Bizen ware, characterized by its rich reddish-brown clay with natural ash glaze, is one of Japan's six pottery traditions. Originating from today's Okayama prefecture on the Seto Inland Sea, its history reaches back to the 14th century. It peaked during the late 16th century when the tea masters in and around Kyoto, the center of culture, found it most appealing. With the modernization of Japan in the mid-19th century, Bizen almost disappeared but was revived in the 1930s through seminal artists like Kaneshige Tōyō (1896–1967). Since then, many artists have explored its potential and while some stay closer to conventional forms, others break with tradition and surprise with new shapes, while still staying true to the core of Bizen. This exhibition showcases the journey in Bizen from the 16th to the 21st century and includes works by four of the five Bizen potters that have been designated Living National Treasure by the Japanese government: Kaneshige Tōyō (1956), Fujiwara Kei (1970), Fujiwara Yū (1996), and Isezaki Jun (2004).

The ceramics are joined by Yoshida Hiroshi's (1876–1950) landscape prints and paintings of the Seto Inland Sea as well as paintings by the Okayama-native Urakami Shunkin (1779–1846).

Kaneshige Makoto
Japanese, born 1945
Tea bowl with hidasuki marks, 2017
Bizen ware; stoneware with hidasuki marks
Promised gift of Tamara and Michael Root L2023.30.39

Kaneshige Makoto is the nephew of Kaneshige Tōyō (1896–1967), the first Bizen potter designated a Living National Treasure by the Japanese government, in 1956. Makoto's father, Sōzan (1909–1995), was Tōyō's younger brother and of course also a potter. Sōzan started the Enzan kiln, in 1964, which Makoto took over in 1982 when his father built a new kiln for himself. Makoto prepares his own clay without using any machines and fires his three-chambered climbing kiln (nobori-gama) two times a year.



Wakimoto Hiroyuki Japanese, born 1952 Vase with reddish fire marks, c. 2011 Bizen ware; stoneware with hidasuki marks Gift of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz 2015.112.9

Wakimoto Hiroyuki is the most represented artist in this exhibition, with nine objects on display. Wakimoto has expanded Bizen pottery significantly through the wide range of non-traditional forms he creates. This case presents three functional objects by him that have strong, red line marks resembling cord bands—called hidasuki in Japanese. The effect is achieved by tying straw to the objects before firing, which then ignites and reacts with the clay body to leave these distinguishing reddish effects.

Wakimoto Hiroyuki Japanese, born 1952 Sake vessel, around 2000 Bizen ware; stoneware with hidasuki marks Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture; formerly given to the Center by Margaret and Harold Sims 2013.29.1235

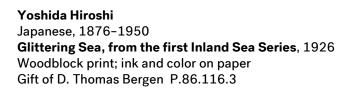
Wakimoto Hiroyuki Japanese, born 1952 Three-legged pitcher, 2003 Bizen ware; stoneware with hidasuki marks Gift of Harold and Margaret Sims L2013.136.6





Yoshida Hiroshi Japanese, 1876–1950 Sailboats on the Inland Sea, 1930s Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk Gift of Ellen Wells 2015.116.1

Sailboats float in a harbor as the fading sun casts a rusty glow over a promontory dotted with trees. Executed with many of the same materials and techniques seen in traditional ink paintings in East Asia, the painter also used perspective and shading, methods more commonly associated with Western painting. This work is a rare example of a Japanese-style ink painting by Yoshida Hiroshi, an artist best known for his woodblock prints as well as Western-style oil paintings and watercolors. Created in the 1930s, the painting may have been inspired by sketches that Yoshida made in 1910, when he traveled to Japan's Inland Sea. These drawings served as source material for some of his most popular work: two series of woodblock prints published in 1921 and 1926 showing a sailboat—one almost identical to that seen in the foreground of this painting—at different times of the day.







Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese, 1876-1950

Sailing Boats: Night, from the first Inland Sea Series, 1926

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 87.85.50

This work is a part of Yoshida Hiroshi's 1926 Inland Sea Series of nine prints. Six of the prints, including these, show sailboats floating in Japan's Inland Sea, a body of water bounded by three of Japan's four main islands. Yoshida used the exact same woodblocks for each of the six prints but adjusted the colors to suggest different weather conditions and times of day. They are a testament to the expressive potential of color and the most iconic works by Yoshida.



Japanese, 1876-1950

Sailing Boats: Evening, from the first Inland Sea Series, 1926

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture; formerly given to the Center by H. Ed Robison, in memory of his beloved wife Ulrike Pietzner Robison 2013.29.389

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese, 1876-1950

Sailing Boats: Mist, from the first Inland Sea Series, 1926

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 87.85.49







Suzuki Kōichi

Japanese, born 1942

Vase in the shape of a bucket, c. 1983

Bizen ware; stoneware with ash glaze

Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation 2015.79.363

Masamune Satoru

Japanese, 1954-2006 **Jar fired with handles**, around 2000 Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze Gift of Harold and Margaret Sims RB2015.5.1

Wakimoto Hiroyuki Japanese, born 1952 Vase, 2002 Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze Gift of Harold and Margaret Sims RB2015.5.4

A native of Nagasaki Prefecture, Wakimoto Hiroyuki was not born into a ceramic family and first studied textile design at Osaka Art College. Realizing that it was not for him, he left school and returned to his family to help with their business. While visiting a friend who was studying ceramics in Bizen, Wakimoto was prompted to pursue this path as well, and he became an apprentice of Yamashita Jōji (born 1947) at the age of 30. Nine years later, Wakimoto established his own studio and kiln.







Yoshikawa Satoshi

Japanese, born 1983 Vase, 2015

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze Promised gift of Michael and Tamara Root L2023.30.159

Yoshikawa Satoshi is an apprentice of the famous Bizen potter Abe Anjin, whose water container is on display in gallery 253. This Bizen vase was made by Yoshikawa during his time in Japan, but since 2019 he has lived in Toronto with no access to a wood-fired kiln and has had to divert from Bizen pottery, radically changing his style.

Takahara Shōji

Japanese, 1941-2000

Vase with handles, 1986-87

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation 2015.79.366



Japanese, 1896-1967 Vase with handles, 1955

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze

Promised gift of Tamara and Michael Root L2023.30.41

Kaneshige Tōyō is generally considered to be the founder and seminal artist of contemporary traditional Bizen pottery. With the modernization of Japan in the late 19th century, Bizen pottery almost disappeared until innovators like Kaneshige revived it in the 1930s by exploring and experimenting with kiln building. In 1956, Kaneshige became the first Bizen potter designated a Living National Treasure by the Japanese government. (There are now five.) He made this cylindrical vase, with uneven loop handles on either side, one year before the designation.







Kakurezaki Ryūichi
Japanese, born 1950
Three-legged vase, 2000
Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze
Gift of Joan B. Mirviss in memory of Frederic B. Wells III 2005.114.2

Although Kakurezaki Ryūichi was not originally from the Bizen area, he apprenticed with Isezaki Jun (born 1936), the fifth Bizen potter designated a Living National Treasure. Kakurezaki has forged a reputation for his innovative, sculptural designs that make use of traditional Bizen clay and firing techniques. Here, a roughly carved flower vase with three legs reflects his avant-garde style.



Gallery 252: Bizen: Contemporary Expressions of Japan's Ancient Pottery

Kakurezaki Ryūichi Japanese, born 1950 Horizontal attenuated vessel with pointed ends, 2010 Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze The Louis W. Hill, Jr. Fund 2010.61.1

In 2001, in an interview for Japan's leading ceramic magazine, Honoho Geijutsu, Kakurezaki Ryūichi said of himself, "I do not intend to create something avant-garde in the Bizen style. My works are always functional, and I create 'crafts' that are indispensable for everyday life. I think it is important that professional potters should create something in response to the needs of our society. My preference is to be seen as a craftsman whose work is avant-garde, rather than an avant-garde artist."



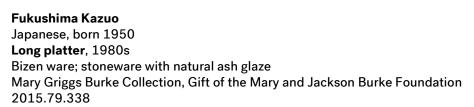
Kakurezaki Ryūichi, Japanese, born 1950

Palladium Ceramic Board, 2015

Stoneware with palladium glaze

The Ruth B. Anderson Memorial Endowment for Asian Art 2016.49

Widely regarded as a leading figure in the field of Bizen ceramics, Kakurezaki Ryūichi's work is beloved also for its departures from tradition. Such is the case with this massive platter, notable for its spinous projections and oozing, lustrous palladium glaze. Kakurezaki graduated from the Osaka University of the Arts and apprenticed with Living National Treasure ceramic artist Isezaki Jun (born 1936) before establishing his own kiln in 1985. His solo shows have been held in Tokyo and the United States. A major retrospective of Kakurezaki's work was held at the prestigious Musée Tomo in Tokyo in 2014.



Urakami Shunkin Japanese, 1779–1846 Blue-green landscape on gold-flecked ground, 1827 Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk The Louis W. Hill, Jr. Fund 2003.97.1

Urakami Shunkin was the oldest son of Urakami Gyokudō (1745–1820), the most famous painter in the history of Okayama prefecture. At the age of 16, Shunkin left Okayama and eventually settled in Kyoto, the most important city for painting at that time. Although many Japanese Nanga (literati) painters created works based on or inspired by old Chinese and Japanese masters, Shunkin is known to have used his own sketches drawn from real life as the basis for his finished works.







Isezaki Jun

Japanese, born 1936 Flower vessel, 2015

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze and hidasuki marks Gift of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz 2019.92.4

Isezaki Jun is one of the most famous Bizen potters—in 2004, he was designated a Living National Treasure by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs. Jun's father, Yōzan, was also a potter, working independently since 1933. Jun eventually became more famous and successful than his father and his older brother, Mitsuru, whose work is also displayed here along with that of Jun's son Kōichiro.

Isezaki Mitsuru

Japanese, 1934-2011

Triangular-shaped vase, late 20th century
Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze
Promised gift of Tamara and Michael Root L2023.30.31

Isezaki Kōichiro
Japanese, born 1974
Leaping up vessel, 2015
Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze
Promised gift of Tamara and Michael Root L2023.30.29







Fujiwara Kei

Japanese, 1899–1983

Large jar, mid-20th century

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture 2013.29.1133

Fujiwara Kei was the second Bizen potter honored by the Japanese government as a Living National Treasure, in 1970. He initially worked as a writer and poet and did not turn to ceramics until he was around 40 years old. Fujiwara met with Kaneshige Tōyō and, following his guidance, created works that are reminiscent of the style produced in the Muromachi period (1336–1573).

Wakimoto Hiroyuki

Japanese, born 1952
Incense Burner "Marks," 2016
Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze

Promised gift of Tamara and Michael Root L2023.30.149a-d

Wakimoto Hiroyuki is a master of unique, non-traditional forms. Created from chunks of clay and not on a potter's wheel, this piece is a composite of separate components that Wakimoto fired in different parts of the kiln. A glaze was not applied, but the dissimilar locations alone produced contrasting colors and textures, resulting in idiosyncratic combinations when the components were joined.

Wakimoto Hiroyuki

Japanese, born 1952

Two Barren Soil Incense Burners "Marks," 2017

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze Promised gifts of Tamara and Michael Root L2023.30.150.1a-c,

L2023.30.150.2a-c







Urakami Shunkin

Japanese, 1779-1846

Landscape in the manner of Ni Zan, first half of the 19th century

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture; formerly given to the Center

by Elvon Harris and Helen Megan 2013.29.362

Urakami Shunkin was the oldest son of Urakami Gyokudō (1745–1820), the most famous painter in the history of Okayama prefecture. At the age of 16, Shunkin left Okayama and eventually settled in Kyoto, the most important city for painting at that time. Although many Japanese Nanga (literati) painters created works based on or inspired by old Chinese and Japanese masters, Shunkin is known to have used his own sketches drawn from real life as the basis for his finished works.

Urakami Shunkin

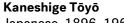
Japanese, 1779-1846

Landscape, 1829

Hanging scroll; ink and light color on paper

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture; formerly given to the Center

by Mr. and Mrs. Makiji Hase 2013.29.361



Japanese, 1896-1967

Clog-shaped tea bowl with slashed incision, c. 1965

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze Lent by Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz L2023.120.4

The modernization of Japan in the late 19th century caused Bizen pottery to nearly disappear, until artists like Kaneshige Tōyō revived it in the 1930s through explorations and experimentations. Of the five Bizen potters designated Living National Treasures by the Japanese government, Kaneshige was the first (1956). It is assumed that Kaneshige created this tea bowl—adorned with simple, slashed incisions along the side—late in his life.







Fujiwara Yū Japanese, 1932–2001 Tea caddy, 1980s Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze with ivory lid Promised gift of Tamara and Michael Root L2023.30.8a,b

Like his father, Fujiwara Kei (1899–1983), in 1970, Fujiwara Yū was designated a Living National Treasure by the Japanese government, in 1996. Yū initially chose a career path unrelated to ceramics, but eventually came back to it, and since the 1960s he has won many awards. He opened his own Bizen workshop in 1967.

Japan

Tea caddy, late 16th century Bizen ware; glazed stoneware with ivory lid and brocade bag The Putnam Dana McMillan Fund 2000.29.1a,b

Beginning in the 1300s, Japanese potters in and around Imbe village in the old province of Bizen produced a variety of sturdy utilitarian vessels using the local, iron-rich clay. The unglazed, rich reddish-brown clay later appealed to tea masters like Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591), who is credited with profoundly shaping the Japanese tea ceremony in the late 1500s and is known to have prized accidental kiln effects. This small, finely crafted tea caddy exhibits the gomayū (sesame seed glaze) effect in which small yellowish beads of natural ash glaze form in the firing process. This caddy was once owned by Sotsutakusai (1744–1808), the eighth-generation head of the Omotesenke, one of the three schools of the tea ceremony that carry on the tradition of Sen no Rikyū.





Japan

Jar with loops, 16th century

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze

Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation
2015.79.283

This sturdy jar was probably used to store dried tea leaves before they were ground into powder for use in the tea ceremony. Its high neck was designed to accommodate a stopper that would have been lashed to the vessel with a cord threaded through the four lugs (loops). In the kiln, ash from the fire landed on the shoulders of the vessel and liquefied in the intense heat, creating natural glaze. The high iron content of Bizen clay determines the reddish-brown color of the jar and also causes the naturally greenish glaze to turn yellow, an effect known as gomayū or "sesame seed glaze."



Gallery 253: Bizen: Contemporary Expressions of Japan's Ancient Pottery

Yabe Shun'ichi
Japanese, born 1968
Wind of Light, 2012
Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze
Promised gift of Michael and Tamara Root L2023.30.151

Yabe Shun'ichi is currently amongst the most impressive contemporary ceramicists in Bizen. His grandfather, Yamamoto Tōshū (1906–1994), was the third Bizen potter designated a Living National Treasure by the Japanese government, in 1987. Yabe's works, while still functional, are much more sculptural in appearance than those of his grandfather and father, with whom he apprenticed.



Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese, 1876-1950

Tomonoura Godowns, from the second Inland Sea Series, 1930

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper Bequest of Harry Drake 2013.79.21

The four prints along these two walls are from Yoshida Hiroshi's second Inland Sea Series, which he printed in 1930, four years after the first. His original series was inspired by a trip he made in November 1910. The second follows a trip to the same area in March 1930.

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese, 1876-1950

Waiting for the Tide, from the second Inland Sea Series, 1930

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture; formerly given to the Center by H. Ed Robison, in memory of his beloved wife Ulrike Pietzner Robison 2013.29.415

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese, 1876-1950

A Calm Day, from the second Inland Sea Series, 1930

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture; formerly given to the Center by H. Ed Robison, in memory of his beloved wife Ulrike Pietzner Robison 2013.29.416







Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese, 1876-1950

Three Little Islands, from the second Inland Sea Series, 1930

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells 2002.161.49



Japanese, born 1938 Water container, 2014

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze Gift of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz 2019.92.3a,b

Abe Anjin, from Osaka, was not born into a potter family. He originally was a painter, and had his first exhibition in 1967. In the 1970s, he started to be engaged in ceramics and in 1989 built his own kiln in Okayama. Abe has a deep fascination with antiquity and traditional forms, and this uneven, asymmetrical water container (mizusashi) resembles Mia's most celebrated antique ceramic, the "Burst Bag" (yaburebukuro) water container from around 1600, on view in gallery 224.

Kaneshige Tōyō

Japanese, 1896-1967

Earred water container with scratched line decoration, 1958

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze Lent by Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz L2023.120.1a,b







Yamamoto Izuru

Japanese, born 1944

Water container of layered burgundy clay, 2017 Bizen ware; burgundy stoneware and black lacquer lid Gift of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz 2019.92.10a-c

Yamamoto Izuru is the fourth son of Living National Treasure Yamamoto Tōshū (1906–1994) and an uncle of Yabe Shun'ichi, whose sculptural vase Wind of Light is in gallery 251. In 1968, Yamamoto went to Paris to study in the sculpture department of the university Beaux-Arts de Paris (formerly called École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts). In 1970, he returned to Japan to study under his father, and in 1975 he opened his own kiln where he builds his signature objects of layered clay like this water container (mizusashi).

Takahara Shōji

Japanese, 1941-2000

Water container in the form of an eboshi hat, late 20th century
Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze and black lacquer lid
Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation
2015.79.365a,b

Takahara Shōji was born in Okayama prefecture, where unglazed Bizen ware was traditionally made. He began his apprenticeship at age 17 and learned under two artists who were nationally recognized to be at the forefront of Bizen: Isezaki Yōzan (1902–1961) and Ishii Furō (1899–1964). In 1965, Takahara built his own kiln and became independent. This water container (mizusashi) was used for fresh water during ceremonial tea preparations and is shaped in the form of an eboshi, a formal hat for men.

Kakurezaki Ryūichi

Japanese, born 1950

Water container "Dream," around 2000

Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze and red lacquer lid Promised gift of Tamara and Michael Root L2023.30.33







Wakimoto Hiroyuki
Japanese, born 1952
Vase in the form of a component stone, around 2000
Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze
Gift of Harold and Margaret Sims RB2015.5.5a,b

Wakimoto Hiroyuki
Japanese, born 1952
Assembled stone pile, 2004
Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze
Gift of Harold and Margaret Sims RB2016.5.4a-d

Wakimoto Hiroyuki is a master of unique, non-traditional forms. Created from chunks of clay and not on a potter's wheel, this piece is a composite of separate components that Wakimoto fired in different parts of the kiln. A glaze was not applied but the dissimilar locations alone produced contrasting colors and textures, resulting in idiosyncratic combinations when the components were joined.

Hoshino Sei
Japanese, born 1959
Large square plate, 2016
Bizen ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze and hidasuki marks
Promised gift of Tamara and Michael Root L2023.30.23

Hoshino Sei, born in Hiroshima prefecture, originally had no connection to Okayama or ceramics. After graduating in 1981 from the prestigious Hosei University, in Tokyo, he worked for Kewpie—famous for producing Japan's bestselling mayonnaise. In 1996, Hoshino decided to radically change his life and began to apprentice under Mori Tōgaku (born 1937), a leading Bizen potter who built the largest traditional climbing kiln currently in use, nearly 280 square feet, in 2015. Hoshino himself built a kiln, in 2003, and has since become so popular that he exhibits his works in solo exhibitions at several galleries every year.







Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese, 1876–1950

Evening after Rain, from the first Inland Sea Series, 1926

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 87.85.27

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese, 1876-1950

Konoshima, from the second Inland Sea Series, 1930

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture; formerly given to the Center by H. Ed Robison, in memory of his beloved wife Ulrike Pietzner Robison 2013.29.414

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese, 1876-1950

Morning of Abuto, from the second Inland Sea Series, 1930

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper Gift of Johanna Maud Hill 2022.7.35

