

Katō Takuo (1917–2005)

Katō Takuo was the sixth-generation head of Kōbeigama, a Tajimi kiln founded in 1804. His rediscovery of *sansai*, or “three-color,” glazing techniques earned him the designation of Living National Treasure in 1995.

Takuo had a deep interest in Persian ceramics that led him to study other low-temperature glazes, such as those used in lusterware. Much of the knowledge of ancient Persian ceramics had been lost to time and human migration, but Takuo managed to re-create these glazes through exhaustive research and experimentation. He produced many pieces that fuse Persian and Japanese aesthetics and techniques.

Takuo’s success in reverse-engineering historical styles brought him to the attention of the Imperial Household Agency. The repository of imperial treasures at Shōsō-in, in Nara, contains eighth-century Japanese *sansai* ceramic works, but the secrets behind their creation had been lost to time. The agency commissioned Takuo to re-create these *sansai* glazing techniques, a project that ultimately required nine years of painstaking research.

The vase displayed here has the clear, bright green and orange-over-milky-white of ancient Japanese *sansai*, but its studded form is much more contemporary. This combination of old and new epitomizes Takuo’s unique style.