Shozo Michikawa, Japanese Potter Inspired by Nature—at Concord's Lacoste, June 2017

Walking into the Lacoste Gallery in Concord, MA I was struck by the lightness, strength and movement in the work of Shozo Michikawa, a Japanese ceramicist who combines both slab and wheel methods to create pots resembling objects formed by nature.

Michikawa is "inspired by the power and energy of nature in its every form" and the belief that "nature will ultimately triumph over science and civilizations," he writes. "The beauty that nature offers as seen in the formation of rocks, mountains, deserts and the seas are unparalleled and conversely natural disasters brought on by tsunamis, earthquakes and erupting volcanoes cannot be underestimated."

Accordingly, Michikawa throws clay to build block-like formations on a potter's wheel, and, often, places a stick in the interior of the form and spins the wheel in different directions—thus creating, according to Atlanta's Catherine

Fox "torqued, spiraling forms and a sense of dynamism." The pots, some of which resemble rocks, riverbeds, or other natural formations, may appear to be as unpredictable as forms created by natural forces.

Writing in Artsati, Fox describes the pots as "irregular in shape, asymmetrical, roughly textured, and deceptively primitive." She points out that, " Unlike most ceramists, who center the clay o n the wheel and build up the walls of the vessel with two hands – one on the interior, one on the exterior – Michikawa effects his sculptural forms by working the decentered clay from the inside out, often poking the interior with a stick to get the shape he wants." After spinning it on the wheel, Michikawa may "cut away at the exterior with a wire to shape the rodlike protrusions, wedges, flaps and origami folds that give his work an earthy tactility."

Each piece is then faceted and glazed to mimic the effects of nature, according to Lucy Lacoste, the Concord gallery proprietor.”Built on the potter’s wheel and often twisted on an internal axis, ” the works are sculptural yet retain a core of functional pottery.” That functional core is critical, the artist says, because pottery has been so integral to people’s lives in Japan.”.

Shozo Michikawa at Lacoste Gallery, Concord June 4, 2017

Michikawa was born on the Island of Hokkaido, the most northern area of Japan, in 1953. After graduating from Aoyama Gakuin University in 1975, he worked in business until evening classes "gave him a passion for clay," according to a gallery writeup. Ultimately, he settled in Seto, one of the sites of the six ancient kilns in Japan. His exhibitions are held widely in Japan and also internationally, such as Philippines, Mongolia, France, USA, and UK.
"Michikawa's is a unique talent based on his personal expression of pottery as an art form, Lacoste says. "His voice is contemporary and poetic. "

At the Lacoste Gallery, 25 Main Street Concord, MA until June 28, 2917.

—Anita M. Harris

Anita Harris is a Cambridge writer, photographer and communications consultant based Cambridge, MA.
New Cambridge Observer is a publication of the Harris

Communications Group, also located in Cambridge.