

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 12 – April 16, 2020 | Opening Party Coinciding with Asia Week: March 12, 5-8pm

## *The Breath of Clay*

### *The Life of Koichiro Isezaki's Contemporary Bizen*



Yō, 2019, Ceramic

NEW YORK, NY – Coinciding with Asia Week NYC 2020, Ippodo Gallery is proud to present Koichiro Isezaki's first NYC solo exhibition, *The Breath of Clay: The Life of Koichiro Isezaki's Contemporary Bizen*. The show will consist of vessels, tea bowls, and Isezaki's latest 'Yō' [Conception] series.

Works in this exhibition depict a conversation about tradition and a challenge against history. Isezaki's Bizen ware reflect the past and give hope for the future.

*"I am not an artist that thinks about the definition of tradition while making [my art]. We are tradition, we are a part of it. It's not in the past. We live and continue through it."* - Koichiro Isezaki

Bizen ware is a stoneware produced in west Japan. Imbe, Bizen Province, has an 800-year history and is considered one of the Six Ancient Kilns. Bizen ware is composed of sticky, plastic, and fine clay thousands of years old, found in rice paddies. The clay body has a high iron content making the surface unreceptive to glaze. Thus, the Bizen tradition features an unglazed, natural finish. Koichiro followed in the footsteps of his Bizen master grandfather, Yōzan, and his father, Jun, who was a Living National Treasure. His more liberated approach to the material was developed through his studies in the United States where he discovered a feeling of unity and decided to renounce the concept of tradition.

Isezaki works closely with his materials from start to finish. As he makes the clay body from raw material, he the materials' energy to use as the base of the work. In Bizen ware, the colors of the clay that surface depend on both oxygen and the type of firewood used. The less firewood, the more oxidizing the flame will be and, as the flames move upward in the Anagama kiln, the vessels turn a bright reddish brown. Because of their extreme plasticity, Bizen wares are fired slowly and over a long period of time. With careful consideration of material and composition, Isezaki creates a conversation between the interior and exterior of the finished piece and through technique and style, he brings life back into a an old time-honored tradition.

**Koichiro Isezaki** carries on his family's generational practice of Bizen ware. He is the first son of Living National Treasure Isezaki Jun. Isezaki was the former apprentice of New York-based ceramic artist Jeff Shapiro, who studied under Koichiro's father's apprentice, Yamashita Jyoji. Straying away from tradition to create something new, his works represents organized chaos and organic form.

**For more information and images, please contact:**

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