

## **JUN KANEKO in JAPAN**

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in  
**JAPAN**

# BIOGRAPHY

Jun Kaneko was born in 1942 in Nagoya, Japan, to dentists Yutaka and Toyoko Ono Kaneko. By 1945, the young Kaneko was sent to live with his grandparents in Chino, in the mountains of Nagano-ken, to escape the heavy bombing in Nagoya. He was reunited with his family in Nagano-ken after the war. The Kanekos moved back to Nagoya in 1950, where Yutaka and Toyoko opened their dental practice, and Jun attended elementary school.

As Jun entered high school, he grew less interested in academics, and instead spent more and more time drawing. Jun's mother Toyoko, herself an amateur painter, discovered Jun's drawings and recognized the young man's talent. She decided to allow Jun to complete his high school education at evening classes, while he spent his days learning painting from teacher Satoshi Ogawa. Kaneko graduated from Meiwa High School in 1962. Seeing Kaneko's clear talent and dedication to painting, Ogawa encouraged him to take his artistic education further in the United States.



The young artist drawing in Japan, 1962.



Jun's family seeing him off at the train station as he began his journey to the United States in 1963.

Kaneko left Japan in 1963 to study painting at Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, California. There, his introduction to Fred Marer drew him to sculptural ceramics. Kaneko proceeded to study with Peter Voukos, Paul Soldner, and Jerry Rothman in California during the time now defined as The Contemporary Ceramics Movement in California. He graduated from Claremont Graduate School in 1971, and traveled back to Japan where he

lectured, exhibited, and organized a Clay Festival in Tokoname with Ryoji Koie. Kaneko returned to the United States in 1972. He taught at University of New Hampshire and later Rhode Island School of Design until moving back to Japan in 1975. He built a house and studio in Nagura, but in 1979 ended up taking a position as Head of Ceramics at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. Kaneko taught at Cranbrook and traveled widely for lectures and workshops until relocating to Omaha, Nebraska, where he established his permanent studio.

Based in Omaha since 1986, Jun Kaneko has worked at several experimental studios, including European Ceramic Work Center in The Netherlands, Otsuka Ohmi Ceramic Company in Japan, Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia, PA, Bullseye Glass in Portland, OR, Acadia Summer Arts Program in Bar Harbor, ME, Derix Glasstudios in Taunusstein, Germany, and Aguacate in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Over the course of his career he has partnered with industrial facilities to realize large-scale, hand-built sculptures. The first of these projects was his 1982-1983 Omaha Project at Omaha Brickworks. Later endeavors include his Fremont Project, completed in 1992-1994, and his Pittsburg Project completed in 2004-2007. Most recently, Jun has been working at Trate Arte ceramics studio in Cuernavaca, experimenting with new glazes and unprecedented scale with the unpredictable raku process.

Kaneko is increasingly drawn to installations that promote civic interaction, realizing over seventy public art commissions from 1985 to present. Many are large-scale permanent installations that can be seen across the United States and internationally in Toronto, Canada, Shanghai, China, Jakarta, Indonesia, and multiple cities in Japan. His artwork appears in numerous international and national solo and group exhibitions annually and is included in more than eighty museum collections.

Gold Medal for Consummate Craftsmanship from the American Craft Council, Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Sculpture Center, and holds honorary doctorates from the University of Nebraska, the Massachusetts College of Art & Design, the Royal College of Art in London, and the University of Pécs in Hungary.

Jun Kaneko has designed three opera productions; Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (2006), Beethoven's *Fidelio* (2008), and Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (2012) which have toured throughout the United States.

Jun and his wife Ree have founded multiple esteemed cultural organizations. The Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, founded in 1985, attracts artists from around the world to Omaha for its year-round residency programs. In 1998, Ree and Jun founded KANEKO, a non profit cultural organization that hosts unique educational programs and exhibitions. Most recently, they founded The Ree & Jun Kaneko Foundation to steward a permanent collection of Jun's artworks.



Kaneko's completed studio in Nagura, Japan, 1978.

1975-78

## NAGURA STUDIO

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While teaching ceramics in the United States for one year, Jun Kaneko was frequently asked about traditional Japanese ceramics. In Japan, Kaneko studied painting and did not become interested in ceramics until moving to California in 1963. From these questions grew a desire to learn the practice of ceramic making in his home country. This motivated Kaneko to return to Japan in 1975. He reached out to his old painting teacher, Satoshi Ogawa, who helped him procure land in the mountain village of Nagura on which to build a studio.



Constructing the roof, 1976.



Kaneko and a friend constructing the Nagura studio, 1976.

Kaneko had to work within the constraints of an extremely limited budget, and wood in Japan was an expensive material. He thoroughly researched materials before concluding that telephone poles and untreated railroad ties would be the most cost effective option for his house and studio. Using these unconventional materials, Kaneko and his friends who would assist on the weekends, set to work on what was to be a two story 1,200 square foot house, and a 2,000 square foot studio with a 1,200 square foot kiln shed containing five kilns. It took them three and a half years to complete construction of the studio.

This undertaking gave Jun his first experience with large-scale environments and their sculptural possibilities, which became an important influence on his work. A year after completing the studio, Jun received an invitation from Clay Works in New York to give a lecture. Having been in Japan for a long time, he decided to return to the United States for a year. Around this time, Akio—who had just completed a graduate program in the U.S. but couldn't stay in the country and he did not have a studio in Japan and was in need of a workspace. Jun offered his studio to Akio, creating a perfect arrangement: Akio gained both a place to live and work, while the studio remained active and productive. Later, Jun began offering five-year studio residencies to fellow ceramic artists in need of creative space. This initiative has kept the studio a vibrant hub for the local ceramics community, fostering artistic growth and supporting the creation of new work.



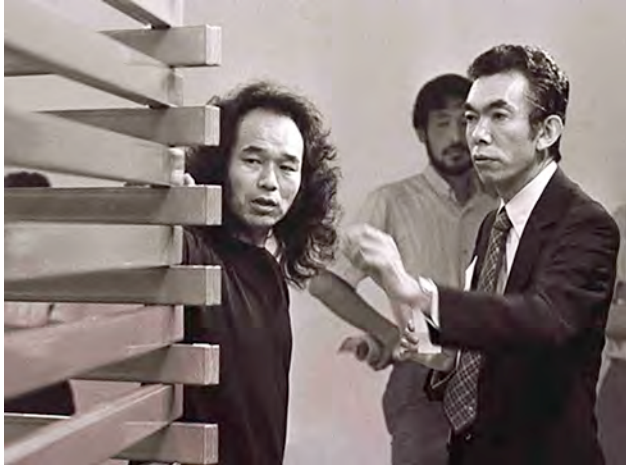
Kaneko's home next to the studio in Nagura, Japan.



Kaneko and a hoop sculpture outside his house in Nagura, 1978.

Jun was invited to the Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia, where he designed shirts and printed materials for fabric and new clothing. Soon after, he was asked to give a lecture at Cranbrook Academy of Art. To his surprise, the entire faculty attended the lecture. It was only afterward that he realized the lecture had also served as an informal interview for a faculty position. After much thought—and encouragement from his friend, printmaker Connor Everts—Jun decided to accept the offer to become the ceramics professor at Cranbrook for a year.

Before moving to the United States, Jun returned to Japan for a year to pack his belongings. Once returning to the states, during this time, he wasn't using his studio. Meanwhile, Akio Takijmore, who was in Japan, lacked access to a working space. Seeing an opportunity, Jun offered his unused studio to Akio as a five-year residency. The studio, known for its generous scale and potential, quickly became a dynamic creative space. After Akio's residency ended, ceramic artist Ryoji Koie took over the studio and worked there for six prolific years. Following him, painter Hiroshi Sugito used the space for three years. Sugito would later become head professor at Tokyo University of the Arts, and his artwork has been well-received in New York galleries. Eventually, the informal residency program came to a close, and the studio returned to Jun Kaneko. By then, it needed repairs, Jun decided to gift the space to his brother. The studio was later passed down to Jun's niece, a ceramicist in her own right, who continues to work there. Under her care, the studio remains highly productive, and other artists are still invited to work in the space.

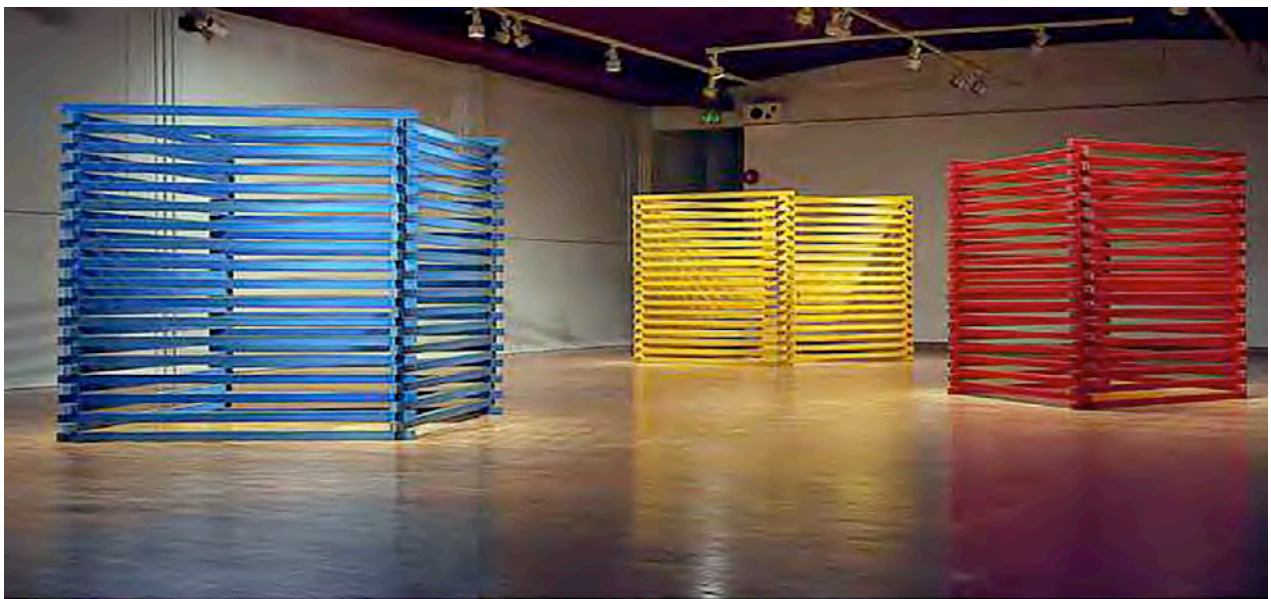


Jun Kaneko with art historian Dr. Yoshiaki Inui at Gallery Takagi

# 1981

## OTSUKA CERAMIC PROJECT

In the early 1980s Kaneko collaborated with the Otsuka Ceramic Factory, a unique place where the largest fired and glazed commercial ceramic tiles in the world are made. After touring the facility Kaneko was invited by the company president to return and produce work there. The company allocated funds to Kaneko's pilot project. Kaneko's finished work, *Parallel Sound*, consists of long tile slats, laid together in a log-cabin fashion with spaces in between. After Jun led the way, Robert Rauschenberg and other artists were invited to work in their own manner with the amazing ceramic techniques at Otsuka.



*Parallel Sound*, 1981, glazed ceramics, each 84 x 156 x 72 inches.



Jun Kaneko at the Nagoya City Art Museum, 2006-2011.

1988

# NAGOYA CITY ART MUSEUM

Jun Kaneko Dangos' at the Nagoya City Art Museum aquisition 1988.



Left: Untitled, Dango, 1986. Hand built and glazed ceramics, 71 x 29.5 x 23.6 inches.  
Right: Untitled, Dango, 1986. Hand built and glazed ceramics, 19.7 x 29.5 x 19.7 inches.



Untitled, 1993, hand built and glazed ceramics, granite, 4 x 24 x 22 feet.

# 1993

Kaneko was approached in 1993 to create an installation for Yamashita Hospital in Ichinomiya, Japan. The project consists of granite paving that extends from an interior corner of the hospital building to a floor-to-ceiling window. This gives an impression of blended indoor/outdoor space. Three large ceramic pieces are positioned on the granite, intermittently reflected in the polished concentric bands of the stones' surface.

YAMASHITA  
HOSPITAL  
PROJECT  
ICHINOMIYA

# MAISHIMA SPORTS ARENA OSAKA

Kaneko created this tile mural, called Gold Wall, for the Maishima Sports Arena in Osaka, Japan. The wall was installed near the entrance stairs to the arena. The tiles have gold backgrounds and feature various multicolored designs.

1994



Gold Wall, 1994, hand built and glazed ceramic tiles, 9.2 x 33.25 feet.



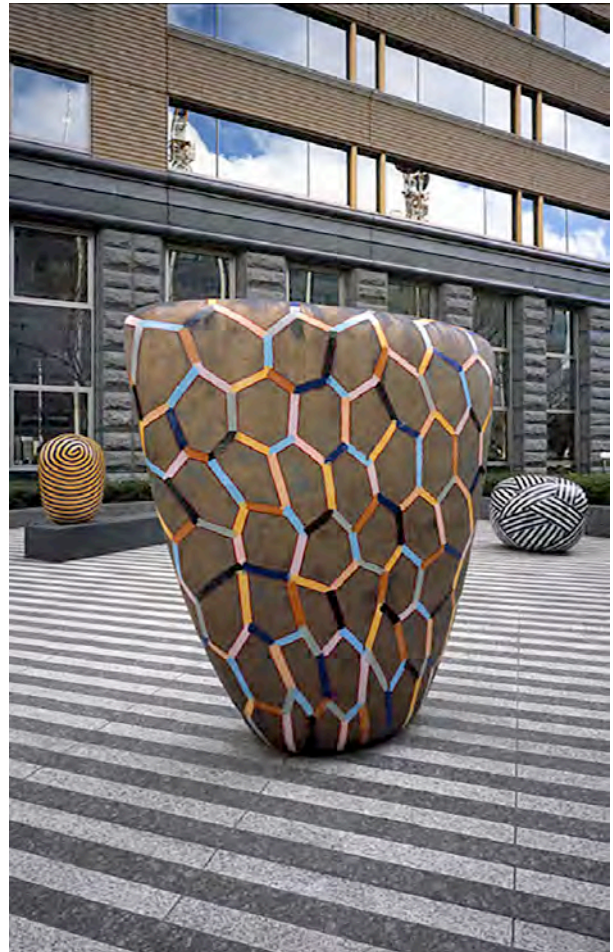
Untitled, 1996, hand built and glazed ceramics, polished and flame treated granite, 6 x 25 x 25 feet.

1997

# AICHI PREFECTURE NAGOYA

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In 1996, Kaneko began work on a project for the Aichi Prefecture Multiple Use Building in Nagoya, Japan. The project was to create a courtyard space at the front of the building facing the street. Kaneko paved the irregularly shaped courtyard with black and white granite stripes. Three free-standing ceramic pieces were then placed throughout the space. The project was installed in 1997.





# ROPPONGI TOWER PROJECT 1 TOKYO

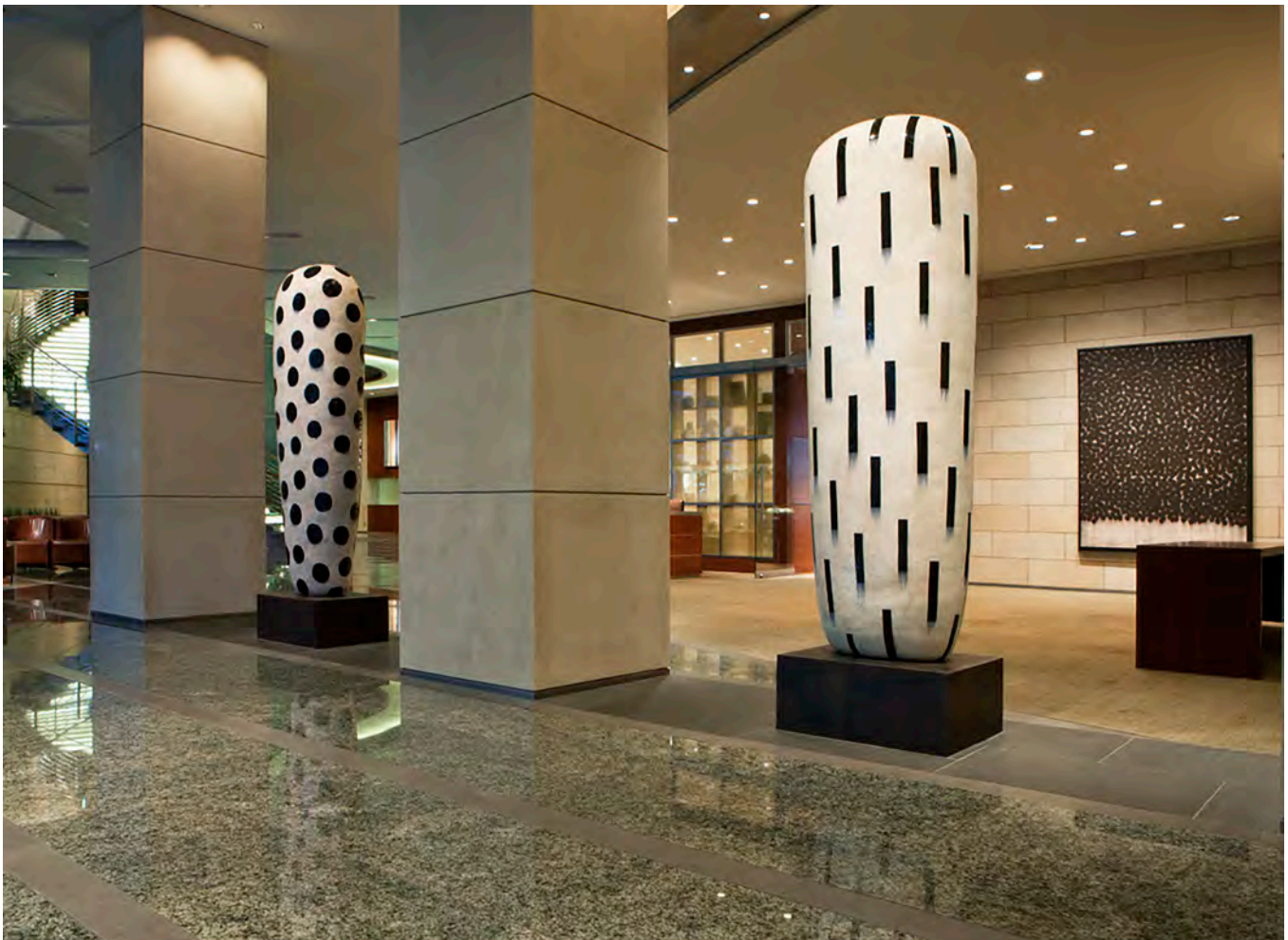
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In June 2002, Kaneko was approached to create a pair of head sculptures for the lobby of the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Tokyo's new Roppongi Tower. The hotel's owner wanted pieces based on Kaneko's previous work, Heads. Kaneko made two ceramic heads specially for the hotel, and they were installed in March 2003.

2003

Untitled, 2003, glazed ceramics and steel,  
left: 96 x 52 x 55 right: 97 x 51 x 58 inches.





Untitled, 2005, hand built and glazed ceramics, each approx. 7.5 feet tall.

2005

In 2004, Kaneko was asked to create two Dangos for the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Kaneko's second project for the Hotel consisted of two tall Dangos installed in a lobby space.

# ROPPONGI TOWER PROJECT 2 TOKYO

# KANEKO IN TOKYO

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This dual-venue exhibition, organized by Gallery Kasahara, involved an outdoor installation at Middletown Garden in Tokyo, Japan. Simultaneously, an indoor solo exhibition of Kaneko's work was held at the Shinwa Art Museum, Tokyo.



Untitled, Dango, 2008, hand built and glazed ceramics, 80 x 50 x 24 inches.

2009





2009-2011

# SEIKA UNIVERSITY WORKSHOP KYOTO

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Jun Kaneko held workshops in 2009 and 2011 at Kyoto's Seika University, which is famous for its Art Programs. In addition to holding daily workshops for the students, he also gave a variety of evening lectures everyday which were open to the public.





Kaneko giving a demonstration at Seika University.



Above, from left to right: George Behringer, Honorary Consul General of Japan, Mary Kane, President and CEO of Sister Cities International, Pete Festersen, Member of Omaha City Council, Nobuhiro Tanabe, Mayor of the city of Shizuoka, Kazumi Shigeta, Chairperson, Shizuoka City Council, Masahiro Unno, General Manager of the Nihondaira Zoo.

2015

# SHIZUOKA SISTER CITY NIHONDAIRA ZOO

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In 2015, the Omaha Sister Cities Association (OSCA) commemorated the 50th anniversary of the city's relationship with Shizuoka, Japan. The commemoration included a ten day visit to Shizuoka and an exchange of gifts. The Omaha Delegation chose one of Jun Kaneko's Tanuki sculptures as its gift to Shizuoka. The Tanuki is known as mascot of prosperity in Japan, there are many legends about the Tanuki, it's personality and magic power. In October 2015, it was placed in the Nihondaira Zoo where it resides today.



Richard Barea, an Omaha tribal elder giving a blessing as a part of the gift ceremony.



Flux, 2015, hand built and glazed ceramics, 47.5 x 24.25 x 13 inches.

2016

# OTEMACHI SPRINGS TOKYO

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Kaneko said of this project outside the Shimizu Art Office in Tokyo: “My artwork hopes to be engaging and to uniquely visually identify this space. Their visual energy creates a great focal point in collaboration with the soft and hard architecture of the site. The key to a successful project is to develop the most positive spatial attitude between the artwork, location and viewer..”



Current, 2015, hand built and glazed ceramics, 77 x 30 x 18.5 inches.

“...My hope is to change the space so a binding relationship unites the concepts of the artwork with these surroundings and creates a bright and inviting place that people enjoy using and want to be within. My goal is to create artwork that contributes positive energy and design that engages both intermittent and daily visitors.”



Color Box, 2015, hand built and glazed ceramics, 76.75 x 29 x 16.5 inches.



2020

# NATIONAL CRAFTS MUSEUM KANAZAWA CITY

This Dango is installed in the courtyard entrance of the National Crafts Museum's new location in Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture. The museum (formerly known as the Crafts Gallery, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo) was relocated from Tokyo. This sculpture, Dango by Jun Kaneko is 10 feet in height.



Untitled, Dango, 2013, hand built and glazed ceramics, 124 x 56 x 34 inches.



Untitled, Head, hand built and glazes ceramics, steel, 124 x 69.5 x 77.5 inches.

# MUSEUM OF CERAMIC ART HYOGO

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Mr. Ryunosuke Kasahara donated this Head to the Museum of Ceramic Art in Hyogo, Japan, which houses ancient ceramic ware and contemporary ceramic art. Kaneko created the sculpture at the Mission Clay Products beehive kilns in Pittsburg, Kansas, USA during a special project from 2004-2007. Mr. Kasahara, an esteemed art dealer and collector, was founder and C.E.O. of Gallery Kasahara in Osaka and Tokyo Japan for over 40 years.



Untitled, Heads, 2014,  
hand built and glazed  
ceramics, steel, left: 100 x  
54 x 48 inches, right: 102  
x 54 x 42 inches.

2022-  
2023

# GARDEN OF RESONANCE PORTLAND, OR

Portland Japanese Garden is one of the most beautiful and authentic Japanese gardens outside of Japan. The Journal of Japanese Gardening ranked it the highest-quality Japanese Garden in North America in 2013.



Left: Untitled, Dango, 2014, hand built and glazed ceramics, 10.5 x 12 x 14.5 inches.  
Right: Untitled, Dango, 2014, hand built and glazed ceramics, 25.5 x 15 x 9.5 inches.



Untitled, Dango, 2019 glazed ceramics, 38.75 x 26.5 x 16.5 inches.



Untitled, Dango, 2017, hand built and glazed ceramics, 88.25 x 30.5 x 22.75 inches.

Garden of Resonance: The Art of Jun Kaneko was, at that point, the largest art exhibition in the garden's history. This solo exhibition saw Kaneko's large ceramic sculptures installed among the garden's five distinct landscapes, along with an exhibition of paintings, drawings, and smaller sculptures in the Pavilion Gallery.

# GROUP EXHIBITIONS IN JAPAN

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2014 Identity and Originality,  
Museum of Ceramic Art, Hyogo

2011 20th Century Ceramics,  
Museum of Ceramic Art, Hyogo

2010 Collection 2: Focus on Recent  
Acquisitions, The National Museum  
of Art, Osaka

2009 Glass Education Network  
2009: Jun Kaneko and Therman  
Statom, Nagoya University of Arts,  
Nagoya

2008 On Existence, The Museum of  
Fine Arts, Gifu

2002 Contemporary American  
Ceramics 1950-1990, Aichi Ceramic  
Museum, Nagoya, National  
Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto,  
Tochigi Ceramic Museum, Tochigi

2002 Setagaya Museum in Tokyo

2000 Goro Suzuki, Jun Kaneko,  
Gallery Kasahara, Osaka

2000 Wonder & Discovery, Shigaraki  
Sculpture Park, Shigaraki

1999 Contemporary American  
Ceramics and Glass, Seto Ceramics  
and Glass Art Center, Aichi

1996 Peter Voulkos & Jun Kaneko:  
Shigaraki Project, Kenji Taki Gallery,  
Nagoya

1995 Ryoji Koie, Goro Suzuki, Jun

予 告

創業380周年記念

陶芸ファン待望の夢の競演  
現代陶芸界の鬼才

鯉江良二・鈴木五郎・金子潤

三人展

会期 ● 平成7年4月13日(木) ↓ 18日(火)

〈最終日は午後5時終了〉

会場 ● スカイル8階催場

KOIE  
SUZUKI  
KANEKO



1994 International Contemporary Ceramic Exhibition, Aichi Prefecture Ceramic Museum, Seto

1993 Contemporary Ceramics 1950-1990, Aichi Prefecture Museum of Art, Nagoya

1992 The 20th Anniversary Exhibition, Gallery Kasahara, Tokyo

1992 Yokohama International Art Fair, Gallery Kasahara, Yokohama

1991 International Ceramic Invitational Show, Shigaraki Ceramic Park, Shigaraki

1991 Ceramic Work - Part I, Otsuka Ceramic Gallery, Tokyo

1990 In Otsuka Ceramic, Gallery Maronie, Kyoto

1990 In Otsuka Ceramic, Otsuka Ceramic Gallery, Tokyo

1988 Nagoya Museum Masterpieces Collection, Nagoya City Art Museum, Nagoya

1987 Claywork Now III '87, Yamaguchi Prefectural Museum, Yamaguchi

1987 Osaka Contemporary Art Fair '87, Osaka City Contemporary Art Center, Osaka

1986 Contemporary Japanese Ceramics, Seibu Museum, Otsu, Shiga-Ken and Tokyo

1981 Gallery Shiro, Osaka

1981 Maronie Gallery, Kyoto

1978 Art Now '78, Invitational Exhibition, Hyogo Modern Art Museum

1978 Nikko Securities Building, Nagoya

1977 Bird's Eye View of Contemporary Japanese Art 1977, National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto

1971 Contemporary Ceramic Art of America, Canada, Mexico & Japan, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

1969 Satoshi Ogawa & Jun Kaneko, El Dorado Gallery, Nagoya

1963 Zaiya Invitational Painting Show

1963 16th Chubu Niki Exhibition, Nagoya (First Prize)

1962 15th Chubu Niki Exhibition, Tokyo

1962 16th Niki Exhibition, Nagoya (Nagoya Times Prize)

1961 14th Chubu Niki Exhibition, Tokyo

# SOLO EXHIBITIONS IN JAPAN

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- 2018 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Fukuzumi, Osaka  
2017 Ceramic Works of Jun Kaneko, Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka  
2016 Jun Kaneko, Sokyō Gallery, Kyoto  
2014 Jun Kaneko: Kyoto 2014, Sokyō Gallery, Kyoto  
2009 Kaneko in Tokyo, Gallery Kasahara, Middle Town Garden, Tokyo  
2009 Kaneko in Tokyo, Gallery Kasahara, Shinwa Art Museum, Tokyo  
2009 Jun Kaneko: Drawings, Gallery Ham, Nagoya  
2006 Jun Kaneko: Selected Works 1989-2005, National Museum of Art, Osaka  
2006 Jun Kaneko: Selected Works 1989-2005, Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu  
2006 Jun Kaneko Exhibition, Gallery Kasahara, Chuden Chioyoda Building, Nagoya  
1998 Jun Kaneko, Stroke Gallery, Osaka  
1996 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Kasahara, Osaka  
1995 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Takagi, Nagoya  
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1987 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Kasahara, Osaka  
1987 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Takagi, Nagoya  
1983 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Takagi, Nagoya  
1981 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Takagi, Nagoya  
1980 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Toen, Shigaraki  
1979 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Takagi, Nagoya  
1978 Jun Kaneko, Gallery Takagi, Nagoya  
1977 Jun Kaneko, Coa Gallery, Kyoto  
1971 Jun Kaneko, Mori's Form, Osaka  
1969 Jun Kaneko, El Dorado Gallery, Nagoya

# SELECT AWARDS & HONORS

2021 International Sculpture Center Lifetime Achievement Award

2018 Commendation from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan

2018 Honorary Doctorate, University of Pécs, Hungary

2008 Honorary Doctorate, Massachusetts College of Art & Design, Boston, MA

2006 Honorary Doctorate, University of Nebraska at Omaha, NE

2005 Honorary Doctorate, Royal College of Art, London, England



Kaneko giving his acceptance speech at the International Sculpture Center's Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony, in Omaha, 2021.

# JAPANESE MUSEUMS

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21st Century Museum of  
Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Aichi Prefectural Ceramic  
Museum, Nagoya

Japan Foundation, Tokyo

The Museum of  
Contemporary Ceramic Art,  
Shigaraki

The Museum of Oriental  
Ceramics, Osaka

Nagoya City Art Museum,  
Nagoya

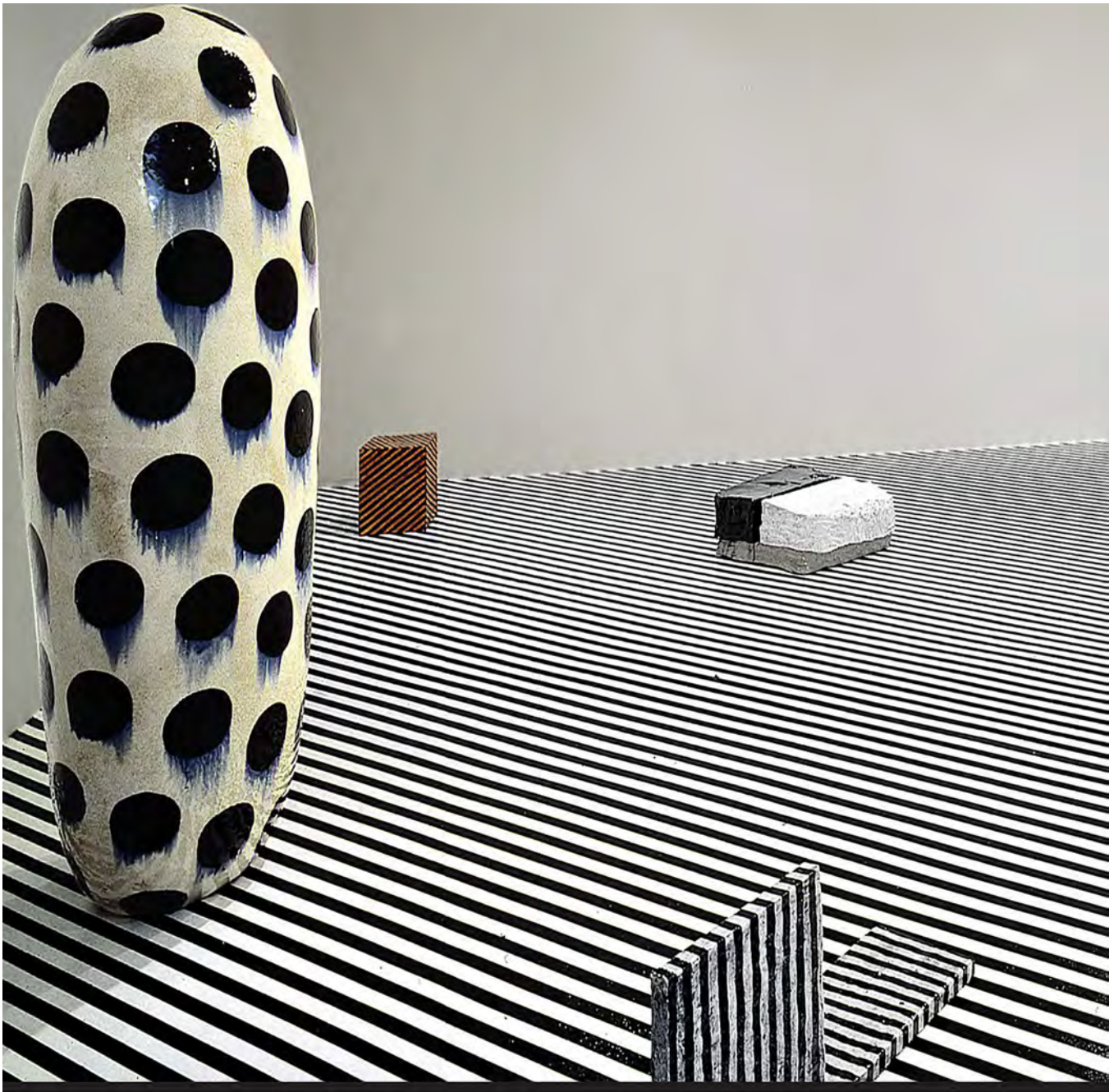
The National Crafts Gallery,  
Kanazawa

The National Museum of Art,  
Osaka

Yamaguchi Prefectural  
Museum, Yamaguchi



Kaneko with a Dango in the permanent collection at the Yamaguchi Prefectural Art Museum, 1987.



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