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Works in Clay: Eiji Uematsu, 2023

October 12, 2023 in Ceramic art



Two persons, 2023



starry sky, 2023



water & clay, 2023



ash, 2023



Fluttering its Wings, 2011



Moon Jumping Rope, 2011



Stars in the Garden, 2020



Air, 2020



Clay Flower, 2012



fresh green, 2023



hanging flower vase, 2023



morning moon, 2023



Sky, 2020



smile, 2023

Works in Clay: Eiji Uematsu, 2023

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

Over the course of his five-decade long career, Eiji Uematsu has produced exceptional ceramic work with a deep sensitivity to the material and ontological qualities of clay, as well as a commitment to keen observation of the natural world. He first began experimenting with clay as a student in the early 1970s, taken by the materiality and possibilities of the medium. In 1975, Uematsu moved to Shigaraki, in the Shiga Prefecture of Japan, an important historical center of Shigaraki-ware ceramic production, later settling in his current home in Iga, Mie Prefecture, one of richest clay-mining deposits in Japan due to its location on the clay bed of the prehistoric Lake Biwa. In the artist's own words, he frequently describes his process as not creating new forms, but drawing out shapes that have already existed in the earth from its beginning.

Central to Uematsu's practice is his profound dedication to highlighting the material characteristics of clay itself: rather than taking the ornamental approach of imposing onto the clay as a vehicle for personal expression, Uematsu's works center the highly-textured, visual variety of his clay composites, free of glaze. Their wide range of colors derive purely from thoughtful mixtures of clay and experimental variations in firing. Some of the artist's forms evoke shapes resonant of earlier ceramics, such as those of the Jōmon or Haniwa periods, while others revel in the intrinsic materiality which he brings forward. The works on display exemplify Uematsu's characteristic sense of playfulness, humor, and spontaneity, as well as the emotional depth and sense of memory that are core to his artistic lexicon.

Uematsu's departure from popular ceramic frameworks derives from his firm rootedness in things experienced by and within the body. The work Stars in the Garden (2020), for example, sources its repeated spherical forms from Uematsu's early childhood memories, rolling mud balls in the palms of his hands. Experiments in clay-building demonstrate Uematsu's uninhibited relationship to earthen materials, for example, in the work Clay Flower (2012) in which the artist threw repeated lumps of clay slip onto the floor and fired the resulting form. Equally crucial to Uematsu's practice is his approach to the element of fire, as both a collaborator and a source of creativity. This relationship is illustrated by Uematsu's use of powdered clay on the surface of the work Sky (2020), allowing the heat of the kiln to leave dramatic and unusual cracks in its surface: lines drawn by flame. Both his experimental production and expressive capacity to breathe the world around him into the essential dialogue between clay and the artist's hand has allowed his work to challenge traditional notions and forms of ceramics, and transcend categories of fine art and clay work.



The works in this exhibition present the artist's journey through the last fifteen years, standing as totems to the elemental phenomena that enliven our natural world—from the sky, to the moon, to the stars, to fresh green leaves, to human life itself. Uematsu's clay works seek to reveal fundamental qualities and textures of the world around us, reorienting our sensibilities to the geological and poetic rhythms of passing time, and declaring our place among them. Alison Bradley Projects is delighted to present this progression of enigmatic, contemplative, and joyful work in this exhibition.

Captions

Object Images

- Eiji Uematsu, Two persons, 2023, Clay, 4 7/8 x 4 1/8 x 2 1/2 in 12.5 x 10.5 x 6.5 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, starry sky, 2023, Clay, 4 x 4 1/8 x 3 1/2 in 10 x 10.5 x 9 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, water & clay, 2023 Clay 5 7/8 x 4 3/4 x 4 3/4 in 15 x 12 x 12 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, ash, 2023, Clay, 11 5/8 x 11 x 2 in 29.5 x 28 x 5 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, Fluttering its Wings, 2011, Clay, 5 1/4 x 7 7/8 in 13.5 x 38 x 20 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, Moon Jumping Rope, 2011, Clay, 8 1/4 x 7 7/8 in 21 x 20 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, Stars in the Garden, 2020, Clay, 9 3/4 x 7 3/8 x 7 3/8 in 24.7 x 18.7 x 18.7 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, Air, 2020, Clay, 13 3/4 x 10 3/8 x 1 1/8 in 35 x 26.3 x 3 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, Clay Flower, 2012, Clay, 19 3/4 x 14 1/8 x 1 5/8 in 50 x 36 x 4 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, fresh green, 2023, Clay, 11 3/4 x 7 7/8 x 1 3/8 in © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, hanging flower vase, 2023, Clay, 12 5/8 x 1 in 32 x 2.5 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, morning moon, 2023, Clay, 18 1/4 x 12 5/8 x 1 in 46.5 x 32 x 2.5 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, Sky, 2020, Clay, 28 3/4 x 15 1/8 x 1 1/8 in 73 x 38.5 x 3 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction
Eiji Uematsu, smile, 2023, Clay, 5 7/8 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2 in 15 x 11.5 x 11.5 cm © Sugimoto Reproduction

Installation Images

Works in Clay: Eiji Uematsu, gallery installation view, photo © Dario Lasagni

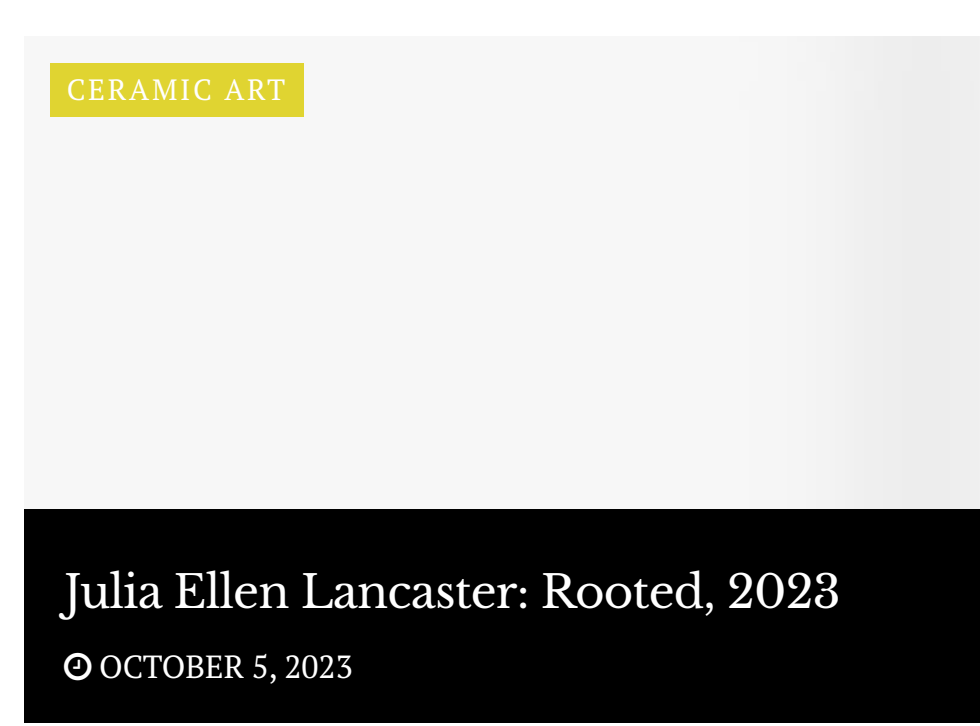
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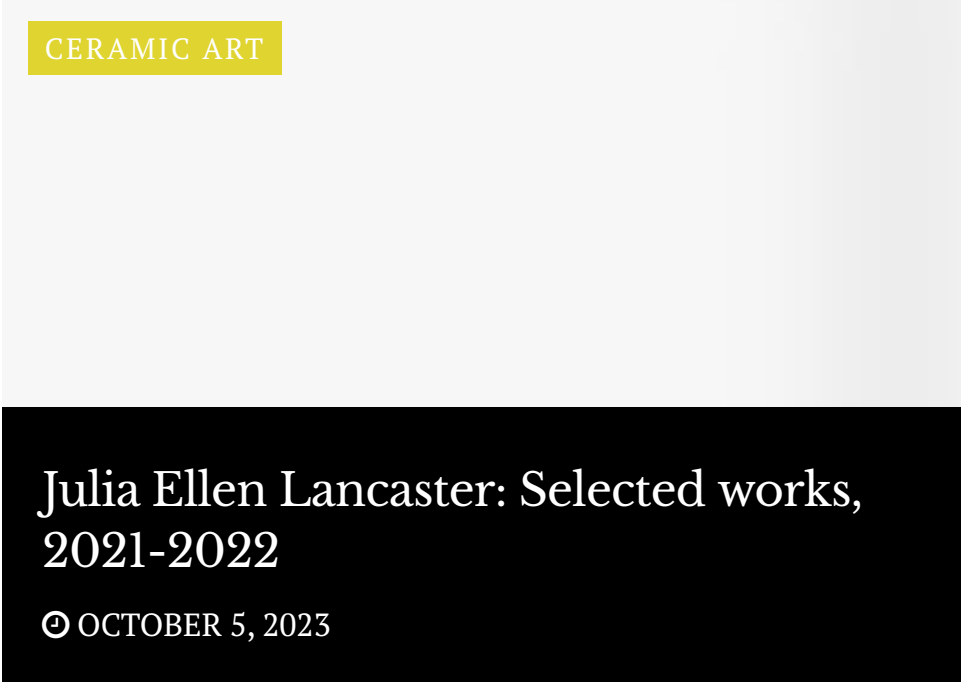
HyangJong Oh: Selected works, 2012-2021

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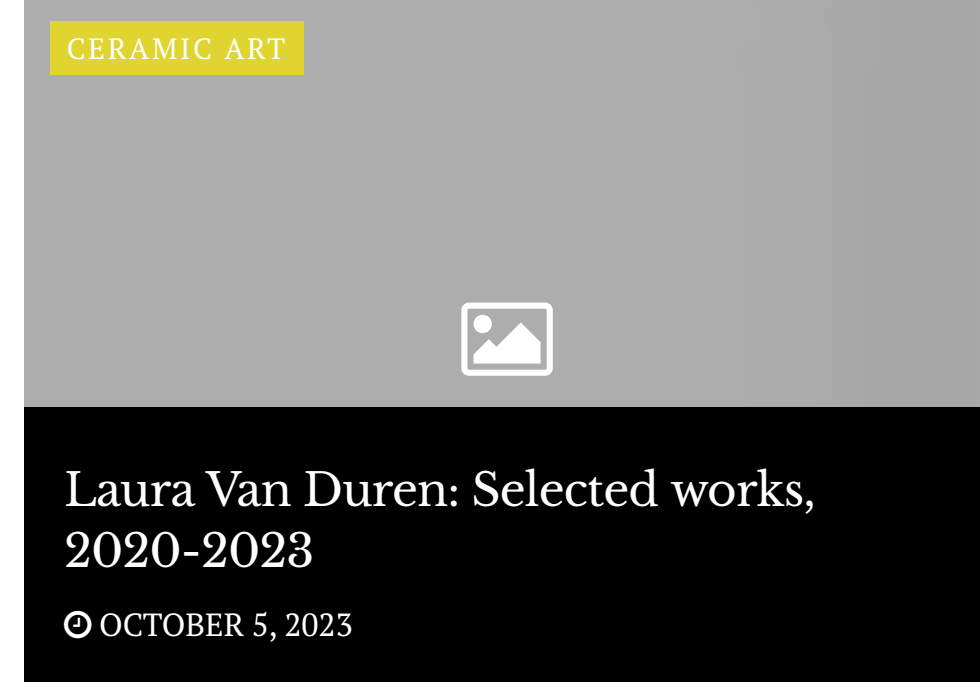
Julia Ellen Lancaster: Rooted, 2023

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Julia Ellen Lancaster: Selected works, 2021-2022

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Laura Van Duren: Selected works, 2020-2023

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