

## KAZU YAMADA

(b. 1954)

Born in a potter's family in Tokoname, one of six oldest pottery centers in Japan, Kazu Yamada developed interest in pottery early. His career path was shaped by meeting with several particularly influential people. When he was 15, he worked with a group of potters who were building a large ceramic installation entitled "The Chair of Moon" for the Osaka Expo Exhibition Hall. Among the potters was internationally renowned ceramist Ryoji Koie. For the first time, Yamada realized the enormous creative potential of pottery, and decided to become a potter.

He enrolled in Osaka Art College, and was greatly influenced by one of his teachers, famed ceramicist Osamu Suzuki. During this time, he shunned the so-called traditional pottery and gravitated towards sculpture and architectural forms. Not until 1978 did he turn his attention towards tradition. In that year, ceramist Tokuro Kato, a Japanese icon in his 80's at the time, saw a great deal of talent and potential in the young Yamada, and invited Yamada for tea. They had tea in an old Shino tea bowl. Yamada was shocked by how strongly he responded to the old tea bowl. He realized that drawing a distinction between contemporary and tradition was superfluous; the tea bowl is pottery.

Since that meeting, Kato became a mentor of Yamada, and the two continued a close relationship until Kato's death in 1985. Yamada shares some of Kato's philosophy about traditions. Both seek not to mimic old Momoyama pottery, but to create present day renditions built on traditions. Their Shino, Oribe, Seto-Guro (Black Seto) tea bowls are unique and personal artistic expressions. Yamada is unquestionably one of the finest ceramists who choose to devote their lives to carry on this tradition.