

Shotaro, Hayashi, Large Platter, #2003.196



c. 2002
G 226

Gallery Label: Hayashi Shotaro is the younger brother of the late Hayashi Kotaro. Both men have been part of the revival of traditionally inspired ceramics from the Mino area of central Japan--long a ceramic production hotbed. After studying with Kotaro, Shotaro established his own studio and kiln in 1974. For this dramatic platter, he was inspired by the grassy green glaze first made popular by the 16th century tea master Furuta Oribe. However, his manner of combing the surface of the clay is thoroughly modern and produces a wide range of color variation as the glaze settles thickly into the deep recesses and pulls thinly away from the sharp peaks.

Description: rectangular platter with swirled incised design; green, blue and brown swirled glazes; knob-like feet with felt bottoms.

In discussing works of another contemporary ceramic artist, the Metropolitan Museum points out the possible similarity to the raked sand-waves of Zen kare sansui gardens, or dry-landscape gardens.



History and Aesthetics of tea ware, *Mino*, *Oribe*

Mino ceramics are high-fired wares produced in the Seto and Mino areas of Gifu Prefecture, which originated in the late 16th century. There are four Mino styles and they relate almost exclusively to the tea ceremony. Our piece is an example of the Oribe style.

Oribe ware is a style of Mino ceramics. It is a high-fired ware that originated around 1600, during the Momoyama period, which lasted less than half a century. During this period new ideas and foreign influences resulted in an explosion of innovative forms and styles in all of the arts in Japan; it was a time of warlords struggling for control of the country, as well as Japan's first encounter with the West. This ceramic style is named after the great warrior and tea master Furuta Oribe (1545-1615). Part of the tea ceremony included careful selection by the tea master of the serving pieces and artwork to be used during the ceremony. Oribe loved dramatic designs, innovative forms, and brilliant colors. Oribe ware was characterized by the combination of a vivid green glaze and iron painted decoration applied to unconventional forms emphasizing the beauty of the irregular. Never had so many different vessel shapes and brilliant glazes been attempted, the uninhibited designs, both naturalistic and abstract, are strikingly "modern."

The tea ceremony developed in the 15th century out of the Zen practice of drinking strong tea in order to stay awake while meditating. Tea wares and the tea spirit were expected to incorporate the four virtues of Harmony, Respect, Purity and Tranquility.

Harmony means it is perfectly balanced in itself, and thus blends well with all other utensils. Respect implies that it can “quote” from the past without slavish imitation, and yet is unique in itself. Purity is manifest in simple forms and colors, ease of use and an impression of cleanliness and of concentrated naturalness. Tranquility is the effect it should produce on the knowing tea enthusiast.

Also fundamental to the tea ceremony are the aesthetics of wabi and sabi. Essentially, wabi refers to understatement, simplicity, transience; sabi refers to detachment and tranquility. These two are often used together, and are still in evidence today in Japanese artworks. By the 17th century sabi implied the seeming contradiction of beauty within desolation and loneliness. Wabi now implies contrasts in refinement and rusticity within a single object, or among different objects. Wabi in today’s world refers to the imperfect as intrinsically beautiful; simple, unpretentious, imperfect, irregular. Artistic boundaries of wabi frequently include asymmetry, eccentricity, exotica, and improvisation as well.

Modern Oribe Ware

Japanese tea wares in the 20th century retain traces of each epoch of Japanese taste. Each new generation of tea masters has added his favorite utensils to the list of utensils favored by his predecessors; artists competed for the honor of having their designs selected by influential tea masters. Within the historical canons of tea utensils, lists of famous things or “meibutsu” have arrived at our time surrounded with great reverence. Today this complex network serves the dual purpose of providing prototypes for modern replication as well as inspiration for artists.

Modern potters have emulated the forms and glazes of the early Mino wares since the 1930’s, when a potter named Arakawa Toyozo discovered some of the original Mino kiln sites. Other potters followed Arakawa’s lead, and by the early 1970’s many artists were working in the area. Contemporary Mino produces some of the most distinctively Japanese ceramics in the country. The area is known for reintroducing rustic strength and individuality to traditional forms of tea utensils, as well as new modern forms.

About the Artist

Shotaro Hayashi is considered a “local living treasure.” He comes from a family pottery heritage and was taught by his late brother Kotaro Hayashi. He was born in 1948, and lives in Told city (about 40 minutes from Hagoya), where he has a very large contemporary workshop. Unlike most artists of his status, he works without an assistant, preferring to be involved in all stages of the creative process.

He has experimented widely with different types of kilns; he uses a modern gas kiln with about 35 cubic feet of ware space.

He specializes in complex cutting techniques, which allow him to create more contemporary forms. He cuts vigorously into the clay body, often creating wavelike or

vortex like patterns, these ideas originating from the movement of water (as in our piece; also reminiscent of dry landscape gardens, see above). The pieces are created rapidly and exude energy and power. His favorite cutting implement is a piece of “sprung steel” some twelve inches long and 3/4 inch in diameter.

He has won an amazing number of prizes within Japan. His exhibition schedule is extremely intense and consequently his work is rarely seen outside of Japan (aren't we lucky!).

Tour Ideas:

Asian Art/ Japanese Art
Ceramics
Modern/Contemporary Art
Artists' Inspirations
Textures
Tradition and Innovation
Making Waves

Questions:

What are some words that describe this piece? What are your first impressions when looking at this piece?

What textures do you see here? If you could touch it, how would it feel?

What do you think might have been possible inspirations for this artist and this piece?

Resources:

WilsonWeb, Ceramics Monthly 55 no10 50-3 D 2007, “Shotaro Hayashi: Shino Master”, by Kelvin Bradford (accessible online in MIA Reference Library)

Metropolitan Museum website

e.yakomono.met/guide, “Guidebook from National Japanese Pottery Information Center”

Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka website

Handbook for the Appreciation of Japanese Traditional Crafts (

e-yakimono.net (an amazing site that encompasses the entire ceramic culture of Japan)

submitted by Lin Stein