

## ***Saiyū* Glazing**

*Saiyū* is a modern glazing technique invented by ceramicist Tokuda Yasokichi III (1933–2009) and characterized by vividly colored glazes that fuse to create fine gradations. It was designated an Important Intangible Cultural Heritage in 1997.

Tokuda Yasokichi III was born in Komatsu, Ishikawa Prefecture, to a famed Kutani ceramics family headed by his grandfather Tokuda Yasokichi I (1873–1956). Yasokichi I is known for his skilled use of overglaze enamels and for reengineering the glazes used in seventeenth-century *ko-kutani* pottery. He also created many original colors. Yasokichi III showed a similar proficiency with glazes and was selected to appear in the prestigious Japan Fine Arts Exhibition for the first time at just 22 years of age.

Yasokichi III was particularly interested in the “blue” (*aote*) overglaze style of *ko-kutani*. This style is distinguished by its avoidance of the color red in favor of deep green, yellow, purple, and navy blue designs. He was experimenting with ways to apply these glazes to a more modern aesthetic. Using higher-than-normal firing temperatures, he found—by accident—that the glazes not only fused to the bisque but melted into one another, blending into hazy spectrums of color often compared to auroras or supernovas. Yasokichi III named these fluid, psychedelic gradations *saiyū*.

*Saiyū* glazing stands out in the Kutani ceramic tradition for its bold departure from traditional forms and motifs, yet it rests on traditional glaze compositions that go back to the very origin of the art form. The Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Art holds nine characteristic *saiyū* works by Yasokichi III that demonstrate his decidedly modern sensibility and the range of innovative expressions he made possible.

In 1997, recognition of Yasokichi III’s work led to the designation of *saiyū* as an entirely new category of Important Intangible Cultural Heritage. That same year, he was named a Holder of Important Intangible Cultural Heritage charged with preserving and promoting *saiyū* glazing. Yasokichi III died in 2009, but he passed the techniques of *saiyū* to his eldest daughter, who assumed the family title of Yasokichi IV (1961–).