

UCCA Clay Opens with Inaugural Exhibition “The Ways of Clay: Select Award-Winning Works from the International Ceramics Festival Mino of the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan”

Released October 19, 2024

Exhibition Period:

2024.10.19 – 2025.2.23

Location:

Gallery 1 and Gallery 2

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UCCA Clay opens with its inaugural exhibition “The Ways of Clay: Select Award-Winning Works from the International Ceramics Festival Mino of the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan,” showcasing a major collection of contemporary ceramic art that reinterprets the traditional medium through revitalized and modern perspectives. Unfolding in three chapters, this opening exhibition highlights the versatility and contemporary creativity in the ceramic medium, setting the stage for future exhibitions and programs.

YIXING, China—From October 19, 2024, to February 23, 2025, UCCA Clay, the latest addition to the UCCA constellation of museums, presents its inaugural exhibition, “The Ways of Clay: Select Award-Winning Works from the International Ceramics Festival Mino of the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan.” As the museum’s opening exhibition, it fuses the rich millennia-long ceramic history of Yixing, the “City of Ceramics” where UCCA Clay is situated, and UCCA’s global artistic vision for contemporary art to spark and celebrate cross-cultural dialogue. Featuring 69 award-winning ceramic works by 65 artists from 17 countries, selected by the prestigious Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan for the International Ceramics Festival Mino, this exhibition puts innovative practices and creative methodologies in ceramic art production into a global context. The exhibition is an exploration of the ceramics medium and creative diversity centered around three central themes: the organic shaping of natural forms, the geometric transformation of space to surface, a reflective engagement with historical iconography, and spirituality. “The Ways of Clay: Select Award-Winning Works from the International Ceramics Festival Mino of the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan” is curated by UCCA Director Philip Tinari and UCCA Assistant Curator Zhang Yao.

Mino-ware, originating from the Mino region of Japan’s Gifu Prefecture, is renowned for its vibrant glazes and distinctive forms. In 1986, Gifu Prefecture launched the International Ceramics Festival Mino to redefine artistic significance of Mino-ware in an increasingly internationalized world. Since then, the festival has brought together ceramic artists and enthusiasts worldwide as an international platform for cultural exchange and dialogue. Works that have been awarded with honors are housed in the Museum of Modern Ceramics, Gifu to

present a dynamic and ever-evolving perspective on the development of contemporary ceramic art.

This exhibition features award-winning pieces from the collection of the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, showcasing the revitalized transformation of ceramics creation through a variety of shapes, forms, and artistic approaches by artists from around the world. The exhibition is titled "The Ways of Clay" in a blend of classical Chinese philosophy with contemporary interpretation of art in an expression of creativity and craftsmanship with the material. The usage of "Ways," or (*dao*), conceptualizes the abstract methodology in the creation of ceramics arts.

"The Ways of Clay: Select Award-Winning Works from the International Ceramics Festival Mino of Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu" is organized into three chapters: "Seeds of Nature," "Geometric Structure," and "Garden of Meditation."

The first chapter, "Seeds of Nature," offers a unique perspective on the symbiotic beauty of nature and art as artists transform fleeting natural phenomena into eternal moments for viewers to experience seasonal change and the cycle of life. Japanese artist Ido Masanobu's *Hanahana* elegantly showcases the dynamic beauty of plant growth through its floral forms. Canadian artist Grace Nickel's *Untitled*, featuring a moth motif, highlights the artist's appreciation for microscopic life. In Belgian artist Guy Van Reemput's translucent *Big Arnas*, the interplay of patterns evokes the rhythms of nature, mirroring day-and-night transitions alongside changing seasons. Finnish artist Kati Tuominen-Niittylä's *Dish, White Moon* captures the soft and gentle light of the moon through its minimalist circular design, embodying a serene beauty that transcends the ordinary. Japanese artist Yanai Yuichi's *Snow Hill* transforms a tranquil winter landscape into modern dinnerware that is both aesthetically pleasing as well as functional. In *Requiem*, Japanese artist Ado uses the form of a coffin to address nature's most fundamental cycle—life and death.

The second chapter, "Geometric Structure," explores the formal evolution and elevation of ceramic art within contemporary contexts. It delves into how geometric elements have transitioned from traditional decorative techniques into a distinct artistic language, showcasing pioneering explorations into the spatial elements of ceramics. Danish artist Bodil Manz's black-and-white geometric piece *Ceramic* strikes a balance between artistic expression and practical functionality. Japanese artist Shūra Yoshikawa Shuji's *Nomezurikomū* constructs a rich, layered structure using basic geometric shapes like squares

and circles. Japanese artist Yoshioka Jun's *Triangle Circuit 1992* resembles a labyrinth, suggesting cycles and connections as well as a design of repetition. Canadian artist James Kemp's *Morphology 2* challenges traditional ceramic shapes, presenting a fluid and dynamic visual experience through irregular stacking and interweaving of clay.

The third chapter, "Garden of Meditation," examines the profoundly unique expressions of ceramics as spiritual vessels. By showcasing the multifaceted roles ceramics play in religious rituals, cultural heritage, and personal meditation, ceramics transcend their utilitarian function to become a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds. Hong Kong artist Wong Sita's *Hundred Rice Bowls* is a multitude of similar yet colorfully diverse bowls, symbolizing the subtle interplay between individuality and community, unity, and diversity. Japanese artist Nitta Hiromi's *Fixed Affordance, it depends on emotion* creates visual tension with its conceptualized representation of the flow in human emotions. The deconstructed and distorted violin form in Sergio Gurioli's *Gruppo* acts as a metaphor for the complexity of human feelings. Italian artist Romano Mazzini's *Citta' Ideale* is an envisioning of a vibrant urban landscape through abstract geometric shapes, inviting contemplation in a surreal space. Chinese artist Ma Huiyuan's *Porcelain Series* seeks to express genuine spiritual aspirations through the reconstruction of new vessel forms.

A unique exhibition design created entirely for this exhibition by UCCA exhibition designer Anna Xiaoran Yang redefines traditional ceramic presentation methods to showcase this medium in a contemporary manner. The streamlined display stands form semi-open, irregular polygons around the columns, while the artworks disrupt conventional single-plane and linear exhibition formats. This innovative approach invites viewers into a multidimensional visual experience, establishing a dynamic rhythm throughout the space. Each artwork is positioned within its own dedicated display space, transforming it from an isolated piece into an integrated whole that actively engages with the museum environment. The exhibition also responds to the architectural spaces created by Kengo Kuma and Associates Architects, while activating them with artworks for the first time.

Support and Sponsorship

Exclusive wall solutions support is provided by Dulux. UCCA thanks the members of UCCA Foundation Council, International Circle, and Young Associates, as well as Lead Partner Aranya, Lead Art Book Partner DIOR, Lead Imaging Partner vivo, Presenting Partner

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Public Programs

UCCA will curate a series of dynamic public programs throughout the exhibition period of “The Ways of Clay.” Curators and experts from Japan’s Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu have been invited to Yixing to lead a themed conversation as well as a workshop in November and February of next year. On the opening day of the exhibition, a guided tour will be offered with exhibition curator Zhang Yao. Additionally, two hands-on ceramic arts workshops will be held to invite visitors to engage directly with the medium. For the latest updates on our events, please visit the official UCCA website and our social media accounts such as the official UCCA WeChat.

About UCCA

UCCA Center for Contemporary Art works to bring the best in art to ever wider audiences, global dialogue, and cultural exchange. Opened in 2007, its Beijing flagship is registered as a non-profit museum, occupying over 10,000 square meters of regenerated factory space at the heart of the 798 Art District. UCCA also operates UCCA Dune in Beidaihe, UCCA Edge in Shanghai, and UCCA Clay in Yixing, Jiangsu Province. In addition to its exhibitions, public programs, and research initiatives, UCCA includes a charitable foundation (UCCA Foundation), a comprehensive children’s art education program (UCCA Kids), and a platform for commercial collaborations (UCCA Lab). Consistently ranked as China’s leading art institution, UCCA has pioneered an integrated operating model distinct in the world.

ucca.org.cn/en

About UCCA Clay

UCCA Clay is a museum situated at the intersection of ceramics and contemporary art. Located in China’s “City of Ceramics”— Yixing, Jiangsu province—it sits at the center of the newly revitalized Ceramic Factory No. 2 Cultural District. Featuring a remarkable façade made of hand-fired terracotta tiles, the 2,400-square-meter building, designed by Kengo Kuma and Associates, is the Japanese architect’s first built work to feature clay as a primary material. Its color refers to Yixing’s renowned *zisha*, or purple clay.

UCCA Clay’s program takes inspiration from Yixing’s unique cultural heritage and millennia-long ceramic history, as well as UCCA’s global artistic vision. Its exhibitions center contemporary creativity in the medium of ceramics, broadly understood, while also offering

broader context and facilitating exchange and dialogue with the wider world. Opened in October 2024, it is the fourth venue in UCCA's constellation of museums, and the first contemporary art institution in Yixing.

About Mino-Ware and the International Ceramics Festival Mino

Mino ware originated in the late Kofun period (7th century) in the Tōnō Region of Gifu Prefecture, Japan. It is a type of high-fired clay that is different from earthenware. From the Sengoku period at the end of the 15th century to the Azuchi-Momoyama period, Mino ware evolved alongside the flourishing of the tea ceremony and ikebana culture, attaining a peak of development. It has since evolved into the subcategories of Kiseido, Seto-Guro, Shino, and Oribe. In the Edo period, Mino ware gradually became something used by everyday people. During the Meiji period, it began to be produced and sold freely, and exports flourished. It was highly praised at overseas expositions. In the first half of the 20th century, Mino ware went through two periods of rapid growth. However, after the 1990s, it gradually declined due to the economic recession and the rise of mass-produced ceramics. In order to revive this traditional pottery art, Gifu Prefecture began the triennial International Ceramics Festival Mino in 1986, inviting artists from all over the world to participate in exchanges on ceramic culture.

About the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu

The Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu is a public museum located in Tajimi City, Gifu Prefecture. It opened on October 12, 2002, as the main venue of Ceramics Park Mino. The collection of the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu emphasizes modern and contemporary ceramics. It includes ceramic artworks, functional ceramics, and industrial ceramics, by outstanding artists from Japan and abroad since the end of the 19th century. The Museum is not only one of the organizers of the International Ceramics Festival Mino, but also its main venue. It also regularly hosts ceramics exhibitions. Ceramics Park Mino, where the Museum is located, was designed by Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, and the architectural tiles used were all locally produced. The Ceramics Park Mino complex is designed to promote the development of the ceramics industry through research and dissemination of Japanese ceramic culture.