

SHOJI HAMADA

—Commemorating the 120th anniversary

June 17th (Tue) – August 31st (Sun), 2014

The way of Hamada

This year commemorates the 120th anniversary of a potter Shoji HAMADA's birthday. He once recalled his life and expressed his way like this; 'I found my way in Kyoto, started it in England, learned in Okinawa and grew up in Mashiko.' In this exhibition, approximately 200 pieces of both his works (that is his hands), and works collected by him (that is his eyes) are on display mainly from the museum's collection.

Shoji Hamada (1894-1978) was born in present Kawasaki City in Kanagawa prefecture, and entered Department of Ceramics, Tokyo Higher Technical School (present Tokyo Institute of Technology) in 1913. There he got acquainted with Kanjiro Kawai (1890-1966) who was senior to Hamada by two years in the school. Then Hamada worked at Kyoto *Toujiki Shikenjo* (Kyoto Municipal Ceramic Research Center) together with Kawai. Just around this time, Hamada visited an English potter Bernard Leach at Yanagi's residence in Abiko, Chiba prefecture and encountered Yanagi at that time. In 1920, Hamada quitted his job in Kyoto and moved to England accompanied by Leach. Hamada was then 25 and Leach 33. The life in England for three and half years was a good opportunity for Hamada to recognize an importance of life itself which support healthy works. In addition, it was a great consequence for Hamada to discover a slipware used as a daily ware. Hamada held an exhibition in London and it was a great success. Then the news of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 was delivered to Hamada and he went back to Japan in the following year. He spent several months with Kawai in Kyoto and Yanagi, who also lived in Kyoto at that time, got acquainted with Kawai through Hamada. It was not too long before these three men coined the term Mingei which admire the beauty of daily craft works and advocated Mingei Movement. Later, Hamada settled in Mashiko, Tochigi prefecture which is one of the most famous folk kilns. There he devoted himself in making pottery, referring to craft works he collected according to his own eyes in various countries and established a simple, healthy and powerful style of his own with techniques adopted from not only Japan

but many other areas. In 1952, Hamada attended International Conference of Artists and Craftsmen in Dartington Hall, England with Yanagi and Leach and contributed in spreading the philosophy of Mingei to Europe. In 1955, he was designated first Important Intangible Cultural Property (so-called Living National Treasure). In 1961, he was appointed second director of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum as a successor of Soetsu Yanagi. In 1968, he was awarded Order of Cultural Merit. Then in 1977, he founded the Mashiko Reference Museum (present Shoji Hamada Memorial Mashiko Reference Museum), using a part of his private home and studio with hope that more and more people see and refer to the craft works which Hamada himself also had been referring to in making pottery. Hamada called himself 'a potter' throughout his life. This means that his ideal was an innocent and simple beauty made by unknown craftspeople and that he was the practitioner of Mingei Movement.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Shinsaku Hamada (Shoji's son) and Tomoo Hamada (Shoji's grandson) for their generous cooperation in holding this exhibition.

Hamada's Technique

The Japan Folk Crafts Museum holds about as many as 450 pieces of crafts made by Shoji Hamada. Most of them were made from clay and glazes of Mashiko, where Shoji Hamada was based. He was good at making pottery with various techniques adopted from ceramics from all times and all places. For example, trailing design which sometimes accompanies unexpectedness is one of the traditional glaze techniques from Japanese folk kilns and it represents a characteristic of Hamada's works who aimed an accidental and natural beauty. Hamada learned a brushwork design, a faced design and finger-wiped design from ceramics of Joseon Dynasty. He started red enamel decoration (*aka-e*) from yearning for *aka-e* of Sung and Ming Dynasty of China and Ryukyu ceramics. He applied a salt glaze technique from Germany to his ceramics and this was very unique to him. Hamada made sugarcane he saw in Okinawa into his own pattern and that became typical of his works.

Craft Works of the West

In 1920, Shoji Hamada visited England with Bernard Leach and got strongly influenced by life and craft works of the West. Hamada even said that England was a beginning of his creative activity. Here about 40 pieces of excellent works from the West (mainly from England) are on display.

Bingata and Ceramics from Okinawa

Shoji Hamada first visited Okinawa in 1918 and had been there very often since then. He acquired a lot from Okinawa's handicrafts, craftspeople and nature. In this room bingata and ceramics are introduced. Please enjoy works during Ryukyu Kingdom era, which Hamada highly admired.

Bernard Leach and Kanjiro Kawai

Bernard Leach was a most influential figure to Shoji Hamada. Kanjiro Kawai, on the other hand, studied together with Hamada both in Tokyo and in Kyoto and had been in closest friendship through a life. Works made by Kawai and Leach, who established their own style, are exhibited in this room.

White Ceramics of Joseon Dynasty

Very unique characteristics of white porcelain of Joseon Dynasty could be seen in this room; some are bluish and others have good stains from a long use. White porcelain of Joseon Dynasty as well as ceramics of *Kohiki* or brushwork design are on display.

Museum Shop

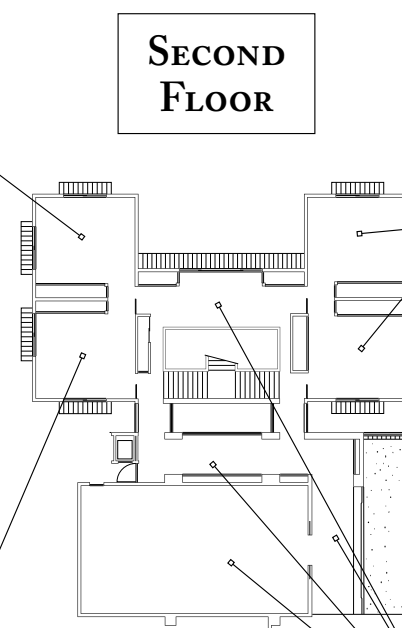
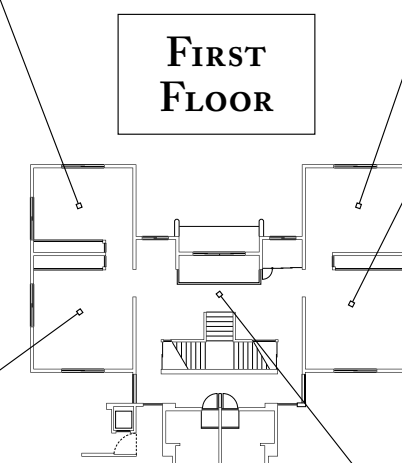
Various Crafts of Taiwan

When Yanagi traveled Taiwan in 1943, it was just in wartime. He collected craft works made by native Taiwanese such as incredibly delicate woven works made by the Paiwan, accessories made of glass beads or teeth, bamboo works like shelves, boxes and woven tools and they are exhibited in this room.

Works by Shoji HAMADA

The collection by Shoji HAMADA

Works by Shoji HAMADA



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