Koike Shōko, *Shiro no Shell* (White Shell) (detail), 2013, on loan from the collection of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz.

Front: Hoshino Kayoko, *Yakishime ginsai bachi* (Unglazed bowl with silver glaze) (detail), 2009, on loan from the collection of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz.

Back: Yagi Kazuo, *Kakiotoshi hoko* (Square vessel with etched patterning) (detail), 1966, on loan from the collection of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz.

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Photos by Randy Batista.

**About the Author**

Tomoko Nagakura is a curator and professor of Japanese art. She is currently a Research Fellow for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and has worked on the Jeffrey and Carol Horvitz Collection of contemporary Japanese ceramics since 2012. Previously, she has been a curator at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, as well as other art institutions in Japan.
Historical Background

When Japan opened its doors to the rest of the world in 1854, following nearly three hundred years of isolation, a new era began to slowly unfold for Japanese ceramic artists. The Mingei (Folk Art) movement was formed officially in 1926 against both modern views of art, which emphasized individual self-expression by artists, and rapid changes in society caused by modernization. The founding members of the Mingei movement included the philosopher Takamura Shōsetsu (1881 – 1942) and ceramic artist Inami Shōji (1887 – 1970), inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement in England and interactions with Western ceramics. The field of art history in Japan has since experienced radical changes in social and formalities of ceramics. Instead they explored new conceptions of object art creation but also as faculty members, teaching the importance of protecting tradition by a nation that would gather at his prestigious college. 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The Malevich Society of Contemporary Artists was formed in 1920 for the art of anti-art, but the movement found no Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928 – 2000), a forerunner of the postmodern movement, the following decades (especially since the 1980s), the number of women ceramic artists increased, and these artists have made important contributions to new approaches to the development of ceramic art. Asakura Shūji (1926 – 2010), who began her artistic career in the 1960’s, has been well known for her large-scale installations. Contemporary female ceramic artists are building on a legacy of at least one. Unusual approach in ceramic tradition. Today, the gender ratio of enrolled students in art schools is 1:2, which means that more women artists are now engaged in ceramic art than ever before, and their work has become well known to a wider population. Many men started to attend universities to learn art, and rather than there being a decline in the number of students, there has been an increase in the number of students pursuing ceramic practice for a career as a ceramic artist in postwar Japan. This meant that ceramic art became open to women, who were not accepted into the male-dominated apprenticeship system and who were excluded from the production of aesthetically uninteresting work. The wedding of Kyōto City University of Arts, Sōdeisha’s founding members, such as Yagi Kazuo (1921 – 1994) and Yamada Hiroshi (1922 – 2000), challenged widely accepted ideas of the functionality and formalities of ceramics. Instead they explored new possibilities afforded by clay as a medium to pursue sculptural expression. Calling their works objet-yaki (object ceramic), these artists sought to bring ceramics into a wider field of fine art. From this new generation such as Kawai Tatsuya (1951 – 2006), who studied with Yagi Kazuo at Kyōto City University of Arts, Sōdeisha artists were non-traditional and argued that they were grand mentors. Three panegyrs of postwar Japanese ceramics have continually proven to be benchmarks for subsequent artists, inspiring them to define their own paths and ceramic artists. Sōdeisha, therefore, played an influential role and functioned as the driving force in the development of the field. For most of the generations of ceramic artists today, non-functional sculptural objects are sought for great beauty, however, without the burgeoning of the Sōdeisha movement in the trajectory of modern Japanese ceramic production, the current situation might have been completely different.