



JOHN DIX BIO

INTRODUCTION: John Dix is an American ceramic artist living in Kobe, Japan. He maintains a studio in the city and a larger facility in Sasayama where he has an anagama woodfire kiln. John regularly exhibits his work throughout Japan and abroad.

BACKGROUND: Born in Flint, MI, John completed his BA degree at Albion and apprenticed at Terrestrial Forming Pottery in Whitehall from 1983-85. He moved on to an apprenticeship in Greece and worked in Potters in Jerusalem in Israel. After returning to Whitehall to manage the studio, John moved to Japan in the late eighties to apprentice with a local maker of Bizen ware.

In 1995 John met David Jack and Sachiko Matsunaga. They were starting a rural studies foundation in the area of Japan called Tamba, an ancient pottery region. With their support John was able to build an anagama kiln. The project developed into Fieldwork Japan where John continues to work as an independent potter as well as offering workshops and classes throughout the year. Students live at the studio, make pottery with Japanese clays and try their hand at firing the anagama kiln.

AS A CERAMIC ARTIST: John's work draws on a number of regional pottery traditions—including those of Tamba, Iga and Bizen.

“The word that best describes my approach to clay is Serendipity. I'll have a starting point without a clear destination, a familiar path (constructing a teapot, a sake bottle, etc) which I always give myself permission to diverge from. This freedom brings freshness to the work and has sustained me over the years.”

“Firing with wood takes the idea of ‘serendipity’ to a higher level. I don't know of any other art form where chance plays such a pivotal role.”

“Most of my work is made using local, mainly Shigaraki clays, and fired for up to 7 days in my wood-burning kiln. The pieces are either fired raw with no glaze, allowing the accumulated fly ash

produced during the firing, or glazed with a shino-type glaze. Some of the work has been pulled from the kiln at high temperature and rapidly cooled (*hiki-dashi*) giving varied effects.”

ABOUT FIELDWORK JAPAN:

“Japan is a mecca for potters from around the world, but it can seem a bit impenetrable for those visiting from abroad for the first time. I am one of few foreign potters in this area.”

“When David, Sachiko and I planned the studio, it was with the understanding that it would be more than just my own workspace, but a facility that would offer outsiders the opportunity to experience ceramics in Japan in a way that might be difficult elsewhere. We have hosted hundreds of people, and many have stayed long-term.”

“A nice thing about our studio’s location is that, while it feels really secluded and tranquil, it’s close to the center of Sasayama, and just over an hour to Osaka or Kobe.”

ON FIRING THE ANAGAMA KILN:

“Anagama firings produce highly unpredictable results. The pieces go in ‘naked,’ or unglazed, and the kiln does all the work. Over many days, copious amounts of ash from the burnt wood is deposited on the pieces and then melt into a kind of glaze when the desired temperature is reached. Each piece comes out differently. I don’t know of another art that demands so much physical effort, only to surrender the final decorative process to the fire gods!”

“Over the centuries, kiln technology developed, but the anagama never lost its popularity in Japan because of the unique and appealing surface decoration created by the ash deposits.”

“In today’s world where you can operate an electric kiln with your phone, the anagama is a throwback to another time. It also brings people together. To chop all the wood, load the kiln and keep it burning for up to seven days takes a team with the common goal of firing this ancient tool. The reward is pots like no other. “

[Click here to watch the YouTube video "John Dix American artist in Japan captured by Steven Dix Artist: Australia"](#)

[Click here for John’s website](#)

SOURCES :

["Q&A with John Dix: American Potter in Tamba Sasyama", March 23, 2020](#) (Kansai Scene)

2001 article posted on Yakimoto.net: <http://www.e-yakimono.net/html/dix-john-jt.html>

<https://www.schallergallery.com/maker/318/John-Dix>