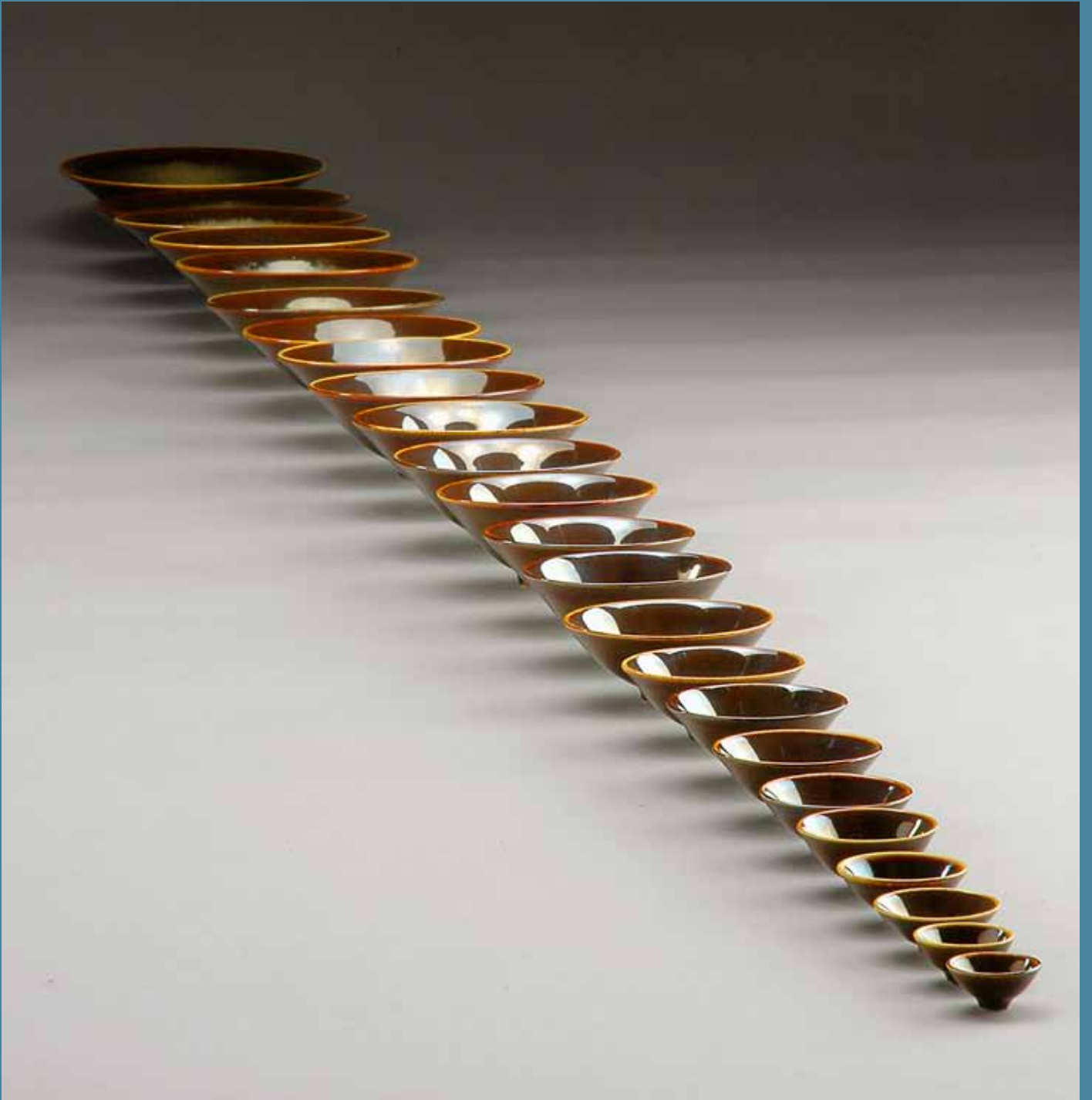


LUSTRE

The Ceramic Art of Hideaki Miyamura



PUCKER GALLERY | BOSTON



F-STOP | *gold glaze* | 90 x 10.5 x 10.5" | HM444

COVER: EDICULE VASE | *blue hare's fur glaze* | 15 x 9 x 9" | HM419

BACK COVER: VASE | *blue hare's fur glaze with snow cap* | 7 x 6 x 6" | HM422

All works are porcelain.



LIDDED JAR | *black and gold glazes* | 7.75 x 7.75 x 5.5" | HM406

LUSTRE

The Ceramic Art of Hideaki Miyamura

Experimentation is the systematic control of the known, counterbalanced by acceptance of the unknown. Though experimentation's first job is to test suppositions, its true power is not in proving preconceptions, but rather in revealing the unexpected and driving innovation. Experimentation often seeks something specific, but unveils something mysterious. Hideaki Miyamura has embraced these harmonic principles in his pottery; though driven by the pursuit of certain glaze finishes through controlled testing and the minimization of chance, he is, in the end, open to risk and guided by the mystical and spiritual power of giving life to hidden beauty. His process of throwing, glazing, and firing is as refined and complex as the

artwork itself. His vessels are pristine, disarmingly simple, contemplative objects whose finishes reflect the panoply of the natural world—geologic phenomena, star-filled nights, undulating ocean waves, and fiery sunsets.

Hideaki Miyamura came to pottery not by serendipity but with great purpose, glimpsing a dream at a young age and actualizing it through a resolute commitment to education and practice, a tenacious spirit, and a disregard for the obstacles in his way. Miyamura's early life in Japan, both in the small province of Niigata and later as a potter's apprentice, remains in the fiber of his being, yet is geographically and culturally distant from Kensington, New Hampshire, where he now lives and works. His serene and secluded property

houses a studio and separate kiln building where Miyamura devotes his days to the technically demanding, creatively inspirational process of pottery, assiduously mixing his clay body, throwing his vessels, concocting his glazes, and monitoring his firings. Light-filled from enormous windows, the studio is tranquil and open but, even at rest, reverberates with the intensity of the artist's immense focus and drive.

Sculptural vessels in various states of completion line the studio like sentinels guarding over the artist, who is a genial and engaging, yet private man. If Miyamura's studio is symbolic of his current success as an artist-potter, it does not divulge the years and trials that have led the artist here, and contains only glimpses of his 26-year-old self—the aspiring artist

who, one day, was perusing a pottery book and came upon four photographs of Chinese Song Dynasty (950-1269) tea bowls glazed in a dark and lustrous tenmoku. Though much has changed in Miyamura's life since that time, he is still infused with the sense of awe and spurred by the penchant for risk that this photographic encounter ignited, and still driven by the pursuit to create things as beautiful as, or even more beautiful than, what he saw in that book. As fellow potter Brother Thomas Bezanson wrote, "risking and dreaming are the primary acts of creativity." What

was it about these four yohen tenmoku bowls, which the artist never even saw in person, which so inspired the trajectory of his life?

Twelfth-century Japanese Buddhist monks who were in China's Mt. Tianmu ("tenmoku" in Japanese; "Heavens' Eye" in English) to study Zen Buddhism were given tea to forestall drowsiness during meditation. When the monks returned to Japan, they brought with them the seeds for the tea plants and the glazed earthenware bowls in which the tea was served (bowls which had actually been made at

kilns many miles away from Mt. Tianmu, but which they nonetheless termed tenmoku). Today's tea ceremony, an intricate art, is a nuanced and complex fusion of culturally significant rituals. The Japanese potters of today who make tea bowls often devote years to its study in order to thoroughly understand the elevating role of the bowl, and craft the vessel with this purpose in mind. The *mingei* interest in the beauty of everyday objects may have been an integral part of the artist's upbringing and training, but it never fully resonated with his visionary mind. While Miyamura



VASE | red glaze | 11 x 8 x 8" | HM424



VASE | iron crystalline glaze | 9 x 4.25 x 4.25" | HM409



VASE | red glaze | 9.25 x 5.25 x 5.25" | HM425

honors and respects those who take this path, his personal aesthetic celebrates the beauty of beauty (in fact, the shape of many of the works are so attenuated that they prevent functionality), and his interest lies in pottery's ability to be spiritually uplifting.

It was not the purpose of the vessels that so inspired Miyamura when he saw the images of the Song Dynasty tea bowls in that book. It was the yohen tenmoku glaze. Yohen (*yo* meaning "kiln" and *hen* meaning "change") refers to the natural

ash glaze that develops on a pot during the firing and came to prominence during the Song Dynasty. It is especially notable in Bizen ware. An alternate meaning to the word *yo*, apropos to the glistening night-sky appearance of the glaze, is "stars." The word *tenmoku* also has had a dual meaning, describing both shape (a tea bowl with an indented rim that can be glazed in any style) and coloration (an iron-saturated inky black). Molten iron in the tenmoku glaze shifts enigmatically on the clay body, sometimes combining in crystals, some-

times merging in oily spots, and sometimes melting in deep and glossy pools. Miyamura's unique combination of the two—often referred to in his oeuvre by its nickname "hare's fur glaze"—is defined by iridescence, shimmer, and tendril-like striations of brilliant blues, greens, and yellows.

The Song Dynasty tenmoku, once the inspirational benchmark, is now just one of several glazes in the repertoire of an artist whose style represents diverse cultural and aesthetic influences, and whose attention to shape rivals his mastery of



VASE | *silver eyes glaze* | 8.5 x 6 x 6" | HM438



VASE | *blue hare's fur glaze with snow cap* | 9 x 6.25 x 6.25" | HM437

glaze. Miyamura has stated, "I create my own interpretations of classical forms, while trying to achieve a clarity and simplicity of line. I am very conscious of the ways in which a form interacts with the space around it. I want my pieces to feel in balance with their environment, to feel as though they co-exist naturally with their surroundings." Miyamura's admiration for the clean-lined aesthetic of many European porcelain houses is evident in his unfussy shapes and pristine finishes. For Miyamura, shape and glaze work in concert in the creation of captivatingly beautiful, spiritually transporting works of art. Smooth white surfaces form an ideal foil for the chemical elements of his glazes to migrate, circle, and merge.

Inside the hot kiln, the glaze flows slowly down the gently sloping shoulders

of his vases, sometimes resulting in feathery streaks, other times in a glistening shimmer frozen in accentuated rivulets. The diminutive handles and necks would never be used to lift the vase but offer geometric elements around which the glaze shines like well-burnished metallurgy. Miyamura often uses his fingers in the throwing process to create wave-like flutes, sometimes with a thick wale around the body of the vase, sometimes with thin ridges around the neck or top, sometimes with horizontal and vertical together in one vessel, but always finely trimmed and smoothly polished. Miyamura often combines roundness, flatness, ribbing, and protuberances in one piece to provide a stage on which a single glaze (or two or three complementary glazes) dance seamlessly. Texture is created on the sleek ves-

sels because the glazes provide a symphony of finishes—profound pools of subtle undertones pair with translucent areas of color where the porcelain is nearly visible, and glossy stretches dissolve into matte finishes like steam on a mirror.

Miyamura has mindfully developed a select number of glazes, all of which can be temperamental to work with but embody the limitless search for awe-inspiring beauty that defines his process. Miyamura's signature gold glaze, developed after the artist moved to the United States, was the result of a small and unexpected patch that appeared during the testing phase of another glaze. This tiny spot motivated Miyamura to try to create a gold glaze, even though it was without precedent in ceramics and not something he had ever attempted to make before. Miyamura



VASE | *crackle glaze with ink rub* | 13 x 10.5 x 10.5" | HM432



LIDDED JAR | *yellow crystalline glaze* | 14 x 12 x 12" | HM445



VASE | *iron crystalline glaze* | 3.25 x 3.25 x 3.25" | HM411

sought a gold that was not showy or overtly shiny (many of his test gold glazes came out too burnished or too dark); instead he envisioned a quiet yellow gold with a subtle aqua undertone, where only the thickest parts of the glaze that pool around the bottom would exhibit an inky luster. Similarly, the peacock glaze resulted from Miyamura's inner vision that the blue hare's fur glaze, so capable of expressing a feather effect, could be made to form into sunbursts if another glaze were put on top. Not surprisingly, Miyamura took this notion and tested it diligently until he achieved success.

The crackle glaze, another in Miyamura's diverse glazing vocabulary, results when a base material and a surface material cool at different rates and separate from one another. Though Miyamura's shapes are decidedly modern, his ivory and mahogany crackle glaze has an antiquarian feeling reminiscent of the Song Dynasty crazed celadon pots produced in the Kuan kilns in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The crystalline glaze Miyamura uses is primarily European in origin, and, as glazes go, not particularly old. Though the ancient Chinese oil-spot glazes of the Song Dynasty did contain small crystals, practitioners today

believe this may have been unintentional. The accidental micro-crystals of the Song Dynasty pots pale in comparison to the purposeful macro-crystals of Miyamura's work. Miyamura's crystalline glazes are a high-gloss, high style contemporary version of historical works first popularized by the Sèvres porcelain factory and England's Royal Doulton. Sometimes, quartz-like white, silver, or gold crystals of varying sizes populate a white background that, like snow, is not pure white at all but reflects and absorbs the colors around it. Sometimes firework-like turquoise crystals explode on a glossy canary surface. Other times the mixture is a

subtle starry-night of blacks and blues, and still other times marble-like green crystals look more like mineral than porcelain.

The glossy, reflective finish of many of Miyamura's glazes—whether crystal, hare's fur, or gold—evoke the artist's personal interest in glass. Miyamura had at one time considered pursuing a career in glass blowing but there were no masters or schools in Japan to teach the art. While researching the tenmoku glaze in the 1980s, Miyamura learned about Austrian Bohemian art glass manufacturer Leotz, which came into prominence during the Jugendstil period (also known as Art Nouveau, 1890–1920) and which was known for its iridescent pieces. (The influence on Miyamura of Art Nouveau/Jugendstil is theoretical as well as stylistic, as he too has eschewed the strict dictums of his art in favor of his own way of doing things). Miyamura envies the flexibility that glass artists have to create impossibly thin shapes,

recalling the tendril-like necks of Italian glass master Lino Tagliapietra's gorgeous vessels. Still, the balance that glass artists achieve between substantial components and ethereal elements is reflected in many of Miyamura's vessels, in which the bulbous form gradually culminates into a waifish neck.

Miyamura's interest in glass brings us full circle back to the notion of experimentation. To think that Miyamura would have been satisfied to unlock the secrets of the yohen tenmoku glaze would be to misjudge the nature of the artist: pioneering, driven to discover, relentlessly seeking new expressions of beauty. Experimentation continues to be a bellwether for Miyamura as he pushes the scope of his knowledge and supersedes the traditional limitations of his medium. A visit to his studio reveals numerous trials in progress. In the lower-level storage area of the studio, he is using a glass-making

technique called lampworking to fashion small glass rods into colorful knobs to use as the bolts for a wall-mounted installation of blue hare's fur plates. In another part of the studio, teardrop vases with truncated necks await the delivery of specially commissioned glass tubes from a lighting company, to be inserted as reflective elements. On yet another table, dark clay unglazed bodies will be artfully combined with his more traditional glazed porcelain pieces. Time will tell whether these latest experiments will withstand Miyamura's critical scrutiny, or whether, like many of his vessels, they will be shattered into oblivion for failing to perfectly fulfill the notions of beauty and spiritual connectivity that the artist ultimately strives to achieve.

— JEANNEV. KOLES

Jeanne Koles is an independent consultant who does project management, design, and writing for museums and the cultural sector. This essay is excerpted from the forthcoming monograph Risk and Discovery: The Ceramic Art of Hideaki Miyamura from Pucker Art Publications and Syracuse University Press.



VASE | black and gold glazes | 7.5 x 6.25 x 6.25" | HM405



VASE | sea foam purple glaze | 7.5 x 6.5 x 6.5" | HM426



NERIKOMI BOWL | *translucent glaze* | 2 x 5 x 5" | HM448



VASE | *blue hare's fur glaze with snow cap* | 13.5 x 6 x 6" | HM421



TEARDROP VASE | *peacock glaze* | 15.5 x 6 x 6" | HM408



VASE | *iron crystalline glaze* | 14 x 5 x 5" | HM433



TEARDROP VASE | *crackle glaze with ink rub* | 22 x 7 x 7" | HM431



SAKE CUPS | celadon glaze with cherry blossom decoration | 1.5 x 3.75 x 3.75", each | HM418, HM417, HM415



LIDDED JAR | sea foam green glaze | 13 x 12 x 12" | HM446



VASE | *green eyes glaze* | 6 x 6.5 x 6.5" | HM450



VASE | *iron crystalline glaze* | 6.5 x 5.5 x 5.5" | HM440



VASE | *silver eyes glaze* | 9 x 6.25 x 6.25" | HM436



LOTUS VASE | *gold glaze* | 22 x 11.5 x 11.5" | HM429



TEARDROP VASE | *gold glaze with snow cap* | 18 x 9.5 x 9.5" | HM430



SAKE CUPS | celadon glaze with cherry blossom decoration | 1.5 x 3.75 x 3.75", each | HM414, HM416



TEARDROP VASE | starry night glaze | 15.5 x 9 x 9" | HM427



VASE | crackle glaze with ink rub | 8.5 x 5.5 x 5.5" | HM439



VASE | *green eyes glaze* | 8 x 9.25 x 9.25" | HM451



VASE | *iron crystalline glaze* | 12 x 6 x 6" | HM434



VASE | *silver eyes glaze* | 13 x 7.5 x 7.5" | HM452



VASE | *sea foam green glaze* | 5.75 x 6.5 x 6.5" | HM412



TEARDROP VASE | *purple and green crystalline glaze* | 17.25 x 9.75 x 9.75" | HM413



TEARDROP VASE | *green eyes glaze* | 16 x 9.5 x 9.5" | HM447



VASE | *sea foam green glaze* | 7.5 x 6.5 x 6.5" | HM410



NERIKOMI LIDDED JAR | *translucent glaze* | 9 x 7.25 x 7.25" | HM435



LIDDED JAR | *crackle glaze with ink rub* | 20 x 6 x 6" | HM428

HIDEAKI MIYAMURA

*Biography**Education*

- 1981 Graduated from Western Michigan University
 1987 Completed apprenticeship with Shurei Miura, Yamanashi, Japan

Selected Exhibitions

- 2014 *Lustre*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
 2013 Gallery Sakura Noki, Tokyo, Japan
 Wexler Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
 2012 *Iridescence*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
 Galerie Silbereis, Paris, France
 2011 *Beauty in All Things: Japanese Art and Design*, Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY
 Wexler Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
 2010 *Beyond Tenmoku*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
 2009 Gallery Sakura Noki, Tokyo, Japan
 2008 *Resplendent Grace*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
 2007 SOFA Chicago, Chicago, IL
 2006 *Pursuing the Eye of Heaven*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
 2005 Gallery Camino Real, Boca Raton, FL
 Katie Gingrass Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
 2004 *Risk of Discovery*, Pucker Gallery, Boston
Fusion of Cultures, Kentucky Museum of Art, Louisville, KY
 SOFA New York, New York, NY
 2003 SOFA Chicago, Chicago, IL
 SOFA New York, New York, NY
 2002 SOFA Chicago, Chicago, IL
 SOFA New York, New York, NY
 Pewabic Pottery, Museum and Education Center, Detroit, MI
 1999 Ayumi Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
 1998 Ayumi Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
 1993 *Bay State Clay*, Fitchburg Museum of Art, Fitchburg, MA
 1989 *Feats of Clay*, Lincoln, CA
 The Fletcher Trust Collection, Auckland, New Zealand

Permanent Collections

- Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
 Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
 Auckland Institute and Museum, Auckland, New Zealand
 Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, PA
 Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA
 Danforth Museum, Framingham, MA
 Georgetown University, Special Collections, Washington DC
 Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
 Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN
 Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY
 Newark Museum of Art, Newark, NJ
 Nora Eccles Harrison Museum, Utah State University, Logan, UT
 Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA
 Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
 Sackler Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
 Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA
 Tikotin Museum, Haifa, Israel
 Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England
 Wheaton College, Norton, MA

*Grants*

- 2008 Individual Artist Fellowship, State of New Hampshire
 2002 Individual Artist Fellowship, State of New Hampshire

Publications

- Carl Little, "In Search of Iridescence," *Ceramics Monthly*, May 2010.
 K.T. Anders, "A Man of 10,000 Glazes," *Clay Times*, March/April 2006.
 Diana L. Daniels and Martha Drexler Lynn, *The Vase and Beyond: The Sidney Swidler Collection of the Contemporary Vessel*, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA, 2012.
 Jonathan Fairbanks, Angela Fina, and Christopher Gustin, *The Best of Pottery, Volume 2*, Rockport Publishers, Rockport, MA, 1998.
 Leon Nigrosh, *Claywork: Form and Idea in Ceramic Design*, Davis Publications, Worcester, MA, 1994.

NERIKOMI BOWL | *translucent glaze* | 2.25 x 5.25 x 5.25" | HM449TEAPOT | *gold glaze* | 5.5 x 4.75 x 3.75" | HM407



BUILDING #2 | *gold glaze* | 44 x 7 x 7" | HM442
BUILDING #1 | *gold glaze with stone base* | 60 x 12 x 12" | HM441
BUILDING #3 | *hare's fur glaze with clock gear handle* | 38 x 8 x 8" | HM443

PUCKER GALLERY

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LUSTRE

The Ceramic Art of Hideaki Miyamura

DATES:

11 January through 22 February 2014

OPENING RECEPTION:

11 January 2014, 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM

The public is invited to attend. The artist will be present.