

## Supreme Tranquility

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The 'Fuji' in Shin Fujihira's surname means 'wisteria' and his first name, 'Shin', which means 'to grow' or 'develop,' was given to him in 1922 by the renowned ceramicist Kanjirō Kawai in the hope that he would grow and flourish, like a wisteria vine. True to his name, Shin Fujihira's work demonstrates a limitless imagination and relaxed creativity that leads the viewer to a better world. Has such a feeling of supreme tranquility ever existed in ceramic works before? Birds fly and fish swim, creating a lively atmosphere. An incense burner seems to float in the sky like a cloud, the body of a vase resembles a ripe fruit, while the pink glaze of a tea bowl resembles the blushing of a young girl's cheeks.

His studio was located in Gojōzaka, the main pottery district in the city of Kyoto, and it was there that his father had established the Fujihira Pottery Company (1916) that boasted the largest climbing kiln in Kyoto. As a boy, he grew up watching the workers coming to and from the kiln but then shortly after the outbreak of the Pacific War, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and his early adulthood was spent living in the shadow of death. He passed his time painting and studying copperplate etching as he waited for his body's natural healing power to aid his recovery. Afterwards, he adopted a spirit of 'indifference to everything,' a stance that embodied itself in his work. For Fujihira, pottery doubtlessly represented a release from depression to the lightness and the joy of life. At that time it was popular to create ceramic objects without function, as represented by the Kyoto avant-garde pottery group, *Sōdeisha*, and a taste for the abstract swept through the postwar art world like a gale. Fujihira's earlier works definitely shared this influence, but he retained an aloof air and his creativity did not display any affiliations. His handbuilt, coiled pots present subtle forms with thin walls and enveloped in a rich coating of glaze. Having

been trained in ceramics by Kanjirō Kawai, a master of glazes, his cinnabar glaze possesses a hint of color within a feeling of transparency that results from a comprehensive study of underglazes.

Why should it be that when we gaze at Fujihira's pottery, we are filled with such a feeling of bliss? It is because it possesses a sublime vision of the universe that surpasses ideology or religion, a simplicity and naïve desire to return to nature. We are delighted to be able to present a solo exhibition by late Shin Fujihira who we hold in the highest esteem.