

**Takuo Katō (1917–2005)**

Sixth-generation head Takuo Katō is perhaps the most famous potter from Kobeigama kiln. In 1995, he was designated a Living National Treasure in recognition of his rediscovery of *sansai*, or “three-color,” glazing techniques.

Takuo had a deep interest in the low-temperature glazes used in ancient Persian ceramics, such as those of iridescent lusterware, and the deep blue color called “Persian blue” that is closely associated with southwestern Asia. He traveled abroad extensively to conduct this research, including to Iran and Iraq. Upon returning to Japan, he managed to recreate many Persian glazes through trial and error, and he fused these techniques with Japanese elements, such as rough forms and negative space.

Takuo Katō’s success in reverse engineering historical styles brought him to the attention of the Imperial Household Agency. The collection of the Shōsō-in imperial treasure house in Nara includes eighth-century Japanese *sansai* ceramics, but the methods used to create them had been lost. In 1980, the agency commissioned Takuo to recreate the *sansai* glazing techniques, and after nine years of painstaking research, he was successful. Up until his death at the age of 87, Takuo continued to produce striking works that combined the deep, rich colors of Persia with the forms and imagery of Japanese art.