




SALON 94

T Magazine, January 17, 2013

## Breaking the Mold | Takuro Kuwata

CULTURE | By ERICA BELLMAN | JANUARY 17, 2013, 9:00 AM |  1 Comment



"Pink-slipped gold Kairagi Shino ball," 2012, is included in an exhibition of Takuro Kuwata's "dysfunctional" porcelain pottery at Salon 94 Bowery.

Takuro Kuwata's gem-studded vessels, in vivid Pop Art reds and blues, appear far removed from traditional Japanese tea ceremony ware. Similarly, the artist's sherbet-hued bowls — malleable-looking structures with cracked, milk-white armors of glaze — could only be surreal, even psychedelic renderings of tea ceremony ceramics.

But Kuwata, a young Japanese artist whose first solo exhibition in the United States, "Flavor of Nature," opens Friday at [Salon94 Bowery](#), insists that his work is in dialogue with the centuries-old ritual. "The tea ceremony bowl has both a specific function and a more abstract aesthetic," Kuwata said. "My work, I think, shares this dual sensitivity."

After an apprenticeship with the master artist Susumu Zaima, Kuwata began to experiment with traditional methods, expanding the formal possibilities of his craft to develop a distinctive style that seems to straddle the distant past and the imagined future.

Using Kairagi-Shino, a method of firing in which pottery is removed from the kiln before the glaze completely melts, Kuwata coaxes his pieces to appear as if they are exploding from within, like otherworldly crustaceans shedding their shells. *Ishihaze* — or “stone explosion” — allows Kuwata to create the dazzling bursts of petrol, gold and mercury that dapple many of his pieces and lend another layer of textural complexity.

The colors of a Kuwata piece — saturated, vibrant and often shocking — immediately arrest the viewer’s eye, making it exceedingly difficult to look away.

Critics have described Kuwata’s recent works as “dysfunctional” objects. Indeed, the vessels seem to shirk their associated conventional uses. Kuwata, however, considers both form and function fundamental to his process. “Function is at the core of each piece,” he said. “In dealing with the materials to achieve this end, form emerges.”

Kuwata does not see his work as rebelling against the norms of his medium. “I’m not trying to break the rules,” he said. “I just want to apply a contemporary sensibility to pottery. I believe I can create something truly new, work that reflects our time.”

*“Flavor of Nature” will be at Salon94 Bowery through Feb. 25.*



“Yellow green-slipped gold-drop bowl,” 2012, in which beads of gold glaze appear to be “condensing” on the pot’s exterior.