



Contemporary Clay: Japanese Ceramics for the New Century

Joe Earle

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Featuring over 50 examples made by more than 35 artists during the last two decades, *Contemporary Clay* offers an overview of everything that is most innovative, creative, and iconoclastic in the world of modern-day Japanese ceramics. The works range from painstakingly crafted porcelains inspired by Chinese prototypes to rough-hewn vessels that revel in the happy accidents of wood-fired kilns to ironic "objects" that mimic newspapers, discarded trash and body parts. The selection is mostly drawn from the extensive collection of Halsey and Alice North of New York and reflects their informed taste; their bias is toward works made under the influence of the avant-garde Sōdeisha group, which challenged the traditional supremacy of utilitarian forms while maintaining its respect for technical excellence. Also widely covered are artists reacting in very different ways to the opportunities and challenges of their craft heritage, some breaking away toward pure sculpture, others reinventing the vessel ideal with an intriguing range of new forms and glaze effects. The book's commentaries on the artists discuss their backgrounds, the processes they employ and their places within the complex world of postwar Japanese ceramic history. In work that is playful, evocative, and avant-garde, the selected artists push the boundaries of our conception of ceramics.

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