Energia Art Award in 2002 and the Shizuoka Prefecture’s Cultural Encouragement Award in 2009. Mihara has exhibited internationally with SOFA New York, New York (2008), Galerie Besson, London (2010), and most recently with Joan B Mirviss Gallery, New York (2011). His works are held in public collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles and The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. Since 1996, he has been represented by Yufuku Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

Images: Ken Mihara, *Kei (Mindscape) #1*, multi-fired stoneware, 43 x 31.5 x 41 cm

Ken Mihara, *Kodoh (Pulse) #1*, multi-fired stoneware, 40.5 x 33.5 x 32.5 cm

Photography: Tsunehiro Kobayashi

Images courtesy of Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney and Yufuku Gallery, Japan

For further information about the artist and exhibition, please contact Liverpool Street Gallery on 02 8353 7799 or info@liverpoolstgallery.com.au