



7704 Junkichi Kumakura (1920-1985)

A ceramic plaque with abstract design, decorated in an Irabo glaze

Impressed seal Jun

Japan, 20th century

Dimensions: H. 25.5cm x W. 23cm x D. 4cm (10¼" x 9¼" x 1¾")

Tomobako (original box) inscribed:

Lid: titled Iraboyu toban (a ceramic board with Irabo glaze), signed Kumakura Jun and sealed Kuma

Junkichi Kumakura was one of the most influential and popular "sculptural ceramic" artists of 20th century Japan. Born in Kyoto he studied design at Kyoto Koto Kogei Gakko (currently Kyoto Institute of Technology) and decided to pursue his career in ceramics in the mid-1940s just after the World War II.

Initially Kumakura was taught by master potters Rikisaburo Fukuda (1908-1984) and Kenkichi Tomimoto (1886-1963) and was interested in pottery vessels and their decorative painting. His works were recognised from an early stage and accepted at the conventional Nitten (The Japan Fine Art Exhibition) in 1947 and 1948. He received awards at the 1st and 3rd Modern Ceramic Exhibitions in 1952 and 1954 respectively and won the 1st Japan Ceramic Society Prize in 1955.

His interest then shifted from vessels to more sculptural forms and in 1957 Kumakura joined the revolutionary ceramic group Sodeisha (Crawling through Mud Association) which was co-founded by Kazuo Yagi (1918-1979), Hikaru Yamada (1923-2001) and Osamu Suzuki (1926-2001) in 1948. As a core member of the avant-garde ceramicist group, he actively created experimental and improvisational ceramic works throughout his career. Kumakura is known for his wide variety of ceramic works, some inspired by jazz music and some concerned with sexuality and eroticism.

His first solo show was held in 1951 at the Form Gallery in Ginza, Tokyo. Since then Kumakura was invited to exhibit at a number of exhibitions in Japan and internationally, including the Brussels World Exposition in 1958 where he won the grand prize and the International Ceramics Exhibition, Prague, in 1962 where he won the silver prize. In 1989 a major retrospective exhibition *Organs that Provoke: Ceramic Works of Junkichi Kumakura* was held at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

Works by the artist can be found in the collections of: The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto; The National Museum of Art, Osaka; Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu; The Shigaraki Ceramic Culture Park, Shiga; Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Portland Art Museum, USA.



gregg baker  
asian art