

For Immediate Release

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**Rosanjin and Voulkos
From Rosanjin to Voulkos**

September 21 – October 23, 2004

Kitaoji Rosanjin and Peter Voulkos had an irreverent approach toward their work, and developed controversial and untraditional techniques with clay. The influential element they share lies in their energy and the aura of their personalities. This exhibition outlines the influence of these two legends upon a select group of California-based artists who were working in ceramics in the 1950s and 1960s. Billy Al Bengston, Michael Frimkess, John Mason, Ron Nagle, Ken Price, Jerry Rothman, Adrian Saxe, and Irv Tepper all embraced Rosanjin and Voulkos as models for their lives as artists and adroitly adopted their blueprint for revisionist adaptation of historical ceramic styles.

Post-Meiji period ceramists had come to the attention of Voulkos primarily through his interaction with Japanese Living National Treasure Shoji Hamada in the early fifties at the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, MT. Rosanjin first toured the United States in 1954 while Hamada and Voulkos were at the Bray. At that time Voulkos made his initial connection with Rosanjin's work and relished the stories of Rosanjin's radically tumultuous career.

Rosanjin was a true Renaissance man. He was an entrepreneur who managed the most successful restaurant of his time in Tokyo. His legacy in the culinary world ascends through the title "Rosanjin Scholar" within the competition (and later television show) *Iron Chef* and continues to influence new generations of chefs worldwide. He was a self-taught expert on historical Japanese ceramics, had an extensive collection of antique Japanese wares, and explored traditional village techniques through his own work by excavating and implementing ancient kiln sites.

Voulkos also drew inspiration from eclectic sources including jazz, poetry, dance, and contemporary art. He applied to his work in ceramics the talents he possessed from his backgrounds in classical guitar and Flamenco dancing. What Voulkos might best be remembered for though is his vision of directing the aesthetic energy of the Abstract Expressionist Movement in painting into his work in clay. The scene in which he surrounded himself served as a catalyst for the creation of his public persona, which in turn became the window through which we view his work. For both Rosanjin and Voulkos, life and work were not only about making art, they were a reflection of a commitment to a greater cultural influence.

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of poet, author and critic Rose Slivka (1919-2004) whose illuminating observations on Peter Voulkos have laid the groundwork for future scholarly examination.