

Yo Akiyama: The Unborn

秋山 陽「未だ生まれない…」



ARTCOURT Gallery is pleased to present *The Unborn*, a solo exhibition by Yo Akiyama.

This exhibition will feature three large works titled *Ame-tsuchi*,^{*1} marking the first time in 20 years that Akiyama has given a title to new large-scale works, as well as his experimental new work *Crossing*, made of white porcelain and iron powder, and several related works from his signature *Metavoid* series.

For over 40 years, Akiyama has pursued an ontological investigation into the relationship between form, space, and perception through his unique ceramic expression characterized by fissures. His early series *Penepplain* (1980-), born from his attempt to “extract states and phenomena rather than forms,” sharply challenges the essence of ceramic art. Akiyama shapes three-dimensional clay objects such as cylinders and cones and then uses a burner to create fissures on the surface. He then slices off these fissured surface layers, unfurls them on a flat plane, finishes them as black ware by reduction firing, and places them as objects in space. This *Penepplain* series, based on the theme of the “epidermal crust” of clay, the liminal boundary enabling the spatial concepts of interior and exterior, was a turning point that led to the development of other series since the 1990s such as *Geological Age*, *Oscillation*, and *Metavoid*. Through these works, he explores the interrelationship between inside and outside, material and space, based on the primordial structure of vessels. Akiyama also delves into the polycentric existence encompassed in the mutually opposed elements of generation and decay, artificiality and nature.

Akiyama’s expressive practice using clay and ceramics as his medium is underpinned by the ceaseless interplay between his bodily perception – the sensation of the ground beneath his feet, the earth he touches with his hands – and his yearning spirit, knowing that his finite body cannot grasp “something” so vast, yet irresistibly drawn to seek that seemingly infinite existence. At the core of his work, there is ever-present intention aiming “not for something static or complete as an image, but something that evokes a temporal and spatial expansiveness,” in essence a pursuit of “perfect incompleteness.”

The centerpiece of this exhibition, *Ame-tsuchi*, is a series of works in which Akiyama deepens his accumulated reflections on existence and creation, opening new possibilities in his sculptural explorations. Through new approaches, such as adding porcelain clay to conventional ceramic clay and polishing surfaces after firing, these works take on a distinctive texture and subdued sheen, imparting a supple presence that further highlights the characteristic contrast between hardness and fragility in Akiyama’s work.

In these works, where two axes intersect, or a slit runs along a single axis, forms emerge that evoke life caught between fusion and differentiation, or the cyclical flow of time which envelops them. Seeds sprout in the earth, nourished by the blessings of the heavens, growing into trees over time, eventually returning to the soil, only to transform once again into new forms. By tracing this cyclical process of life, where birth and death are gently intertwined, through his tactile connection with clay, the artist, as a part of this cycle himself, seems to confirm that his finite existence is somehow linked to something that transcends perception. Additionally, *Crossing*, in which various compositions of lines emerge on the white porcelain support, is a continuation of his 2013 monotype *Correspondence*, in which he fixed spider webs onto paper using the oxidizing properties of iron powder. Even in this dialogue with the microscopic world of the spider’s intricately crafted beauty, the artist is pursuing moments where his sensibility intersects with the unknown.

We invite you to experience Akiyama’s ongoing expression in which the behavior of soil is fostered as a “phenomenon” between the material and himself and his insight into the infinite expanse that breathes life into the whole of creation.

1. The title of Akiyama’s new works, *Ame-tsuchi*, is a Japanese word used since ancient times that combines the characters for “heaven” (天) and “earth” (地). It can be directly translated as “heaven and earth” or “sky and ground” but also extends to broader meanings like “world” or universe.” Rooted in Japan’s animistic beliefs, where gods dwell in all aspects of nature, and polytheism, *Ame-tsuchi* also represents the deities of heaven and earth.

[Works to be exhibited] *Ame-tsuchi 1* (detail) | Photo: Kazuo Fukunaga

Exhibition Information

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November 9 [Sat.] - December 14 [Sat.], 2024

11:00am - 6:00pm [Sat. -5:00pm]

*Closed on Sundays, Mondays and National Holidays

Opening Reception: November 9 [Sat.] 3:30pm - 5:00pm

Organized by ARTCOURT Gallery (Yagi Art Management, Inc.)

Sponsored by Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd., Mitsubishi Materials Corporation, Mitsubishi Jisho Property Management Co., Ltd.

Artist Information | Art Fair

Art Collaboration Kyoto

November 1 [Fri.] - 3 [Sun.], 2024 | Preview: October 31 [Thu.]

Venue: Kyoto International Conference Center

<https://a-c-k.jp/en/>

ARTCOURTGallery Booth: KM02 in Kyoto Meetings section

Artists: Yo Akiyama, Yasue Kodama

Large works by Akiyama will also be on view in the public program curated by the ACK guest curators.

*Please contact Michiko Kiyosawa and Mizuho Haida at ARTCOURT Gallery for any inquiries including photographic materials.

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ACG Press release –Exhibition Announcement–

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YAGI ART MANAGEMENT, INC.
ARTCOURT Gallery

| Works to be exhibited |



Ame-tsuchi 1

Ceramic clay, porcelain clay, slip, iron powder
109.5 x 88 x 35 cm
2024



Ame-tsuchi 2

Ceramic clay, porcelain clay, slip, iron powder
96 x 90.5 x 52 cm
2024



Untitled MV-244

Ceramic clay, porcelain clay, slip, iron powder
37.5 x 42 x 47.5 cm
2024



Untitled MV-245

Ceramic clay, porcelain clay, slip, iron powder
20.5 x 49.5 x 19.5 cm
2024



Crossing 3

Porcelain clay, iron powder
12 x 19.5 x 23 cm
2024

Photo: Kazuo Fukunaga

Yo Akiyama 秋山 陽

1953 Born in Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi, Japan
 1978 Completed Postgraduate course in ceramics, Kyoto City University of Arts

| Selected Solo Exhibitions |

2022 ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka [13,'09]
 2021 Galerie Pierre Marie Giraud, Bruxelles, Belgium [14,'10]
 2019 QM Gallery Katara, Doha, Qatar
 2018 Kyoto City University of Arts Art Gallery @KCUA, Kyoto
 2016 Musée Tomo, Tokyo
 2015 Joan B. Mirviss Gallery, New York, USA [11,'07]
 2008 Muramatsu Gallery, Tokyo [98]
 2005 KochuKyo, Tokyo
 Frank Steyaert Gallery, Gent, Belgium
 2004 INAX Tile Museum, Tokoname, Aichi
 1999 Contemporary Art NIKI, Tokyo
 1996 Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo [93, '89, '87]
 Gallery Nakamura, Kyoto [87]
 1991 Shibuya Seibu Craft Gallery, Tokyo [88]
 1986 INAX Gallery 2, Tokyo
 1985 Gallery Maronie, Kyoto [83, '82]
 1980 Gallery 16, Kyoto
 1977 Gallery Iteza, Kyoto [76]

| Selected Group Exhibitions |

2023 *The Present Situation of Ceramic Art: A Form, Rises from Clay and Soul*,
 Tajimi City Cultural Atelier gallery VOICE, Gifu
 2021 *TSUCHI-IJIRI*, Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum, Ibaraki
 2020 *HANDS & EARTH: Perspectives on Japanese Contemporary Ceramics*,
 Katonah Museum of Art, New York, USA
 Widening the Lens of Contemporary Art: Listening with the Eyes /
 Seeing through Ears, BB Plaza Museum of Art, Kobe, Hyogo
 2018 *2018 Taiwan Ceramics Biennale*, New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics
 Museum, New Taipei City, Taiwan
 2016 *Spider's Thread - Spinning images of Japanese beauty*, Toyota Municipal
 Museum of Art, Aichi
 Rencontre, The Museum of Ceramic Art, Hyogo
 From the Terada Collection, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo
 2015 *FAENZA, the International Ceramics Prize Exhibition*, Sekiguchi Museum, Tokyo
 Unfolding Worlds, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA
 2014 *Into the Fold: Contemporary Japanese Ceramics from the Horvitz Collection*,
 Harn Museum of Art, USA
 Tradition on Fine Contemporary Japanese Ceramics from the Paul &
 Kathy Bissinger Collection, Asian Art Museum, USA
 2012 *Son et Lumière, Material, Transition, Time*, 21st Century Museum of
 Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Ishikawa



Yo Akiyama -*Far Calls and Textures* -
 ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka, 2022 | Photo: Kazuo Fukunaga

| Selected Awards |

2016 The First prize, Japan Ceramic Society
 2014 Culture and Scholarship Award, Kyoto Shimbum
 Newspaper
 2011 The 52nd Mainichi Art Award, Mainichi Shimbum
 Newspaper
 2010 Grand Prix, The 17th Mokichi Okada Award
 2008 The 21st Kyoto Fine Arts Cultural Award
 2007 Contribution Award, The 25th Kyoto Prefecture
 Cultural Award
 2001 Ube Industries, Ltd. Award, The 19th Exhibition
 of Contemporary Japanese Sculpture 2001
 1992 Kyoto City Best Emerging Artist Prize
 1989 Ravenna Chamber of Commerce Prize,
 46th Faenza International Competition of Art Ceramics
 1988 Excellence Prize, Yagi Kazuo Competition of
 Contemporary Ceramics [86]

| Major Public Collections |

Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art
 Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum
 Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum
 The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka
 Ube Open-Air Sculpture Museum
 21th Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa
 Museum of Modern Ceramics Art, Gifu
 The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto
 Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art
 Kyoto Chuo Shinkin Bank
 Kyoto Prefecture
 The Japan Foundation
 National Crafts Museum
 The National Museum of art, Osaka
 Koriyama City literature Hall
 Suntory Museum of Art
 Shiga Museum of Art
 Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, Shiga
 Simane Art Museum
 Takamatsu City Museum of Art
 Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery
 Tokoname Board of Education
 BB Plaza Museum of Art
 Hagi Uragami Museum
 The Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama
 Everson Museum of Art, USA
 Faenza International Ceramic Museum, Italy
 Museum of Fine Art, Houston, USA
 Victoria & Albert Museum, England
 Praha Decorative Museum, Czech Republic
 Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery, Canada
 International Ceramic Studio, Hungary
 Keramion Frachen, Germany
 Mint Museum, USA
 Minneapolis Institute of Art, USA
 Museum of Fine Arts Boston, USA
 Smith College Museum of Art, USA
 International Olympic Ceramic Sculpture Museum,
 Amaroussion, Greece
 Honolulu Contemporary Art Museum, USA
 Sèvres Museum, France
 Portland Museum, USA
 The Art Gallery of South Australia, Australia