

PRESS RELEASE

"Japanese Ceramics: From Raku to Kutani – A Journey Through the World of Japanese Pottery" Offers In-Depth Insight into a Centuries-Old Tradition

With the publication of the comprehensive work "Japanese Ceramics: From Raku to Kutani – A Journey Through the World of Japanese Pottery," enthusiasts, collectors, and art historians are presented with a unique compendium of Japanese ceramic art. The book takes readers on a fascinating journey through the diverse traditions, techniques, and cultural significance of Japanese pottery, which continues to be admired and recognized worldwide.

Japanese ceramic art has a tradition stretching back several millennia, and its influence extends far beyond Japan's borders. While appreciation for Japanese ceramics is steadily growing in the West, there has been a lack of a comprehensive work that considers historical developments as well as regional characteristics, technical aspects, and aesthetic principles in their entirety. This book impressively fills this gap.

The detailed examination of the various ceramic styles—from the rustic beauty of Raku pottery to the colorful elegance of Kutani ware—offers the reader authentic insight into the deep cultural roots of this art form in Japan. The author understands how to clearly present the complex relationships between technical processes, philosophical concepts such as wabi-sabi, and the historical development of Japanese society.

The book begins with an introductory examination of Japan's earliest ceramic traditions, dating back to the Jomon period (c. 14,500 BC to 300 BC). These early pottery pieces, characterized by their distinctive cord-pattern decorations, form the starting point for exploring a craft that has evolved and refined over millennia. The author traces the historical development in detail and explains how various cultural influences—particularly from China and Korea—have enriched Japanese ceramic tradition without losing its distinct identity.

Particular attention is paid to Japan's six major traditional ceramic centers: Bizen, Echizen, Seto, Shigaraki, Tamba, and Tokoname. Over the centuries, each of these centers has developed a distinctive style characterized by specific clays, firing techniques, and aesthetic preferences. The author analyzes these regional peculiarities and illustrates how local resources, climatic conditions, and socioeconomic factors have contributed to the development of different traditions.

Raku ceramics, known for its connection to the Japanese tea ceremony, is treated in particular detail. The reader learns how this ceramic style emerged in the 16th century from the collaboration between the tea master Sen no Rikyu and the potter Chojiro and how it embodies the principles of Zen Buddhism and the aesthetics of wabi-sabi. The characteristic manufacturing technique—removing the red-hot ceramic from the kiln and then cooling it in organic material—is explained, as is the cultural significance of these vessels in the context of the tea ceremony.

A particular merit of the book is its detailed presentation of the technical aspects of ceramic production. The author explains in detail the different types of clay, their preparation and shaping, the various firing techniques—from traditional anagama wood firing

to modern gas kiln firing—as well as the variety of glazes and decoration techniques. These technical explanations are complemented by numerous illustrations and photographs that allow the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the complex manufacturing processes.

Furthermore, the book explores the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of Japanese ceramics. Concepts such as wabi-sabi (the beauty of the imperfect and transient), ma (the meaningful space between things), and yugen (the mysterious depth) are not only explained theoretically but also illustrated in their practical application and significance for the design and appreciation of ceramics. The author shows how these aesthetic principles distinguish Japanese ceramics from Western traditions and why they are increasingly receiving attention in the international art world.

Another chapter is devoted to the role of ceramics in everyday life in Japan. From tableware to sake vessels to ceremonial objects, ceramic wares are an integral part of Japanese culture. The author describes how a vessel's function influences its shape and design, and how the appreciation of handmade ceramics in everyday life reflects the Japanese understanding of beauty and quality.

Special attention is also paid to the masters of Japanese ceramic art. From historical figures such as Nonomura Ninsei and Ogata Kenzan to modern artists such as Hamada Shoji and Kawai Kanjiro, the book portrays the most important potters and their contributions to the development of Japanese ceramics. The author not only illuminates their technical innovations and stylistic characteristics, but also their role as cultural mediators and their importance in the transmission of traditional craft techniques.

An exciting chapter is devoted to the cultural exchange between Japan and the West in the field of ceramic art. The author traces how Japanese ceramics have influenced European and American artists since the late 19th century, and how Western elements have in turn been integrated into Japanese ceramic tradition. This intercultural dialogue is vividly presented through exemplary artist biographies and work analyses, demonstrating the dynamics of a tradition that, despite its deep historical roots, has always remained open to new influences.

The collection and evaluation of Japanese ceramics is another focus of the book. The author provides valuable advice on identifying and classifying pieces, explains the significance of potter's marks and signatures, and offers guidance on quality criteria and valuation. This practical information is invaluable for collectors and art lovers when classifying and evaluating objects.

The work concludes with a review of the contemporary Japanese ceramics scene. The author presents current trends and innovative approaches that combine traditional techniques with modern artistic concepts. He demonstrates how young ceramicists are reinterpreting their tradition and the challenges they face in a globalized world. It becomes clear that Japanese ceramic art has lost none of its vibrancy and expressiveness in the 21st century.

The book also poses critical questions about the future of the traditional ceramics industry in Japan. Given the aging population and the exodus of young people from rural areas, many traditional ceramics centers are facing existential challenges. The author discusses various initiatives to preserve cultural heritage and promote young talent, such as residency programs for international artists, cooperative workshops, and new training concepts.

The author Hermann Candahashi himself is no stranger to the world of Japanese art history. With many years of experience as a researcher and admirer, he has compiled his extensive knowledge in this work. His own fascination with Japanese ceramics began during a stay in Kyoto, where he had the opportunity to gain knowledge from a traditional potter. This personal experience and direct contact with this living tradition shape his approach to the subject and lend the book an authentic and engaging perspective.

The research for this work took the author to Japan's most important ceramics centers, where he visited more than just historical sites. This extensive fieldwork is reflected in the depth and authenticity of the presentation, making the book a reliable source for anyone who wishes to seriously engage with Japanese ceramics.

Beyond his purely academic interest, the author also emphasizes the transformative power of encountering Japanese ceramics. In the introduction, he describes how engaging with this art form has changed his own aesthetic sensibilities and sharpened his eye for the beauty of everyday things. This personal dimension adds an additional layer to the book, inviting the reader to engage with the world of Japanese ceramics not only intellectually but also emotionally.

What distinguishes this book from other publications on the subject is its holistic approach. While many works focus on specific aspects—be it history, technique, or individual styles—"Japanese Ceramics: From Raku to Kutani" offers a comprehensive overview that considers all dimensions of this art form. At the same time, it delves deeper, offering new insights and perspectives to even the specialist audience.

The book concludes with a plea to preserve and promote the Japanese ceramics tradition as a living cultural heritage. The author emphasizes the importance of this craft not only as a historical phenomenon, but as an ongoing practice that remains relevant and inspiring even today. He encourages readers to become part of this tradition themselves – whether as collectors, practitioners, or simply as attentive observers who appreciate the beauty and depth of this art form.

"Japanese Ceramics: From Raku to Kutani – A Journey Through the World of Japanese Pottery" is more than a nonfiction book – it is an invitation to an aesthetic and cultural journey of discovery that enriches the reader with knowledge and sharpens their perception. It is a work that bridges the gap between East and West, between tradition and modernity, between craftsmanship and artistic expression. And last but not least, it is a homage to an art form that, in its apparent simplicity, reveals astonishing depth and complexity.

The book is aimed at a broad audience: art historians and museum professionals will find in-depth information and new perspectives; collectors and enthusiasts will receive practical advice on classifying and evaluating objects; ceramists and artisans will gain technical suggestions and aesthetic inspiration; and those interested in culture will be introduced to a fascinating world that may have previously been beyond their grasp.

The publication of this definitive work comes at a time of growing interest in Japanese culture and aesthetics. The principles of minimalism, mindfulness, and appreciation for craftsmanship, which are anchored in the Japanese ceramic tradition, are increasingly resonating in Western society. In this context, the book offers not only technical information but also philosophical

and aesthetic impulses for a reorientation in the way we deal with everyday objects.

In today's consumer society, characterized by mass production and a throwaway mentality, the Japanese ceramic tradition reminds us of alternative values: the beauty of nature, the appreciation of craftsmanship, respect for materials, and the joy of the sensual quality of everyday objects. The book invites the reader to discover these values ??and integrate them into their own lives – whether through a more conscious use of everyday objects, an exploration of craft techniques, or simply through the development of aesthetic perception.

Particularly noteworthy is the way the author presents the connection between tradition and innovation in Japanese ceramics. He demonstrates that this is not a contradiction, but rather a productive field of tension in which the preservation of traditions and experimentation with new approaches mutually enrich each other. This balance between respect for the traditional and openness to the new could serve as a model for other areas of cultural and social life.

The book concludes with a look at the global dimension of Japanese ceramics. The author describes how this art form transcends national and cultural boundaries and connects people of different backgrounds. The worldwide community of ceramists, collectors, and lovers of Japanese pottery is presented as an example of cultural exchange based on mutual respect and shared appreciation. In times of increasing international tensions, this form of cultural connection offers a hopeful example of intercultural dialogue and understanding.

"Japanese Ceramics: From Raku to Kutani – A Journey Through the World of Japanese Pottery" is a book that informs and inspires, imparts knowledge, and broadens horizons. It is a valuable contribution to the dissemination of Japanese culture in German-speaking countries and will undoubtedly serve as a standard work on this subject for a long time to come.

About the Author

The author is a renowned expert on Japanese culture and religion, having published numerous publications on these topics. He spent several years, with interruptions, in Japan, where he intensified his knowledge in various places and cities. His field research took him to numerous regions of Japan, from Hokkaido to Okinawa, and gave him deep insights into local traditions and customs. In addition to his travels, he also considers himself a cultural mediator and has authored numerous books on Japanese spirituality and folklore. He is particularly interested in the connection between traditional ideas and modern society, as well as the intercultural dialogue between Japan and Western cultures.

Availability

"Japanese Ceramics: From Raku to Kutani – A Journey Through the World of Japanese Pottery" is now available in three languages ??(German, English, and French) in bookstores, as a hardcover, paperback, e-book, and audiobook. Further information, excerpts, and event information can be found on the publisher's website.

Contact for media inquiries

For review copies, interview requests, and further information,
please contact:

Press Office

tradition GmbH

Heinz-Beusen-Stieg 5

22926 Ahrensburg

JAPANESE CERAMICS: FROM RAKU TO KUTANI

**A journey through the world of
japanese pottery**



Hermann Candahashi

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