

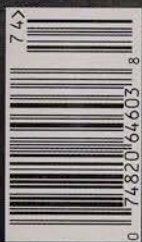
# Ceramics

## Art + Perception

April 2018

# #108

USD	\$20
EUR	€18
CAD	\$27
AUD	\$27
GBP	£15





# Hoshino Satoru

## at LIXIL Gallery, Tokyo

Written by Janet Koplos

**H**oshino Satoru (b. 1945), has established an international reputation through residencies and guest teaching, and for his large installations. While this gallery is a modest space, low-ceilinged and windowless, he transformed it into a dark field of motion with his *Beginning Form—Spiral '17*. Two masses on the long side walls of the rectangular space were composed of hundreds of pinched and smoked clay elements of gray and black tones, ranging in size from a tiny wad to a forearm-length clump. Both masses begin with small parts scattered nearly floor to ceiling, which aggregate into a sort of windstorm sweeping down the wall. Some parts, rather than being pinched, appear to be scraped or smeared, and two of these, on the end wall of the gallery, curve toward each other to become the meeting point of two fragmented clouds of dark clay. That meeting point is as tense as God's reaching toward Adam's hand on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Alternatively, the installation can be read as originating from this almost-touching point, boiling down the wall like dense smoke and dissipating into the tiny separate squeezes.

In the middle of the room, Hoshino placed a vessel, also black and pinched, rising from a base of fat coils maybe a foot in diameter, whereas the top is probably triple that. The vessel is constructed as a spiral, although it's hard to tell because of the darkness and the dramatic texture. Walking around it did not confirm the answer and was likely to make the viewer dizzy. This was a case of dynamic motion, for sure, and seemed to embody in condensed form the shifting shapes on the walls.

In a niche, behind glass, was *Beginning Form—Spiral Spring Snow 09-1*, an object about two feet tall, also pinched coils but narrowing from maybe 8 inches to about 3 inches in diameter, seductively and beautifully glazed with tones of blue, from dark to nearly white. It, too, is an aggregation, possibly spirals or maybe stacked rings. The profile of the sculpture is irregular in the extreme, yet because the lowest pancake in this stack is twice as wide as the others, it does not seem as precarious as it otherwise might. In comparison with the installation, the surface of this work is utterly luscious, even lickable. A few passages of red at and near the base are like an electric shock, heightening the entire experience.

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While it seems easy to summarize the appearance of these parts, the overall implications are less specific and their impact longer-lasting. Much of the sculpture by Hoshino's contemporaries does not have an explicit, sound-bite-ready content but rather has to do with emotional response and a feeling of integration into a larger – even cosmic – context. That would seem to be the case here, as well. This installation is encompassing, literally, since it surrounds the viewer. It is an environment. It is reminiscent of natural phenomena – a whirlwind of leaves, a whirlpool in water. It ranges from expansive to compacted, with the forces on the wall condensing into the urgent downward drilling motion of the central vessel. While the walls, in particular, might evoke the numinous natural objects and occurrences that the Shinto religion sees as invested with spirits, at the same time everything that makes up this installation is intimately touched by the hand of the artist, so it becomes personal.

One might stop to consider the amount of labor invested in the work, yet in the end that seems a minor factor. More important is the familiarity of this material transformed into what almost amounts to a creation myth. A bilingual leaflet for the exhibition reveals that Hoshino's Kyoto studio was destroyed by a landslide in 1986. In response, his work changed drastically, reflecting his realization of the force of moving earth/clay and the insignificance of human efforts. The installation, then, is a collaboration with and acknowledgement of primordial nature.

LIXIL Group is a Japanese conglomerate manufacturing building material and housing equipment. Its several galleries, located on the second floor of a building at the edge of the Ginza district of Tokyo, were formerly called INAX, after the corporation's sanitary fittings subsidiary. A gallery was established in the early 1980s, and since 1994 has presented a numbered series of ceramic exhibitions, this one being #120. ■

#### About the Author.

Through her writing and scholarship, Janet Koplos has been highly influential in framing the critical discourse on contemporary craft and has contributed significantly to our knowledge of the field. A graduate of the University of Minnesota School of Journalism and Mass Communications with a MA in art history from Illinois State University, Koplos has been writing about art since 1976. She has published more than 2,000 articles, reviews, and catalogue essays in the US, Europe, and Japan. She is the author of *Contemporary Japanese Sculpture* (1991), *Gyongy Laky* (2003), and co-author of *Makers: a History of American Studio Craft*, intended as both an important resource for the field and a much-needed college-level art history survey. Koplos was senior editor at *Art in America* (1990 – 2009) and served as guest editor of *American Craft* in 2009. She lectures, juries, and critiques frequently and is a member of the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art and the College Art Association. She has taught criticism at the Parsons New School of Design and other schools. For her numerous scholarly contributions to the field, Koplos was elected an Honorary Fellow of the American Craft Council in 2010.

Images courtesy of the author.