
Mizusashi: Japanese Water Jars from the Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz Collection - Ephemera Mizusashi: Japanese Water Jars from the Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz Collection

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Mizusashi: Japanese Water Jars from the Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz Collection Intro Panel

Fairfield University Art Museum

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MIZUSASHI

*Japanese Water Jars from the
Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz Collection*

June 5 – December 14, 2018

The water jar (Mizusashi) has a significant role in the Japanese chanoyu tea gathering. Usually made of clay, it holds the hot water for the preparation of tea (chanoyu translates as “hot water for tea”). While the water jar must be functional, and there are some basic requirements regarding size and shape, artists have great freedom to be expressive in interpreting the vessel—through the articulation of form, choice of ceramic body (usually stoneware or porcelain), firing method, and surface decoration—to create a visually compelling object.

The sixteen mizusashi in this exhibition are on loan from Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz, who have one of the finest and most extensive collections of contemporary Japanese ceramics in the U.S. The earliest work, made in 1929 by the famous potter Kita ji Rosanjin (1883-1959), is a rough Shigaraki-clay stoneware covered jar with the natural deposits and markings from an anagama (wood-fired) kiln, which represents the epitome of the Japanese tradition of rustic stoneware vessels. Striking in a very different way is the water jar with delicate, exquisite over-glaze enamel floral patterning in gold and silver with a lacquer lid made in ca. 1978 by Kiyomizu Rokubei VI (1901-1980). Among the most recent examples is the 2015 pumpkin-shaped water jar in matte pale greenish-yellow with a black ceramic lid by artist Katsumata Chieko (b. 1950), who has become well-known for her playful, undulating biomorphic forms that challenge traditional Japanese notions about the ceramic medium and vessel forms. Together, these demonstrate the wide range of aesthetic interpretations that 20th-century and contemporary Japanese artists have made, melding tradition and innovation.