Vase

Place of origin: Tokoname (made)

Date: 1989 (made)

Artist/Maker: Yoshikawa, Masamichi, born 1946 (maker)

Materials and Techniques: Porcelain with incised patterning decorated in underglaze blue

Museum number: FE.34-1989

Gallery location: Ceramics, Room 142, The Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Gallery, case 10, shelf 1

Public access description

Yoshikawa Masamichi is a Tokoname-based artist who, unlike makers subscribing to the traditional crafts movement, for whom the establishment of a reputation outside Japan may be a bonus but is rarely a prerogative, has always operated in a more international context (his work can regularly be found in London, for example, at Contemporary Applied Arts). While he still maintains the interest in ceramic sculpture he originally pursued under the tutelage of Sugie Junpei (1936-) after graduating from art college in 1968, his energies have increasingly turned towards the making of functional ceramics. He is especially interested in how utensils interact with one another when used in combination (toriawase) and how they relate to their contents. This has led him not only to hold joint exhibitions with makers working in media other than ceramics, but also to collaborate with specialist chefs in the staging of carefully orchestrated 'food and tableware' performances.

Given Yoshikawa's interests it is not surprising that he should point to early seventeenth century Oribe wares, the ultimate in recherche tablewares of their time, as an important source of inspiration. This should be understood less in terms of the specifics of technology and style than in terms of the underlying freedom of spirit which imbues his loosely formed shapes and playfully abstracted designs. The liveliness of Yoshikawa's decoration belies the painstaking technique by which it is achieved. This involves inlaying different shades of cobalt blue into lines that have been scratched into the unfired clay surface. The use of needles and lengths of piano wire on porcelain that has been allowed to dry out to a precisely determined extent gives rise to the ragged quality of line that so effectively enhances the etching-like nature of the compositions.

Descriptive line

Vase, porcelain with incised patterning decorated in underglaze blue, by Yoshikawa Masamichi, Tokoname, Japan, 1989

Physical description

Vase, distorted form of almost square cross-section rising to an irregular, stepped mouthrim. Slab-built from porcelain; the narrower panels forming the sides of a wedge-shaped cross-section; the wider panels of an even cross-section. Interior and all of the exterior except the base covered in clear glaze; all exterior surfaces, the base included, decorated with semi-abstract patterning executed by scratching and filling with cobalt blue.

Dimensions

Width: 26.9 cm, Depth: 23.4 cm, Height: 36.8 cm

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Object history note

Purchased from the maker

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O24679/vase-yoshikawa-masamichi/