

SIDE GALLERY

KODAI UJIE



Tea Bowl
Manufactured by Kodai Ujiie
Japan, 2025
Porcelain, lacquer

Measurements
14,8 × 11,8 × 15,4h cm
5,9 × 4,6 × 6h in

Edition
Unique Piece

About

Rooted in traditional ceramics, Kodai Ujiie's sculptures explore the evolving boundary between vessel and sculpture through controlled yet improvisational techniques. His pieces often evoke quiet, creature-like presences, drawing inspiration from the anatomical strangeness of amphibians and other biological oddities to create soft-edged forms that feel both familiar and otherworldly, resonating with a lineage of artists who expand the vessel into a sculptural language. Eschewing bold color, he employs a restrained, almost ghostly palette, with expressive forms and carefully worked surfaces reminiscent of experimental freedoms found in the work of Ron Nagle. Ujiie glazes suggest frozen, snow-covered terrains or ash-dusted mineral surfaces—distant, imagined, and quietly surreal landscapes. This muted, eerie tonality fosters a sense of reverie, creating a feeling of stillness or suspended time, as if each object inhabits a slow, parallel reality just beyond perception.

At the same time, Ujiie's practice is deeply informed by the conventions of traditional Japanese pottery, particularly in his use of technical fusions that bridge historical methods with contemporary form. By adapting the kintsugi lacquer mending process, he brings a layered sensibility to his practice; his unpredictable glazes—thickly applied and often suggesting a synthetic gloss—conjure a striking sense of spontaneity within otherwise carefully constructed, deliberate forms. These works gesture toward utility, subtly alluding to conventional vessels or architectural fragments—recalling Betty Woodman's reimagining of ceramic traditions through hybrid, architectonic gestures—while their meanings unfold through multiple layers of interpretation and ambiguity. His ceramics also evoke an animated quality: bulbous, soft-edged, almost creaturely forms that suggest narrative or anthropomorphic character, aligning with the expressive, sculptural approach of Ken Price and inviting viewers to engage with them as lively, enigmatic presences rather than mere objects.

Biography

Kodai Ujiie (b. 1990) is a contemporary Japanese ceramic artist known for his avant-garde and organic, hand-built vessels that incorporate kintsugi-inspired lacquer mending and explore themes of impermanence and resilience. After graduating from Tohoku University of Art and Design in 2013 and 2015, Ujiie began creating abstract and sculptural works that merge traditional Japanese forms with a distinctive blend of unusual celadon colors, unique shapes, and textures reminiscent of skin, scales, and bone. His work has been exhibited internationally at galleries and major art fairs, and his pieces are held in public collections including the Miyagi Prefectural Jun Sugimura Museum of Art.