

Grove Gallery presents pottery of Japanese ceramist Kenichi Saito

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The works of Japanese master potter Kenichi Saito will be shown at the University of California, San Diego's Grove Gallery from Jan. 9-Feb. 10, beginning with an artist's reception from 6-8 p.m. on Jan. 9.

The artist is famous for his use of the hill-climbing kiln, which is rarely used in this country. This climbing kiln is difficult to master because of its size, but it is highly praised in Japan for its outstanding firing qualities.

Saito opened the kiln in 1978, at his current home in Takamaeda, to develop "new" Kesenuma pottery. Kesenuma pottery was first produced in the village of Kesenuma, Saito's birthplace, about 90 years ago.

Saito started his career in political science in 1968, but left it in 1975 when he apprenticed himself to a master potter in Miyagi-ken, near Kesenuma. His objective was to learn to produce pottery using the clay of his home village.

Three years later, finished with his apprenticeship, Saito ventured out on his own and started producing pottery in the new Kenryu kiln at Takamaeda. Two years later he was entering national exhibitions, and was soon winning top prizes in his class. In 1982, Saito won one of the highest awards possible in Japan, the Japan Pottery Association Chairman's prize at the International Pottery Exhibition, and won the prize again in 1985.

Saito has a prolific exhibition record as well. He has exhibited his work annually in Japan's Traditional Art Musashino Exhibition, a prestigious show for Japanese potters who use traditional means of production. He also shows annually in Japan's famed National Exhibition, a large exhibition of crafts and trade goods.

The Grove Gallery will exhibit approximately 100 of Saito's works, a full range of functional table ware, usually available only in Japan.

Of his work, Saito says, "Whether it is a small cup or large pot, they are, after all, simply lumps of earth which have long been overlooked. It is always a great thrill for me...when I revive the clay with my hands and produce something useful for the everyday lives of the people."

The UC Crafts Center/Grove Gallery will offer a one-day workshop with Kenichi Saito, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 17. The Grove Gallery is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturday.

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