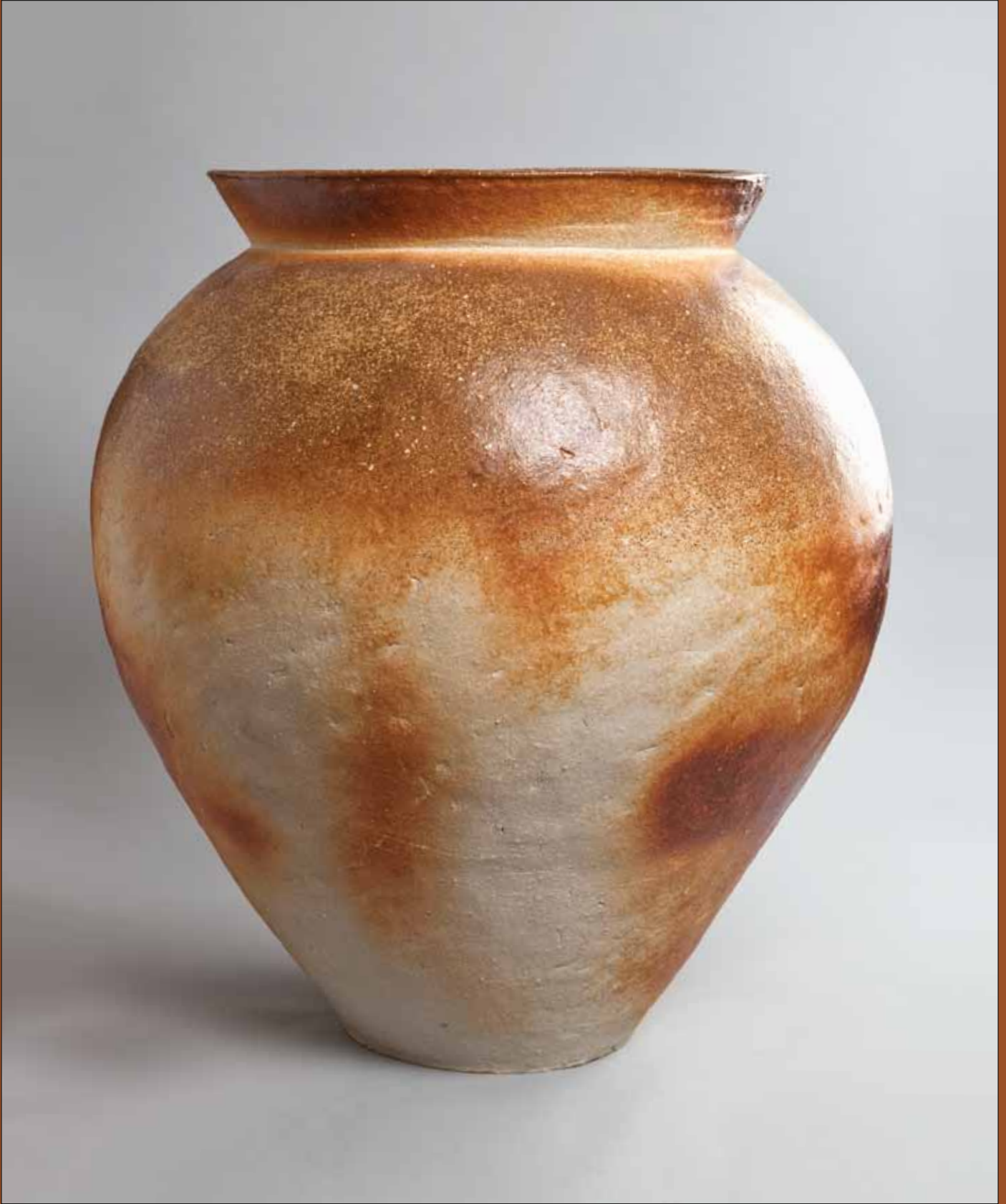


# UNWAVERING PURSUIT

*The Ceramic Art of Jan Kollwitz*



Pucker Gallery • Boston



ON THE COVER AND ABOVE:  
*Echizen otsubo* (Large jar in Echizen style)  
28 x 24 x 24"  
KJ84



*Ohaguro tsubo* (Small jar to hold tooth-blackening material)  
4.75 x 4.25 x 4.25"  
KJ75

*Ohaguro is a custom of dying one's teeth black using iron filings dissolved in vinegar. It was popular in Japan until the Meiji Era.*

## UNWAVERING PURSUIT

### *The Ceramic Art of Jan Kollwitz*

In German, JK stands for Japanese Ceramics (*Japanische Keramik*), as well as for Jan Kollwitz. His initials, which Kollwitz writes on the base of his pots, and prints on business card, exhibition invitations, and studio flyers, are reminiscent of a Japanese character. This points to the important influence of Japanese ceramics in his work. For Kollwitz, this does not mean European ceramics with a Japanese veneer but art/craft in accordance with Japanese precepts and function, following time-honored rules. His work is defined by the masterly command of these ideas rather than by individualism, serving the aesthetic of everyday life. Such an interpretation of one's own work differs uncompromisingly from the widespread view that ceramics is a discipline that should be realized as an autonomous art form. Kollwitz is unable to share such a view, as he has learned from his own family tradition the demands which art must fulfill: his great grandmother was Käthe Kollwitz, who placed her art — drawing, etching, and sculpture — at the service of humanity. No one who sees art as bound to such ideals can be satisfied with ceramics as decoration only, or as arts and crafts in the worst possible sense. Instead, they will choose an unassuming approach, which for all its modesty is more demanding. With his attention to a timeless and universal aesthetic, Kollwitz fulfills the humanistic purpose of

his art as was demanded by William Morris, realized by Bernard Leach, and is still axiomatic in Japan.

Kollwitz made no compromises when he decided to quit acting and take up ceramics at the age of 23. He studied with Horst Kerstan, who taught him to respect Japanese aesthetics. He learned Japanese and then travelled to Japan in 1986. There, he discovered a situation in flux. Traditional pottery centers still maintained their cultural heritage. "Ancient kilns" of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, especially Seto, Tamba, Bizen, Tokoname, and after a period of stagnation, Shigaraki, were preserved. Of the "new kilns" of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Hagi and Karatsu continued to flourish. Mashiko, which sprung from the fame and teachings of Hamada Shoji, challenged these centers with a new and uncommonly diverse range of products. Similarly, the regionally defined pots from "old" and "new" kilns had frequently become separated from their local roots. A younger generation had set up studios in other locations and dealt more freely with hereditary rules, sometimes finding altogether new, individual expressions or favoring sculptural ceramic art that follows its own guidelines. Echizen, which is the location Jan Kollwitz decided upon, is in fact one of the oldest Japanese ceramic centers. However, he found that the tradition of creating large, simple storage jars was largely extinct. The prefecture

administration undertook considerable efforts to revive and renew this heritage and established a museum with old pieces, some of which had been discovered in archaeological excavations. The administration gave assistance to young potters to help them set up their studios and commissioned the building of a kiln based on the ideas of the famous Seto master Kato Tokuro, which was available to local workshops.

On his arrival, Jan Kollwitz thus discovered a lively ceramics scene in a state of flux, but he also found workshops working in very different ways. He first studied with Nakamura Yukata, who together with his wife was dedicated to an abstract, symbolic approach to art. Though he respected this master, Kollwitz was in search of something else; he was not interested in non-functional art, and instead wanted to make vessels. He found support in Yamada Kazu. Yamada came from Tokoname, where his father was a respected potter and Yamada himself was a pupil of the great Kato Tokuro. His work clearly reveals Tokuro's influences in his use of red and white shino glazes and green and black oribe. But in spite of developing a personal friendship with Yamada, the young Kollwitz did not follow his teachings either. Instead, he found direction in the works from Shigaraki and Iga, which are typified by use of clay with quartz inclusions and surface decoration developed exclusively through wood firing.

Upon returning to Europe in 1988, Jan Kollwitz built an anagama kiln suited to this technique near a 13<sup>th</sup>-century Benedictine abbey in Cismar, Germany. The master kiln builder Watanabe Tatsuo from Mino, Japan, joined him in this effort. Kollwitz worked to prepare a clay body

suitable to his purposes by adding quartz sand, and opened his workshop in 1990. Soon, a series of annual exhibitions began, including a show at the Schleswig-Holsteinisches Landesmuseum near his studio. The potter has subsequently expanded his resources without fundamentally changing his aim. He has consistently refused to deviate from the canon of Japanese vessel forms, emphasizing his connection by using the Japanese terms such as *hanaire* for a vase, *oke* for a water jar, *kame* for a storage jar, and *suiban* for a rectangular *ikebana* dish. He believes that even though his vessels may be made for the specific Japanese purpose of the tea ceremony, they can also be useful for everyday life within Western culture as well. For vases, bowls, and lidded jars, among other forms, a functional purpose can be found anywhere — especially among individuals looking to give form to their lives beyond convention. Many have supported his uncompromising approach, and Kollwitz has successfully established a reputation within Germany and beyond.

At first glance, it may appear that there has been little evident development in the artist's work over the past 25 years. A closer inspection reveals that Kollwitz has managed to obtain new, subtle nuances of color from the firing. Colors, ranging from a warm pale tan through red-brown to black and purple-grey, have become richer, ash deposits have become thicker, and seemingly random distortions have become more natural. Clearly, Kollwitz is not seeking sensation or superficial effect, nor easily achieved results, nor variety and individuality. Instead, he is interested in a gradual improvement in quality, in achieving artistic substance through an unwavering command of craft skills



*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
2.5 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
KJ123

*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
2.5 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
KJ121

*Sara* (Small dish)  
1.5 x 4.25 x 4.25"  
KJ117



Mizusashi (Water container)  
8 x 8.5 x 8.5"  
KJ68

in accordance with a conviction put forward in Goethe's *Maxims and Reflections*, where he stated that an able pigment grinder can sometimes become an outstanding painter.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Japanese ceramics became the most important model for European ceramics. Artists endeavoring to emulate this work did not, however, have a command of the technology or knowledge to do so successfully. They imitated on a superficial level the celadons, the rice straw ash glazes, and the gold lacquer repairs. For example, copper oxide was sometimes added to other ingredients to obtain a glaze resembling the grey-green of celadon in an oxidation firing. Jan Kollwitz decided upon a diametrically opposed interpretation of Japanese models, faithfully adopting their techniques and finding his direction through form and function. In an era that focuses exclusively on individuality and spurns "learning by doing the same," this attitude now appears outmoded, though it was also prevalent for centuries in Europe, once making a sense of cultural identity possible in folk art regardless of changes in society. Now, under the influence of globalization, an insistence on cultural

resources spans great distances. Whatever the final verdict on this may be, one thing is beyond doubt: if our sense of individualism does not preserve the means with which it may express itself, if art does not have a command of its basic skills in the widest sense, it relinquishes its own foundations. Jan Kollwitz offers resistance to this in convincing fashion, thus contributing to the preservation of resources that others can build upon.

And, finally, an observation on a paradox: whilst the younger generation of artists in Japan increasingly devotes itself to Western individualism, a contemporary artist in Germany pursues an antithetical concept. It will be worthwhile to observe how this situation develops.

—HEINZ SPIELMANN—

*Prof. Dr. Heinz Spielmann was for many years the director of the Landesmuseum at Schloss Gottorf in Schleswig and was the founding director of the Bucerius Kunst Forum in Hamburg. This article is reprinted in translation with the author's permission from New Ceramics: The European Ceramics Magazine, November/December 2008 edition.*



*Iga hanaire* (Flower vase for tea ceremony in Iga style)  
8 x 4 x 4"  
KJ87



*Iga hanaire* (Flower vase for tea ceremony in Iga style)  
12 x 5.5 x 5.5"  
KJ106



*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
2.5 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
KJ124

*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
2.75 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
KJ125

*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
2.5 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
KJ120



*Tsubo* (Jar)  
9 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ89



*Kake-hanaike* (Hanging flower vase)  
7.5 x 3 x 3"  
KJ71



*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.25 x 6"  
KJ83

*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ79



*Shiho sara* (Rectangular platter)  
1.5 x 10 x 5.25"  
KJ130



*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.5 x 6.25"  
KJ78

*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ82

*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ76





*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6 x 6"  
KJ80

*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.75 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ81

*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ77



*Hanaike* (Vase for flower arrangement in tea room)  
9.5 x 4.5 x 4.5"  
KJ92



*Hanaike* (Vase for flower arrangement in tea room)  
8.75 x 4.75 x 4.5"  
KJ93



*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
3.5 x 3.75 x 3.5"  
KJ129

*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
3.5 x 3.5 x 3.25"  
KJ128

*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
3.5 x 3.25 x 3.5"  
KJ127



*Sara* (Square plate)  
1.5 x 10.25 x 10.25"  
KJ109



*Tsubo* (Jar)  
8.5 x 5.75 x 5.5"  
KJ88



*Kake-hanaike* (Hanging flower vase)  
7.5 x 3 x 3"  
KJ72



*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
3.75 x 3.5 x 3.5"  
KJ126

*Yunomi* (Tea cup)  
3.75 x 3.5 x 3.75"  
KJ98

*Iga hanaire* (Flower vase for  
tea ceremony in Iga style)  
12 x 6 x 5.5"  
KJ94



*Kabin* (Square vase)  
5.5 x 4 x 4"  
KJ115



*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.75 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ133

*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ132

*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ134



*Sara* (Plate)  
2.25 x 18 x 18"  
KJ70



*Shiho sara* (Rectangular platter)  
1.75 x 10 x 5.25"  
KJ139

*Shiho sara* (Rectangular platter)  
1.25 x 10 x 5.5"  
KJ138



*Kyozutsu* (Sutra scroll container)  
7.5 x 6 x 6"  
KJ91

*Oke* (Water-holding vessel for tea ceremony)  
9 x 7.75 x 8"  
KJ97

*Kyozutsu* (Sutra scroll container)  
7.5 x 6 x 6"  
KJ90



*Sara* (Small dish)  
1.5 x 4.25 x 4.25"  
KJ117

*Sara* (Small dish)  
1.25 x 4.5 x 4.25"  
KJ119

*Sara* (Small dish)  
1.5 x 4.25 x 4.25"  
KJ118



*Iga hanaire* (Flower vase for tea ceremony in Iga style)  
11 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ112



*Iga hanaire* (Flower vase for tea ceremony in Iga style)  
11.5 x 5.5 x 5.75"  
KJ107



*Ohaguro tsubo* (Small jar to hold tooth-blackening material)  
4.5 x 3.75 x 4"  
KJ104



*Chawan* (Tea bowl), white feldspathic glaze with  
iron underglaze brushwork  
3.75 x 5 x 5"  
KJ74



*Chawan, hikidashi-guro* (Tea bowl, pulled-out  
black glaze)  
3.5 x 4.5 x 4.5"  
KJ73



*Hanaire* (Vase), Jomon style  
12 x 6 x 6.25"  
KJ111





*Shiho sara* (Rectangular platter)  
1.5 x 10 x 5.25"  
KJ140

*Shiho sara* (Rectangular platter)  
1.75 x 10 x 5.25"  
KJ137



*Mizusashi* (Water container)  
8.25 x 7.5 x 7.5"  
KJ100



*Kake-hanaike* (Hanging flower vase)  
7.5 x 3.25 x 3"  
KJ116



*Shiho sara* (Rectangular platter)  
1.75 x 22.25 x 15.75"  
KJ110



*Kabin* (Square vase)  
5.25 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
KJ114



*Kabin* (Square vase)  
5.5 x 4 x 4"  
KJ113

Kyozutsu (Sutra scroll container)  
11 x 8.25 x 8"  
KJ105



Yunomi (Tea cup)  
2.5 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
KJ122

Sara (Small dish)  
1.5 x 4.25 x 4.25"  
KJ118

## Biography of Jan Kollwitz

### Personal

- 1960 Born in Berlin, Germany
- 1983–1985 Studied with Horst Kerstan, Kandern, Germany
- 1986–1987 Studied with Yutaka Nakamura, Echizen, Japan
- 1987–Present Exchange with Kazu Yamada, Echizen, Japan
- 1988 Construction of wood-fired anagama by Tatsuo Watanabe in Cismar, Germany
- 1988 Workshop established in Cismar, Germany
- 1990–Present Exhibitions in Germany and abroad
- 2011 Fellowship at Villa Massimo, Rome, Italy
- 2012 Recipient of the Prefectural Cultural Award, “Kulturpreis Ostholstein”

### Public Collections

- Echizen Togeikan Museum, Echizen, Japan
- Grassi Museum, Leipzig, Germany
- Hällisch-Fränkisches Museum, Schwäbisch Hall, Germany
- Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
- Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Berlin, Germany
- Keramik Museum, Berlin, Germany
- Keramion Frechen, Frechen, Germany
- Kreissparkasse Köln, Cologne, Germany
- Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, Coburg, Germany
- Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, Germany
- Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, Germany
- Schleswig-Holsteinisches Landesmuseum Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig, Germany
- Sparkasse Ostholstein, Eutin, Germany
- Sparkassenstiftung Schleswig-Holstein, Kiel, Germany
- Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, California, USA



Mizusashi  
(Water container)  
8.5 x 7.5 x 7.75"  
KJ99



*Mizusashi* (Water container)  
8 x 8.25 x 6.75"  
KJ96

*Mizusashi* (Water container)  
7.75 x 7 x 7.25"  
KJ95

### *Selected Solo Exhibitions*

- |      |   |      |   |
|------|---|------|---|
| 2014 | Museum Moderner Kunst-Stiftung Wörlen, Passau, Germany<br>Pucker Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts, USA<br>Schloss Reinbek, Hamburg, Germany | 2002 | Museum im Schloss Bad Pyrmont, Germany<br>Zen-art Galerie Hennig, Hamburg, Germany  |
| 2013 | Galerie Bernau, Bernau, Germany<br>Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Berlin, Germany   | 2001 | Ostholstein-Museum, Eutin, Germany<br>EKO-Haus der japanischen Kultur, Düsseldorf, Germany<br>Zen-art, Galerie Hennig, Hamburg, Germany |
| 2012 | Pucker Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts, USA<br>Galerie Kirbach, Düsseldorf, Germany<br>Museum Eckernförde, Germany                         | 2000 | Landhaus Nösse, Sylt, Germany   |
| 2011 | Kunsthandel Klefisch, Cologne, Germany<br>Praxisstipendium Villa Massimo, Rome, Italy   | 1999 | Galerie Faita, Hamelin, Germany<br>Emslandmuseum Schloss Clemenswerth, Sögel, Germany   |
| 2010 | Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Cologne, Germany<br>Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Berlin, Germany  | 1998 | Galerie Objekta, Kreuzlingen, Switzerland<br>Rosenthal Studio-Haus-Galerie, Hamburg, Germany<br>Studio Pels-Leusden, Berlin, Germany    |
| 2009 | Künstlermuseum Heikendorf, Germany  | 1997 | Galerie Rosenhauer, Göttingen, Germany<br>Galerie beim Roten Turm, Sommerhausen, Germany  |
| 2008 | Ostholstein-Museum, Eutin, Germany<br>Museum Kellinghusen, Germany  | 1996 | Galerie Lommel, Leverkusen, Germany<br>Loes & Reinier, Deventer, Netherlands  |
| 2007 | Käthe Kollwitz Haus, Moritzburg, Germany<br>Goethe-Institut, Hamburg, Germany<br>Studio Pels-Leusden, Berlin, Germany                     | 1995 | Zen-Galerie, Hamburg, Germany   |
| 2005 | Museum Kellinghusen, Germany<br>Kunstraum-B, Kiel, Germany<br>Töpfermuseum, Duingen, Germany  | 1994 | Galerie Charlotte Hennig, Darmstadt, Germany<br>Keramikmuseum der Stadt Frechen, Germany  |
| 2003 | Studio Pels-Leusden, Berlin, Germany<br>Rosenthal Studio-Haus Galerie, Hamburg, Germany   | 1993 | Schleswig-Holsteinisches Landesmuseum, Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig, Germany<br>Kloster Cismar, Germany                                   |
|      |   | 1992 | Lauenburgischer Kunstverein, Büchen, Germany  |
|      |   | 1991 | Galerie Theis, Berlin, Germany  |



### *Artist Statement by* Jan Kollwitz

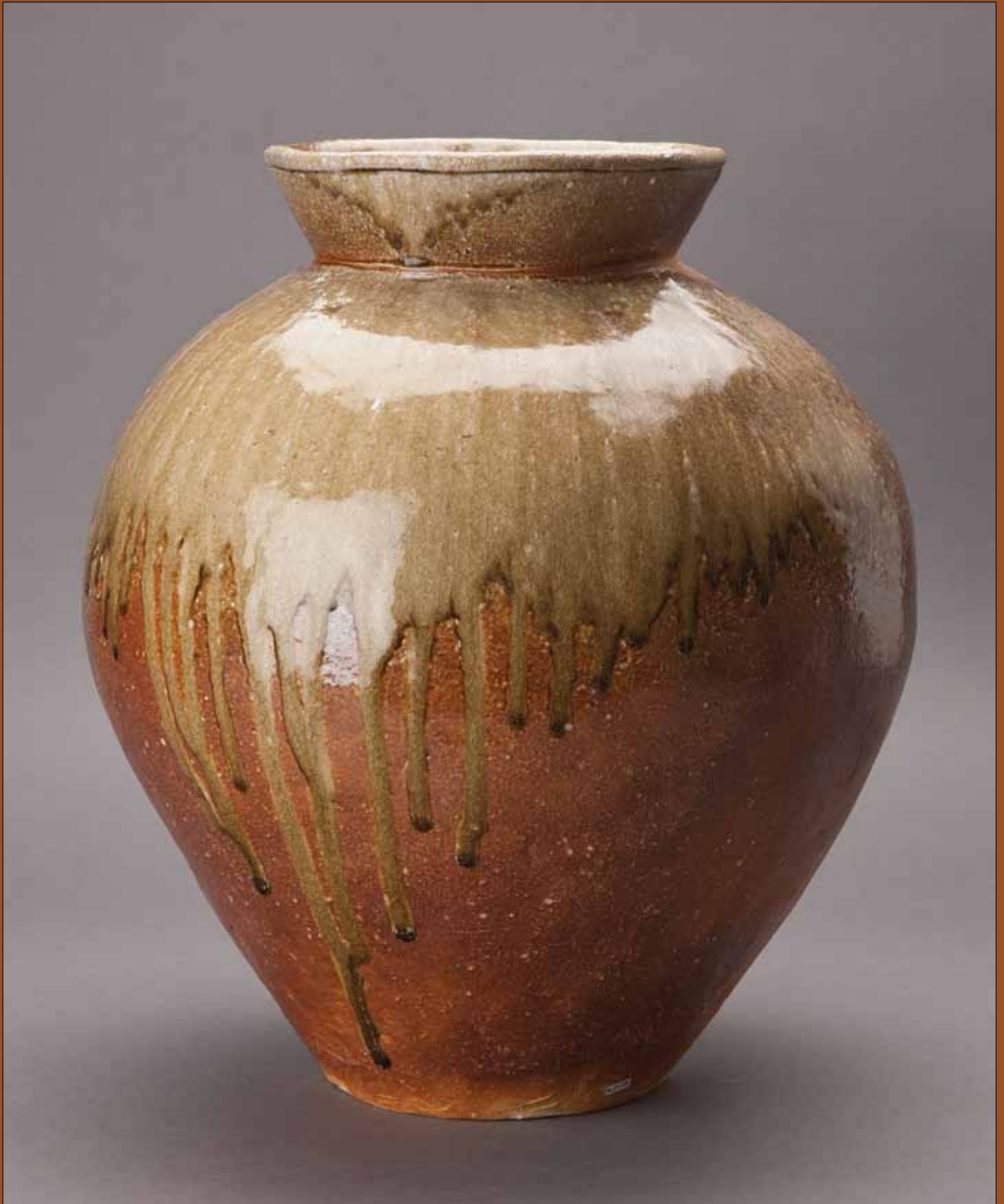
**T**he firing process is, fundamentally, something I set in motion, something I attend to, but which I can never really be in command of. To set aflame this awesome fire means also to face a danger. You unleash an elemental force that is exceptionally powerful. I find confidence in the fact that I do things just as I practiced as an apprentice in Japan.

In that four-day process, which demands the utmost from you physically, it is important to remain in an alert and mindful state. At the same time, you must be careful not to be swept away by a wave of euphoria, or to succumb to exasperation, but instead to trust the kiln and handle each situation with calm consideration. On one hand, it is impossible to force your will upon anything. On the other hand, it is imperative to develop a keen sense of the processes taking place in the kiln, using the full energy and

composure you have at your disposal. Ideally, you behave in a way that allows whatever is taking shape to be disturbed as little as possible.

Sealing the kiln also means saying goodbye. At that moment, I am very aware that the fire will break as many as a third of the pieces I attempt. The pieces which survive the fire intact have achieved independence from me — such a complete life of their own — that I sometimes ask myself if it is I who really made them.

The first enemy in the creation of tea ceramics is your own good intentions. The second enemy is the desire to do something exceptional. The more I am able to keep my own personality — my ego with its desires, feelings, annoyances, and worries — outside of the work, the more space there is for something, from other worlds, to insert itself into the pottery.



*Echizen otsubo* (Large jar in Echizen style)  
17.75 x 15 x 15"  
KJ108

*Credits:*

**Design:** Leslie Anne Feagley

**Editors:** Destiny M. Barletta and Tess Mattern

**Photography:** John Davenport



*Ohaguro tsubo* (Small jar to hold tooth-blackening material)  
4.75 x 4 x 3.75"  
KJ103

*Ohaguro tsubo* (Small jar to hold tooth-blackening material)  
4.75 x 4 x 4"  
KJ101

*Ohaguro tsubo* (Small jar to hold tooth-blackening material)  
4.25 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
KJ102

**PUCKER  
GALLERY**

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**GALLERY HOURS**

Monday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM  
Sunday 10:30 AM to 5:00 PM

We offer one free hour of validated parking at the 200 Newbury Street Garage. The garage driving entrance is located on Exeter Street between Newbury and Boylston Streets. The nearest MBTA stop is Copley Station on the Green Line.

Pucker Gallery is a member of the Boston Art Dealers Association and the New England Appraisers Association.

# UNWAVERING PURSUIT

*The Ceramic Art of Jan Kollwitz*

**DATES:**

*22 November 2014 through 4 January 2015*

**OPENING RECEPTION:**

*22 November 2014, 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM*

*The public is invited to attend. The artist will be present.*



*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.25 x 6.25"  
KJ131

*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.75 x 6.25 x 6.5"  
KJ136

*Yama-jawan* (Rice bowl)  
2.5 x 6.25 x 6"  
KJ135