

Press Release

Alison Bradley Projects is pleased to announce our upcoming exhibition, *Works in Clay: Eiji Uematsu*, featuring sixteen works by **Eiji Uematsu** in his first-ever New York exhibition.

Eiji Uematsu (b. Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, 1949) works in clay, actively evading categorization as artist or ceramicist. Rather, he approaches the medium as an exploration, delving into both the tactile and immaterial possibilities of the clay. In his own words, Uematsu does not see his ceramic practice as producing new forms, but as drawing out the shapes that have already existed in the soil from its beginning, and without the use of glazing.

Uematsu began experimenting with clay as a student in Tokyo in the early 1970s, initially engaged in painting and lithography before being taken by the materiality and possibilities of clay work. Like the Mono-ha (School of Things) artists of his generation, Uematsu works within conceptual frameworks that locate works of art not in their objective, material form, but in the immaterial structures through which they reveal themselves: in affective sensations arising from charged “encounters,” revealing the essential nature of things. His era’s artists endeavored to liberate work from intentions, methods, or concepts through intimate contact with the world, or *shigusa*: an interactive act that dissolves the distinctions between subject and object. In rethinking how we conceive of objects, or “things” themselves, Uematsu has resisted labeling himself, even as an artist, throughout his career—his only commitment being to the clay itself.

Even without such labels, Uematsu pays homage to the history of his chosen medium through form and texture, at times resonant of Jōmon and Haniwa works. In 1975, Uematsu relocated to Shigaraki, Shiga Prefecture—known for its long ceramics tradition and high-quality local clay—starting his position at a regional ceramic factory, and eventually made his home and studio in Iga, Mie Prefecture. By rooting himself in regional Japanese ceramic traditions, Uematsu mastered technique, using them as a springboard for minimal and abstract expression. As such, the interaction between the artist’s hand and the clay appears through his playful and experimental forms.

The works in this exhibition present the artist’s journey through the last fifteen years. The earlier works showcased, rendered in the red clays emblematic of the Shigaraki region, nod to tradition in order to depart from it in favor of minimalist form that actively resists function. They reference nature while simultaneously resisting it, creating a sense of unease in making clear the interventions of the artist’s hand. The minimalism of form prevails through the work that follows, becoming a vehicle for experiments with surface treatment.

Uematsu's recent works synthesize these investigations into the material and poetic possibilities of clay. They become representations of the various relationships that inspire his work and process: between the clay and the body, the body and nature, and the clay and the earth itself. Through elegant forms and textured surfaces, Uematsu creates room for whimsy, setting aside ceramic conventions in order to create vessels of expression for human experience manifested through clay. **Alison Bradley Projects** is delighted to present this progression of enigmatic, contemplative, and joyful work in this exhibition.

Each week, the exhibition will feature a unique floral arrangement by Ikebana artist **Kan Asakura**, to ground the show in the natural world and to honor the wildness from where Uematsu works.

Biography

Eiji Uematsu (b. Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, 1949) is a ceramic artist whose current practice, since the late 1970s, has been centered out of his home and studio in Iga, Mie Prefecture, Japan. In the 1980s, Uematsu began showing work throughout Japan, garnering a reputation as an esteemed contemporary artist and ceramicist. He has had solo exhibitions at the Kyoto City University of Art, Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, the Museum of Ceramic Art, Hyogo, as well as numerous other galleries and institutions.