KODAI UJIIE

Hybrid Ofuke & White Glaze Jar
Manufactured by Kodai Ujiie
Japan, 2026
Ceramic, Ofuke glaze, white glaze

Measurements
Approx. 33 × 33 × 35h cm
Approx. 13 × 13 × 13,8h in

Details
Unique Piece
Produced exclusively for Side Gallery

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, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan) is a contemporary ceramic artist whose experimental and visceral practice challenges the boundaries between craft, sculpture, and living matter. Known for his avant-garde, hand-built vessels and objects, Ujiie's work explores themes of impermanence, repair, and transformation, frequently incorporating kintsugi-inspired lacquer mending as both a literal and symbolic gesture of resilience.