

Métiers d'Art/2
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Catalogue statement by Louise Doucet Saito and Satoshi Saito

Our first and foremost goal is the achievement of harmony.

We also strive to remain as open and receptive as possible so as to always be learning more and so as to take advantage of every life experience. In this way each experience finds its place and is reflected in our work.

We allow forms and colors to evolve jointly and never permit artificial short cuts to disrupt the natural development of an individual work.

Pottery is a daily activity for us. Seeing as we employ our own pots in daily use, it is necessary that they be properly made. But the very fact of using them so leads to changes in their forms, for, like all human beings, we ourselves are in a process of transformation. The pots provide the measure of our own development, in much the same way as does the growing up of our children, the eldest of whom is now ten.

It is this natural transformation that we attempt to translate into forms and colors, into textures and volumes which maintain their harmony regardless of the ongoing evolution. It is this kind of vital movement which we hope to embody in our work.

It isn't likely or necessary that every work we produce must be a masterpiece—we are not producing copies; it is ourselves that we are expressing. They do not represent the perfect execution of a model, but rather the results of our experience.

When we open the kiln to examine the completed pieces, it is easy to see how certain lines may be either too broad or not sufficiently distinct, or that the glaze does not possess

the desired quality. We are the first to criticize our own pieces, understanding the problems in their production and often seeing how they have turned out very different from what we had imagined.

Every craft has its own difficulties. To create anything worthwhile it is necessary to work carefully, prudently, patiently. It is necessary to have a basic understanding of the materials being used. It takes time. It's an experience where one has to proceed calmly and methodically, day by day.

Whenever we encounter others who understand these fundamental principals of any *métier* because they practice one, whatever it may be, it is a joy for us to benefit from the contact and to share with them our own experience; and it is more than a matter of the pleasure involved: it is a matter of real communication.

As the American poet Archibald MacLeish once said, the primary discipline is to realize that a discipline exists; all art begins and ends with a discipline, and each art form is first and foremost a craft.

We have had the opportunity to see many works of ceramic art, the products of a variety of diverse and often ancient civilizations. It became clear to us those works shared certain essential aspirations. We felt the struggle of the artist to combine three elements: the perfect clay, the perfect form, the perfect firing.

We have had to work very hard to fully understand our materials, in order to make the most of the available clays and to get as close as possible to the perfect firing. One cannot attain the highest quality without observing the most fundamental principles.

In our eyes, seeking this perfect harmony between personal experience and creative endeavor, between the material, the process and the final product, is what it means to be an

artist. Of course such perfection cannot be achieved in fact—it only exists in the blood and in the spirit. And even if one were to attain it, a real artist would immediately want to go further still.

The work of an artist must have meaning. There is no doubt that the kind of harmony we seek goes well beyond the purely technical aspects of pottery and implies a real understanding of life itself.

Some of the questions which preoccupy us derive from the fact that we are no more certain of the meaning of our lives than of the meaning of our craft.

Examining some of our more successful pieces leads us to ask ourselves if they possess a meaning comparable to the pottery of the tenth century or of certain pre-Columbian works. Should we imagine that we might be fortunate enough to produce, in the course of our lives, one or two pieces capable of expressing the spirit of our age? Such is the test to which we submit our work.

1976: What common denominator, what common image, what common taste does the year evoke? And what is it that is alien to the character of 1976? Do we really understand our time? Probably we do not.

All that we can hope for is that the forms that we create, their sizes, their shapes, their rhythms, bear some essential relation to the age; bear some relation to the manner in which we would like to articulate our public and private spaces, and to the rhythms and proportions that we would ideally desire to find in our lives.

Doucet Saïto