



## Clay

I feel clay. I see clay.  
Through these processes, wonderful things become visible.  
Mountains and rivers.  
Rainy days, sunny days, seasons changing, flowers blooming.  
Leaves blown by the wind and changing color in the fall.  
In the heat of summer, in the cold of winter, below our feet lies clay.  
Imprinted in the clay is the memory of all that has been.

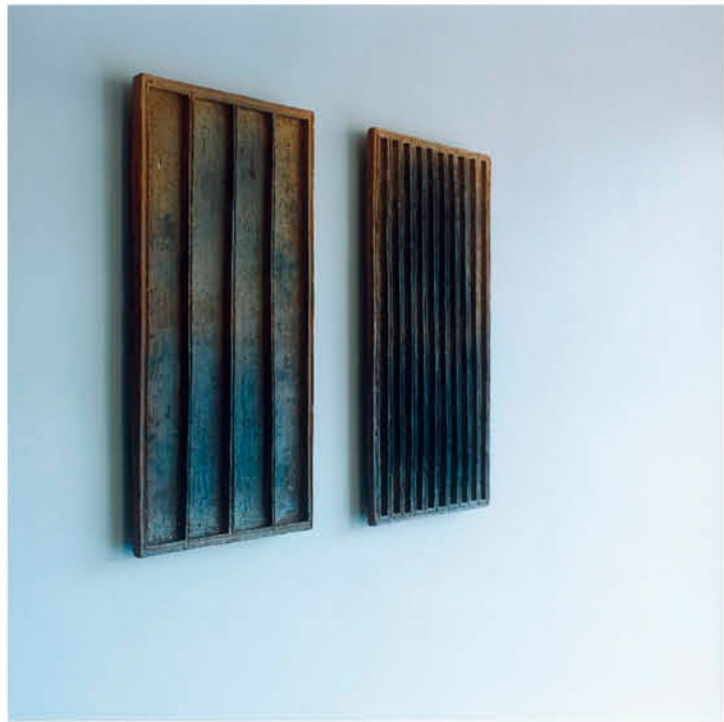
Eiji Uematsu













Eiji Uematsu describes his practice as involving, prior to any sort of creative expression, a reckoning with the clay itself. It is an internal process, not of creating something based on a certain theme, but of feeling something when he touches clay dug out of the soil – the most primordial material for all terrestrial life forms – tapping wellsprings of creativity in what he finds there, and forging a link between the conscious and the unconscious. Uematsu's work has developed through a primal and intuitive approach that transcends the existing frameworks and methodologies of ceramics or contemporary art.

For example, his tea bowls and flower vases have distinctive textures and modeling that give them an imposing presence as objects, transcending their utility as vessels. He has also produced numerous sculptural objects that have the external characteristics of vessels, but are not practically usable as such. Uematsu has embraced the natural cracking and warping that the mainstream ceramics world avoids, and exhibited diverse works including sculptures with the rough textures of earth and gravel, large-scale installations incorporating fired pottery fragments and raw clay, and interactive works in which the audience participates.

These seemingly disparate works share Uematsu's fundamentally unchanging process of giving shape to what he senses in the clay, and one gets the impression that each work naturally emerged in the form in which it did. Uematsu has said that he "tries not to overdo things," and evidently sees a deliberate approach to creative expression based on theory and technique as narrowing down the rich expressive possibilities of clay itself. By enjoying and embracing randomness born out of a profound communion with nature, grappling with the clay and hardening it in fire, he can create truly free and original works that are "gifts from nature."

Uematsu has been exhibiting frequently since the 1980s at numerous galleries and museums both in Japan and overseas. His work is highly acclaimed across genre boundaries, and was exhibited in the 1985 exhibition *'85 Hinuma: Clay Landscape*, along with many prominent contemporary artists including members of the Mono-ha school, and in the 1986 *Clay: Image and Form 1981–1985*, featuring Japan's most prominent ceramicists. In more recent years he has held a solo exhibition at Kyoto City University of Arts Art Gallery @KCUA and been featured in a group show at the Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art.

From small clay forms to pieces taking up entire walls, all of Uematsu's works convey the artist's singular perspective and emotive force. While highly unique, they possess a primal, nostalgic beauty that is universal.

#### Eiji Uematsu

Born 1949 in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, Uematsu began creating reliefs in 1972 to gain appreciation of different soil qualities before starting to fire earthenware ceramics in Tokyo. In 1975, he moved to Shigaraki, Shiga Prefecture, to start working at a pottery factory while continuing the independent production of his own works. In 1982, he moved to the Marubashira district of Iga, Mie Prefecture, where he built a kiln fueled by firewood together with kerosene. It expanded the scope of his practice along with pit-fired pottery (noyaki). In 1996, he was invited to produce his works at the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park. His works have been widely exhibited in a number of solo and group shows since the 1980s in both the museums and the galleries.

- 1, 2 *Karuta* 82x13x1.5cm 1986
- 4, 5 *Wind Direction* 70x40x20cm 1995
- 6 (top), 7 *Dryness of the Earth* 51x22x23.5cm 1991
- 6 (bottom) *Intersecting Time* 14.5x35.5x47cm 1996
- 8 *From a Single Grain* 78x21.5x21.5cm 1996
- 9 *Shape that Supports* 30.1x56.5x14cm 1995
- 10 (top) *The Tsuchigami Game I* 20x20x18cm 1992
- 10 (bottom) *The Tsuchigami Game II* 22.8x22.6x22.6cm 1992
- 11 *The Tsuchigami Game V* 17x34x34cm 1992
- 12 (top) *Movement of Soil* 47x31.5x5cm pre 2000
- 12 (bottom) *Expansion from the Wall I, II* 66.5x34x2 (Left), 68.5x34x2cm (Right) 1999
- 13 *Festival* 53x65x2cm 1986
- 15 *Harvest* 22x43x43cm 1996
- 16 *Doro-buné* 10x96x22.5cm 1996

#### Eiji Uematsu

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