

About the Artist

An influential figure in the world of Japanese ceramics, Akihiro Maeta (1954-) creates elegant and minimal sculptures from white porcelain that are deeply inspired by the vessel form. Minimalism in ceramics can be easily mistaken for an inability to decorate or experiment. For Maeta, this is far from truth. The artist's trademark landscapes are, in fact, the simplest of silhouettes coalesced with the purity of white, and his serene works reveal Maeta's unique ability to give birth to riveting, simple and alluring beauty that is shorn of excess. Having been collected by 22 public institutions throughout the world, in particular the Musée Ariana in Geneva, the British Museum in London, and the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Maeta is considered to be one of the leading ceramic sculptors of his generation. Subsequently, he has been awarded the Purple Medal of Honour in 2007 by the Government of Japan, and was designated a Living National Treasure by the Emperor of Japan in 2013.

About the Work

Surprisingly, the serenely faceted silhouettes of Maeta's works are not formed on a wheel. Instead, Maeta prefers to free himself from the formative and sculptural limitations imposed by this tool, and for this reason, only uses it to initially throw the basic shapes of his work. Then, using his bare hands, the artist begins to push and sculpture the surfaces of his works into individually ridged sides. Essentially, the artist's plump silhouettes are created through free-forming using the sheer strength of his hands and fingers. After the placements of his edges are determined, Maeta trims and prepares his surfaces using a blade to completely erase his hand marks from his facades. This final faceting/polishing completes the contemplative creative process of the artist's work. After glazing, the work is consecutively fired in a gas kiln at a relatively lower temperature than traditional porcelain, to imbue the work with a soft, milky whiteness. Ultimately, Maeta's works reveal far more than superficial functionality, and are infused with the artist's deep philosophy of expressing the true beauty of porcelain through the elegance of minimal simplicity.

1954 Born in Tottori, Tottori Prefecture, Japan / Lives and works in Tottori

Selected Awards

- 1991 Mainichi Shimbun Newspaper Prize, 11th Japan Ceramics Exhibition
- 1993 Kenkichi Tomimoto Prize, 48th Shinsho Craft Exhibition
- 1999 Tottori City Cultural Award
- 2000 Asahi Shimbun Newspaper Prize, 47th Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition
- 2004 Japan Ceramic Society Award
- 2005 Shinsho Craft Exhibition Grand Prize
- 2007 Purple Medal for Artistic Achievement, Government of Japan
- 2010 Tottori Prefecture Art Cultural Prize
- 2012 Designated Tottori Prefecture Intangible Cultural Property Holder for Ceramics
- 2013 Designated Living National Treasure by the Government of Japan

Selected Exhibitions

- 1979 5th Japan Ceramic Art Exhibition, Japan (selected every time since)
- 1983 30th Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition, Japan (selected 23 times since)
- 1996 New Expressions in Porcelain: Developments in the 1990s, The National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo, Japan
- 2002 International Asia-Pacific Contemporary Ceramics Invitational Exhibition, Yingge Ceramics Museum, Taiwan
- 100 Years of Contemporary Ceramics Exhibition, Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan
- 2006 Asian Ceramic Delta: Japan, South Korea and Taiwan
- 2007 Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan, The British Museum, London, UK
- 2009 Akihiro Maeta - Form in White Porcelain, Tottori Prefectural Museum, Japan
- 2010 Collect, London, UK ('11, '12, '13, '14, '15)
- The Musée Tomo Prize Contemporary Ceramics for the Tea Ceremony, Musée Tomo, Tokyo, Japan
- 2012 Vallauris Biennale, France
- 2013 TEFAF Maastricht, The Netherlands ('14, '15, '16, '17, '18, '19)
- 2014 The Present of Living National Treasures, Tokyo National Museum, Japan
- 2016 Spring Masters New York, USA
- Treasures of the World from the British Museum, National Museum of Singapore, Singapore
- EAF Monaco, Monaco
- 2017 TEFAF New York Spring, USA

Public Collections

Foreign Ministry, Government of Japan / Japan Foundation, Japan / Agency of Cultural Affairs, Japan / Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan / Shiga Ceramic Cultural Park, Japan / National Museum of Modern Art, Japan / Tottori Prefectural Museum, Japan / East Hiroshima City Museum of Art, Japan / Everson Museum, USA / Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA / Musée Ariana, Switzerland / Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia / Auckland Museum, New Zealand / British Museum, UK / The Tanabe Museum of Art, Japan / Sano Toseki Museum of Art, Japan / MOA Museum of Art, Japan / Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum, Japan / Icheon World Ceramic Centre, Korea / Indianapolis Museum of Art, USA / Jingu Museum, Mie Prefecture, Japan / Gitter-Yelen Foundation, USA