

**Masters of the Craft  
Recipients of the Saidye Bronfman Award for Excellence in the Craft, 1977-1986  
The Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989**

**Statement by Satoshi Saito and Louise Doucet Saito**

“The artist experiences joy in being able to communicate to other souls his enthusiasm before the masterpieces of nature, whose secret he believes he possesses.” (Paul Cézanne)

One spring afternoon, two years ago, a man dressed in overalls drove up to our house in a battered car. He asked to see our work. We were in the midst of preparing to fire a kiln, and we were glazing. After some hesitation and a few inquiries about what he was interested in, we showed him several pieces. “Which piece do *you* like best?” he asked, and we told him. We explained how and when various pieces were made and what the prices were. He stayed with us for about half an hour, explaining how he had come across our work, giving his impressions of the pieces in front of him and talking about his experiences in the region. He turned out to be a new veterinarian. He chose four pieces, paid for them, and left with his purchases. He was very happy. And we were very happy.

This man was not the only person, nor was he the first, to make a decision in this way. But he was among a very few who had that kind of confidence.

For an artist, to have a work bought is the most positive criticism and the best reward.

Other such people, though not all of them in overalls, have appeared at sensitive points in our career, through their appreciation and confidence enabling us to go further and to take more risks. We are very grateful to them.

We have been working together for more than 25 years. We still remember the day in 1966, in the town of Mashiko, a name synonymous with pottery in Japan, when we opened our first kiln. Half hidden among the ashes we discovered one of our vases. We knew by its colour and texture that it was a beautiful piece. We knew, then, we wanted to continue.

Time passed but our main concern remained to follow our vision and respect our intuitions. Each piece finished incorporates the beginning of the next.

The shapes we have been exploring in our recent work are not controlled by the clay or by the traditional functions of ceramics, but by the demands of our own plastic “language.” Our work has become more purely the pursuit of certain sculptural forms. Today we imagine such forms not only in clay, but also in metal or stone, and we feel free to satisfy the formal necessity in our work, to reshape the body of space in a manner that strikes us and, we hope, others as dynamic, sensuous, and right.

We are older. We have learned to measure time, to conserve our strength. Our work continues to move and change. Creating is a matter of constant effort; the effort to go a little further with each piece; the effort to resist the temptation to circle around the same idea and thus fall into tranquil mediocrity. We need to constantly draw on new reserves of energy in order to remain curious and passionate and brave.

Our ambition is to taste the joy that comes from perfecting our work to the point where it can embody something of our curiosity about life and of our feel for the world. That is what we want to transmit in terms of what we have learned about shape, colour, and volume. If the fruits of our work manage to bring to others the joy we have received from past makers, we will be happy.

We hope that the forms we produce, their volumes and rhythms, bear some essential relation to the time, and to our actual everyday lives; but more importantly, we also hope that our work might articulate in space the rhythms and proportions we would ideally like to find in our lives.

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