

Pointing to the Celestial Poles

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Who was it who first noticed the exceptional talent of Kamoda Shōji, the artist who catapulted his way across the firmament of modern Japanese ceramics like a veritable comet? While both Nagasaki Tarō, the Vice-Chancellor of Kyoto City University of Arts, and his teacher, Tomimoto Kenkichi, were aware of his abilities, it was in fact Hamada Shōji who, on encountering Kamoda's work for the first time, recognised the full extent of his genius. At that time many aspiring young potters went to Mashiko to visit Hamada. Hamada took an immediate liking to Kamoda and from the outset treated him as someone special. The story goes that Hamada invited Kamoda into the Uendai, the old farmhouse at the back of the complex of buildings that is now the Shōji Hamada Memorial Mashiko Reference Museum (Hamada Shōji Kinen Mashiko Sankōkan), where they spent several hours talking and poring over the many books about ceramics Hamada had in his library. In 1959, by which time Kamoda had established his workshop in Mashiko, Hamada visited Kamoda as he was unloading his kiln after his second firing. Hamada's praise for what Kamoda had made is said to have been the reason why Kamoda's ceramics, to which nobody had previously paid any attention, began to sell. Hamada later made it a point to visit all of the three-person shows of works by Kamoda, Mori Tōgaku and Ezaki Issei held at Gallery Te in the Tokyo Kōtsu Kaikan from 1969 onwards.

The Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art (Mashiko Tōgei Bijutsukan) covered the full gamut of Kamoda's rich and constantly changing oeuvre in three successive exhibitions held in 1999, 2001 and 2003. These were entitled *Tsuchi no Seimei o Motomete* (In Search of the Spirit of Clay), *Seimei no Katchi* (Spirit Incarnate) and *Hishō suru Seimei* (Soaring Spirit). Thirteen years have now passed since the last of these was held. This exhibition at Nakachō Konishi Arts is a welcome occasion on which to revisit Kamoda's achievements.

No. 1 Ash-glazed flower vase, circa 1965

This is one of the ash-glazed works Kamoda made during the period 1964–1967. Its overall shape and the sharpness of the treatment of its mouth anticipate the characteristics of his subsequent work. The piece he showed at the 1966 *Dentō Kōgeiten* (Traditional Kōgei: Art Crafts Exhibition), which was purchased by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, was also an ash-glazed vessel.

No. 2 Silver-glazed vase, 1968

Kamoda's spring 1968 solo exhibition at Gallery Te consisted solely of faceted unglazed stoneware works. In his third *Kamoda Shōji Sakutōten* (Exhibition of Ceramics by Kamoda Shōji) at the Takashimaya Department Store that autumn, however, he showed a mixture of unglazed stoneware pieces and about ten works decorated in silver. Rather than being applied directly to the clay body, the silver was painted over a layer of colour.

No. 3 Polychrome vase, 1973

Kamoda is known to have submitted works of this type in late 1973 to the *Central Gendai Tōgeiten* (Central Contemporary Ceramics Exhibition) and the *Gendai Tōgei Senbatsuten* (Selected Contemporary Ceramics Exhibition). They belong to the end of a series of glossy, polychrome works he had begun to make in 1971. Judging from the titles he used for early examples of works in this series, for example *Tsubogata Saitō* (jar-shaped polychrome ceramic) and *Tsutsugata Saitō* (cylinder-shaped polychrome ceramic), it seems he was less interested in stressing the forms of his works than the fact that they were polychromatic. In this sense he was placing ceramics in the same camp as sculpture and painting. However, from 1973 onwards, the colours he used became more subdued, which suggests his interests were moving in a new direction in which other considerations were more important.

No. 4 Vase, 1973

On this vase Kamoda used the technique he had developed to create his fish-scale patterned polychrome ceramics. In this case the geometrically swirling grey bands are areas of the high-fired clay body to which he had not applied any colour.

Nos. 5 & 6 Vases, 1974

Kamoda exhibited vase no. 5 at a solo exhibition held in May 1974. The overall form and incised surface patterning are, as is often said, reminiscent of ancient ritual vessels. Vase no. 6, which was exhibited at the Takashimaya Department Store in September of the same year, is decorated with a freely executed pattern of inlaid white slip. One can see how in a matter of only a few months, Kamoda had moved on from using one method of decoration to another.

No. 7 Coloured vase, 1975

The patterning on this strikingly matt-red coloured vase is reminiscent of the comb-feathered decoration used on English slipware. Meticulous application of the pigment created the sharp white lines separating the areas of colour.

No. 8 Vase, 1976

The application of areas of glaze and the omission of colour to reveal thin lines of the stoneware body seen on this vase are both patterning techniques Kamoda had previously used. What is different about this work is its shape, which is reminiscent of square brown paper bags of the type used in supermarkets of the time. The surface design stands on its own as a compelling example of modern art. The combination of form and decoration is an eloquent reflection of Kamoda's genius.

No. 9 Square bowl, 1977

The blackness of the bowl's surface, the cutting away of its corners and the razor-like sharpness of its rim give the work an intensity that is combined with Kamoda's distinctive sense of pictorial design. Although he called it a 'bowl', it is far more than that. This is a work that devotees of Kamoda will be much excited by.

No. 10 Vase, 1978

The patterns on the reddish stoneware body of this vase were applied as thin circular lines of glaze. The contrast between the materiality of the clay body and the glazed patterns is especially striking.

No. 11 Vase, 1978

Kamoda first used the technique of laying down or painting thin lines of glaze on his works in 1977, the year before he made this particular piece. It required a great deal of concentration and effort. In contrast to the smoothly rounded shapes of the reddish stoneware works Kamoda produced, most of the pieces in this series were more sharply angular in shape and were decorated with straight rather than circular lines of glaze.

No. 13, Plaque, 1978

When made by Kamoda, even ceramic plaques came alive as powerful works of art. Why Kamoda started making plaques at this late stage in his career, when he had pursued the vessel form for so long, is something of a mystery. But if one looks at his oeuvre as a whole, one can say that the exploration of the boundaries between art and craft was one of his perennial concerns. It is likely that making plaques with no utilitarian function represented a form of artistic exercise for Kamoda.

This exhibition consists of twelve larger works and a group of cups made over a twenty-year period from the 1960s through to 1980. Only twelve, or perhaps one should say as many as twelve, none of them fails to move or impress. One of them is of particular importance, namely the silver-glazed vase belonging to a group of similar wares he exhibited in 1968 together with a selection of unglazed stoneware works. Kamoda's ceramics are generally distinguished by sharp mouthrims and geometry of form. But the silver-glazed works he exhibited that year were quite different. Their mouths were thick and heavy, and their bases were deeply and boldly sculpted in the manner of massive split footrings. These features and the use of colour beneath the silver glaze resulted in ceramics of enormous beauty and originality. Kamoda made less than a dozen works of this silver-glazed variety, so this is a rare opportunity to see one at first hand. Indeed, it is worthwhile visiting this exhibition just to see this one vase. As a museum curator I feel ashamed at instinctively wanting to keep this masterpiece to myself rather than sharing it with others ... but despite my better self, that is how I feel.

On 28 February 1967 the selection committee for the Takamura Kōtarō Prize met at the Shiseidō Parlour in Tokyo. This happened to coincide with the first day of Kamoda's second solo exhibition at the Takashimaya Department Store. Because Kamoda had been recommended as a candidate for the prize by Imaizumi Atsuo and several other members of the committee, the request was made to have ten of his works brought over from the Takashimaya Department Store to the Shiseidō Parlour for viewing. This resulted in Kamoda being chosen as a winner of the Takamura Kōtarō Prize, which was being held for its tenth and final time. The category for which Kamoda qualified, *zōkei* (lit. 'creating forms or shapes'; broadly synonymous with 'plastic arts'), embraced an extensive range of activities including sculpture, architecture, garden design and crafts such as ceramics. Kamoda was the one and only ceramic artist to receive an award in the whole history of the Takamura Kōtarō Prize.

‘Many of the [the prizewinners] have shared in one way or another Takamura Kōtarō’s spirit in their approach to and way of living.’

(comment by the poet Itō Shinkichi at a group discussion (*zadanka*) about the achievements of the Takamura Kōtarō Prize held at Tonoki in Kagurazaka on 22 September 1968; recorded in Takamura Kōtarō Memorial Committee (ed.), *Tenkyoku o Sasu* (Pointing to the Celestial Poles), 1969)

‘So it means that everyone who received the prize led a Takamura Kōtarō-like way of life.’

(comment by the poet Kitamura Ta’ichi at a group discussion (*zadanka*) about the achievements of the Takamura Kōtarō Prize held at Tonoki in Kagurazaka on 22 September 1968; recorded in Takamura Kōtarō Memorial Committee (ed.), *Tenkyoku o Sasu* (Pointing to the Celestial Poles), 1969)

In his third solo exhibition at the Takashimaya Department Store held in the autumn of 1968, Kamoda presented a number of unglazed stoneware works (*sekkō*). These marked a major turning point in his career. They were the beginning of his exploration of unglazed stoneware that was to lead to what are generally considered his greatest achievements, namely his unglazed stoneware vessels with carved wave patterns. Bursting with the energy of fresh invention, Kamoda stopped participating in the *Dentō Kōgeiten* and withdrew from the Nihon Kōgeikai (Japan Kōgei [art crafts] Association). Independent of and without any kind of organisational backing, he moved his studio to the quiet remoteness of Tōno in Iwate Prefecture and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the making of ceramics.

I have entitled this essay ‘Pointing to the Celestial Poles’ after the *Takamura Kōtarō Shō Kinen Sakuhinshū* (Collected Works Commemorating the Takamura Kōtarō Prize). The work with which Kamoda won the prize was an ash-glazed bowl. It is often said that early works by an artist contain all the key elements of everything they subsequently create. One cannot but bow one’s head in admiration at the foresight shown by Imaizumi Atsuo and his fellow jurors in recognising Kamoda’s genius in this early work. The exhibition at Nakachō Konishi Arts consists of works in many different shapes and with multiple styles of decoration. Regardless of which piece one looks at, one cannot fail to see the singularity of focus that Kamoda maintained throughout his career. He was a living manifestation of Takamura Kōtarō’s adage that ‘whichever way the needle is spun, it will always end up pointing to the celestial pole’.

天極をさす

横堀 聡

日本の近代陶芸界を彗星のごとく走り抜けた加守田章二の才能を、いち早く認めたのは誰だったろうか。加守田が学んだ京都市立美術大学学長の長崎太郎や、同校教授の富本憲吉はその嫡矢であったが、益子に入った加守田の作品を見て、陶芸家としての資質を最初に見抜いたのは濱田庄司である。当時、益子では陶芸家を目指す若者たちが教えを乞うために濱田の元を訪ねたが、その中でも加守田は特別扱いであった。濱田は加守田を益子参考館（現 濱田庄司記念益子参考館）奥の古民家上台に招き入れ、二人で熱心に陶芸全集を覗きながら数時間も話し込んでいたという。1959（昭和 34）年、加守田が益子で独立して 2 度目の窯出しに、濱田が立ち寄り作品を褒めたことによって、それまで引き取り手のなかった作品が売れるようになったと云われる。1969（昭和 44）年から始まる東京交通会館内ギャラリー手における加守田章二、森陶岳、江崎一生の「三人展」にも濱田は毎回必ず足を運んでいたのだ。

益子陶芸美術館では 1999（平成 11）年「第 1 章 土の生命を求めて」、2001（平成 13）年「第 2 章 生命のかたち」、2003（平成 15）年「第 3 章 飛翔する生命」と、3 回に分けて加守田章二の刻々と変化するほぼ全ての作調を紹介した。それから 13 年経った。今回、中長小西における「加守田章二展」の作品をあらためて見てみよう。

＃1 《灰釉花瓶》：

1964（昭和 39）年～67（昭和 42）年頃作られた灰釉作品の一つで、既に加守田独特の厳しい口作りや器形が顕著に表れている。1966（昭和 41）年に伝統工芸展に出品され文化庁買い上げとなった作品も灰釉作品である。

＃2 《銀陶壺》1968（昭和 43）年：

春にギャラリー手で開催された展覧会では面取の炆器作品だけであったが、秋の高島屋の「加守田章二作陶展」では僅か 10 点前後の銀陶が炆器と共に出品された。単に銀彩を施しただけでなく、下地に彩色してから銀で覆っている。

#3 《彩色壺》 1973(昭和 48)年 :

このタイプの彩色作品は1973年末のセントラル現代陶芸展や現代陶芸選抜展に出品されたことが知られているが、1971年から始まる、いわゆる多色による艶やかな彩陶作品の最後に作られたものである。最初に発表された彩陶のネーミングをみると、当初何点かの作品は壺形彩陶や筒形彩陶というふうに、器形よりも彩陶そのものに加守田の意識が向けられているようだ。加守田にとって陶芸は彫刻や絵画と同じ美術、あるいはそれに近いものではなかったか。しかし、1973年以降彩陶は徐々に色彩を抑えめに、加守田の心から彩陶が薄らいで行くような変化が見て取れるようで興味深い。

#4 《壺》 1973(昭和 48)年 :

いわゆる鱗文の彩陶から使われていられる彩色技法、つまり彩色の塗り残しによって線文様を描く方法を用いている。幾何学的に折れ曲がる明灰色の帯文様は塗り残された焼締の土の色そのものである。

#5 《壺》、#6 《壺》 1974(昭和 49)年 :

#5《壺》は5月の個展で発表されたもので、一般に言われるように古代の祭祀器を想起させる形状と線刻文様だが、同年9月の高島屋における作陶展では白泥を自在な線文様に象嵌した#6《壺》になっている。僅か数か月の時間を経ただけで全く違う文様技法によって作調を変化させている。

#7 《彩色壺》 1975(昭和 50)年 :

印象的なマットな赤彩にイギリスのスリッパウェアに使われる技法コムフェザーを思わせる線状の塗り残しによる文様。

#8 《壺》 1976(昭和 51)年 :

焼締の陶肌に釉薬で文様を描く、あるいは釉薬を描き残すことで細い線状の文様を作る技法そのものは既に数年前から使われていたが、この作品の器形はまるで当時のスーパーで使われていた茶紙の四角い紙袋から触発されたかのような形状で新鮮な驚きがある。描かれている文様も独立したモダンアートとしての魅力があり、いずれにしても器形と文様は加守田の非凡な才能を強く感じさせる。

#9 《鉢》 1977(昭和 52)年 :

全体を黒く染めた鉢は四隅の切込みと縁作りの切れそうな鋭さが生む緊張感と、線状の文様は加守田の絵画的センスを強く感じさせるもので、作品名は鉢であるが、本質は全くと言っていいほど違う。これも加守田ファンを魅了する一品だろう。

#10 《壺》 1978(昭和 53)年 :

赤みが掛かった焼締の表面に釉薬を細く円形に置いて形作られた文様を施しているが、焼締の土の質感と釉薬によって生まれた線文とのコントラストが見事である。

#11 《壺》 1978(昭和 53)年 :

この作品は前年と同じく線状に釉薬を置いてゆく(塗る)技法を器体全面に施している。1 点仕上げるのにも集中力のいる作業である。赤みがかった焼締作品は相対的に滑らかな形状を呈していたのに対して、本作品は一転、直線を主体としたシャープな稜線によって構成される器形が多い。

#13 《陶板》 1978(昭和 53)年 :

陶板も加守田が作ると、一つのアート作品としての存在感を持つようになる。ここまで陶芸を究めて、この時期に何故陶板を制作するのかという疑問が浮かぶが、振り返れば加守田の陶芸は美術か工芸というある種永遠のテーマの境で創られてきたように思える。加守田にとって陶板は用途を持たない、より美術的な仕事だったのかもしれない。

今回、展示されている加守田作品は 1960 年代のものから 1980 年作までの 20 年間における作品からたった 12 点(湯呑を除いて)、あるいは 12 点もあると言えるが、それらは見た者を感動させずにはおかない。今回、特に異彩を放つ作品がある。それは、1968(昭和 43)年秋に炆器作品と共に発表された銀陶である。加守田陶芸の魅力の一つはシャープな稜線や口作りの造形であるが、この年に発表された銀陶はいつもの加守田とは様相が違っていた。器体の厚さをそのまま露にしたかのような口作りや割高台をより大胆にしたかのような切込みを入れた底作り。特にこの時にみられる独特の特徴である。常人には考えもつかない造形、瞠目する底作り、銀彩の下地に施された彩色によって魅惑の光を放つ。この銀陶が僅か 10 点前後の寡作であることも私たちの目に触れる機会を少なくしている。この 1 点を見るだけでも本展を訪れる意味がある。出来ることなら自分の手元に置いて眺めていたいと思うのは、名品と接する感動を多くの参観者と共有しなければならぬ美術館人として恥じるべきかもしれないが、それが正直な気持ちでもある。

1967(昭和 42)年 2 月 28 日、東京の資生堂パーラー集会室において高村光太郎賞の選考委員会が開かれていた。日本橋高島屋において「加守田章二作陶展」が始まった初日のことである。美術評論家で選考員の今泉篤男らが推挙した加守田章二の作品を見てみようということになり、急遽高島屋の展覧会場から加守田作品が 10 点ほど選考会場へ運ばれた。そして、10 回目で終了となる高村光太郎賞の一人に加守田章二が選ばれた。高村光太郎賞規定の中に、造形とは彫刻、建築、造園、工芸、陶芸などを広く包括する立体造形を意味するものと説明されているが、陶芸では加守田が最初で最後の受賞者となったのだ。

(受賞者は)何らかの意味で人生とか人間の生き方、生命とかを追い求めるタイプの人達が多いというところ、これは高村さんその人が持っていた精神に近いと思います。

*-1 『天極をさす』高村光太郎記念会編 1969年、所収の座談会 高村光太郎賞の顛末 から伊藤信吉(詩人)の発言から。於:昭和43年9月22日 於神楽坂「との木」

(受賞者)各人が人間の生き方としてそれぞれ光太郎的だったということだね。

*-2 『天極をさす』高村光太郎記念会編 1969年、所収の座談会 高村光太郎賞の顛末 から北川太一の発言から。於:昭和43年9月22日 於神楽坂「との木」

高村光太郎賞受賞の翌年秋の高島屋における個展では、いわゆる炆器が出展された。実はこの時期の作品は加守田の作品変遷を語る時に極めて重要な意味がある。炆器は加守田陶芸の最高峰と評価される曲線彫文作品が生まれる序章となる土味をそのまま残した焼締作品の始まりであり、新たな世界が始まる熱気に溢れている時期なのだ。加守田は、伝統工芸展への出品取り止めや日本工芸会の正会員を辞して無所属となり、肩書や組織のしがらみを断ち、作陶の場を岩手県遠野の山里に移して周囲の雑音も断ち、虚心坦懐、陶芸に向かい合う道を歩んだ。

本稿の表題「天極をさす」は『高村光太郎賞記念作品集』のタイトルを使わせていただいた。加守田の高村光太郎賞は《灰釉鉢》を賞の対象としたが、初期の作品にはその作家の全ての要素が包括されると云われる。初期の作品をもってして加守田の本質を見抜いた今泉篤男をはじめとする高村光太郎賞選考委員たちの先見性には頭が下がる。今回展示されている加守田作品は、様々な造形や文様による変化はあっても、結局どの時代の作品も、加守田が目指す一極に向かう直線上に創られたものであることを雄弁に物語っている。奇しくも高村光太郎の詩句「いくら廻されても針は天極をさす」のごとく、加守田の思いは貫かれていたのだ。

益子陶芸美術館副館長