

Suzuki Osamu (1934–)

Suzuki Osamu is a leading potter working in Shino-style ceramics. In 1994, he was designated a Living National Treasure and tasked with promoting the art form.

Suzuki was born in the nearby city of Toki, where he first learned pottery-making and glazing techniques under his father, an expert in ceramic glazes. Suzuki has a particular interest in Shino ware, which he began producing in his twenties. He went on to be selected for the prestigious Japan Traditional Crafts Exhibition, as well as a host of other awards. Suzuki moved to Tajimi in 1964 for work, and two years later he founded his own kiln, where he is still actively creating new ceramic pieces.

Though Suzuki's works are informed by the traditional methods and aesthetics of Shino ware, they have a distinctly modern sensibility. The tea bowl on display here shows the boldly contrasting patches of scarlet clay and white feldspar glaze for which Suzuki is known. After throwing a bowl on his potter's wheel, he shapes the sides with a spatula to create a uniquely distorted, uneven form.

Although Suzuki produces ceramics in traditional styles, he utilizes modern technologies. Since the 1960s, he has been using a gas kiln rather than a wood-burning kiln to achieve a greater degree of control and consistency when firing. In order to adapt traditional Shino techniques to a gas kiln, Suzuki conducted extensive clay and glazing tests and made customized adjustments to his kiln.