

# Kawai Kanjirō as a Potter: An Exploration of *Tōgi shimatsu* (Essays on Traditional Ceramic Techniques in Japan)

Over the years, the ceramics and lacquerware of the Mingei, or traditional Japanese folk art movement have become increasingly popular as heartwarming vessels and objects for enjoying and enriching daily life. As a leading ceramic artist of this movement, Kawai Kanjirō (1890–1966) has also gained much attention.

Born in Yasugi city, Shimane prefecture, Kawai attended the Tokyo Higher Technical School (now the Tokyo Institute of Technology) to study ceramics. In 1914, he moved to Kyoto and joined the Kyoto City Research Institute for Ceramics. Three years later, in 1917, he left the Institute and began working independently. In 1920, he opened a ceramic studio, which he named Shōkeiyō (Kiln of Bell Valley), in Kyoto's Gojōzaka area, which has traditionally been known for its production of Kyoto-style ceramics. He continued to work there for the rest of his life.

In the early years of his career, Kawai focused on mastering various East Asian glaze techniques and exhibited works modeled after ancient Chinese ceramics. His encounter with the philosopher Yanagi Muneyoshi, however, led Kawai to be involved in the joint publication of "A Manifesto for the Creation of a Japanese Folk Art Museum" (*Nihon Mingei Bijutsukan setsuritsu shuisho*) in 1926 together with Yanagi and the potters Tomimoto Kenkichi and Hamada Shōji. From there, Kawai made a major shift in style to a more rustic one, based on the concept of "beauty in everyday crafts" (*yō no bi*, literally "the beauty of the practical") and became a central figure in the Mingei movement. After World War II, he created sculptural ceramic works that served no practical purpose.

The Essays on Traditional Ceramic Techniques in Japan (*Tōgi shimatsu*) in the title of this exhibition refers to a series of articles that Kawai contributed to in the Mingei movement journal *Kōgei* (Applied Arts). In his groundbreaking essays, the artist chronicled his visits to kiln sites throughout Japan. This exhibition explores his creative activities from the beginning to the end, highlighting his ceramics works that have previously not been introduced and are little known. The exhibition also features works owned by collectors in the Kansai region who supported the potter.

## Admission

### Adults

¥ 1,100 (¥ 900\*)

### High school and university students

¥ 700 (¥ 500\*)

### Elementary and junior high school students

¥ 400 (¥ 200\*)

\*For groups of 20 or more



1. Kawai Kanjirō  
Copper-red ("Swamp Eel Blood") Glazed Celadon Jar  
with Dragon-shaped Handle  
c. 1922

Hankyu Culture Foundation Itsuo Art Museum



2. Kawai Kanjirō  
Bowl with Line Pattern in Trailing Slip  
c. 1931  
Asahi Beer Oyamazaki Villa Museum of Art



3. Kawai Kanjirō  
Copper-red-glazed Vase with Slip-trailing Flower Design  
c. 1948  
The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (Kawakatsu Collection)