

LISSON

MASAOMI YASUNAGA



BIOGRAPHY

Masaomi Yasunaga was a student of Satoru Hoshino, a coterie of the avant-garde ceramic group Sodeisha: a post-war (1940s – 1990s) movement that questioned the mandate of functionality within the ceramic medium and pioneered a new sculptural philosophy. Translated as ‘crawling through the mud society’, artists of Sodeisha rebelled against the prevalent ceramic traditions in Japan to create existentially and emotionally driven artworks. Yasunaga extends the legacy of Sodeisha group’s experimental ethos by focusing on the process of creation, centred around the sculptural form rather than the functional use of the object. Inspired by his upbringing within Japan’s Catholic minority and ensuing appreciation for aesthetics of Western origin, Yasunaga honours a global range of vessel forms and ritual objects. With titles referencing physical states of being — empty, melting, fused, molted, shedding, skeleton, flesh and bone — the artist evokes nature’s physicality into earthenware, eliciting an emotional connection with the viewer.

While pottery is typically formed from clay, fired in a kiln and sealed with a finishing coat of glaze, Yasunaga adopts glaze as the primary material from which to build his sculptural works. Combined with unique raw materials such as feldspars, whole rocks, metal or glass powders, Yasunaga’s forms are buried in various strata of sand or kaolin (unrefined porcelain clay) to preserve their structure in the firing stage. After cooling, Yasunaga’s sculptures are excavated from their beds in a studio process analogous to archaeological excavation and discovery. The yielded objects appear honed and shaped by earthly elements over centuries, some whole and others curiously fragmented. Aesthetically, these sculptures are simultaneously primitive and contemporary; objects

of human culture which appear as if lost and found, seeming to confirm the supremacy of nature's order over the world of mankind.

Yasunaga (born 1982) lives and works in Iga-shi, Mie Prefecture, Japan. He has a Masters Degree in Environmental Design from Osaka Sangyo University. Recent solo exhibitions include *A Certain Trajectory* at Art Basel Hong Kong *Encounters* (2026); *Traces of Memory* of ICA Miami (2025); *Treading the Earth* at Lisson Gallery, Shanghai (2025); Pierre Marie Giraud, Brussels (2024); *Empty Vessel* at Gallery 85.4, Tokyo (2024); *Clouds in the Distance* at Lisson Gallery, London (2023); *discoveries from picking up stones* at Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles (2023); *In Holding Close* at Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts, Auburn, USA (2023), *Looking Afar* at Lisson Gallery, New York, USA (2022), Lisson Gallery, East Hampton, NY, USA (2021); *Empty Parade* at wad Café, Osaka, Japan (2020); *To things that exist, to things that don't exist* at gallery YDS, Kyoto, Japan (2020); *Empty Landscape* at Libby Leshgold Gallery, Vancouver, Canada (2020); Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2019); *Masaomi Yasunaga: A Shadow of the Eternity* at Utsuwakan, Kyoto, Japan (2019); *Memory of Orient* at Gallery Utsuwa Note, Kawagoe, Saitama, Japan (2018); Garb Domingo, Okinawa, Japan (2017); *and arid landscapes* at pramata, Tokyo, Japan (2017). Selected group exhibitions include *CHAOS* curated by Alex May, Carpenters Workshop Gallery, Los Angeles (2023), *Enamel & Body / Ceramics*, Ginza Maison Hermès Le Forum, Tokyo (2023), *OBJECT&THINGS* at The Noyes House, Connecticut (2022), *Romantic Progress*, Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu (2022), *Sterling Ruby and Masaomi Yasunaga* at Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2020). His work is included in the permanent collections of the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts, Auburn, USA, the Ariana Museum, Geneva, Switzerland and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, USA.