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For Immediate Release

ICN gallery Press Release

ICN gallery  
96-98 Leonard Street; London EC2A 4RH  
Hours: Mon – Sat, 12:00–7:00pm  
www.icn-global.com

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## Keiko Masumoto “Kitsch Kōgei”

**05 – 31 March 2012** (Opening from 12:00pm on 05 March)

Private View: 03 March (Sat), 2:00–5:00 pm (Invitation Only)

**ICN gallery** proudly presents **Kitsch Kōgei** by artist **Keiko Masumoto** from **05 – 31 March 2012**. For a long time in Japanese applied arts, the ideas towards “art” and “craft” have been kept separate. However there are some artists who break the mold, and ICN Gallery is pleased to present one of them, Keiko Masumoto.

Using high ceramic craftsmanship, her works include everyday Japanese items such as decorative plates, vases, and tea ceremony instruments. But she breaks the relationship between utilitarian and decorative objects by combining these items and traditional motifs with dynamic shapes, creating a humorous take on Japanese traditions and culture. A new generation artist seeking to escape outdated conventions, Masumoto erases the lines between craft and art by showcasing the beauty of useful things.

**Keiko Masumoto** (b. 1982; Hyogo, Japan)

After completing both undergraduate and graduate ceramic programs at Kyoto City University in 2007, Masumoto was an instructor at ceramic studio Fumosha in Kyoto for three years. From 2010 she has been an artist-in-residence at the University of Arts (Philadelphia, USA).

**Scheduled Events:**

Private View: 03 March from 2:00-5:00 pm (Invitation only)

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Octopus / pot  
2011  
Porcelian  
310mm×240mm×350mm



Pagoda / pot  
2008  
Ceramic  
1200mm×650mm×600mm



Pot / pot  
2010  
Ceramic  
650mm×570mm×440mm



Kinkakuji / pot  
2008  
Ceramic  
400mm×215mm×335mm

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**Curator's Message:**

There have been many developments in contemporary Japanese pottery. Young artists have emerged within the last ten years who go against convention and have created works that are moving, shed the fetters of tradition, and are full of expression. These works have some serious punch.

From this generation of artists Keiko Masumoto explores the boundary between art and craft creating utilitarian pieces that are for decoration. These pieces, while considering the traditions of Japanese art, are plates with 3D blooms and vases curled in the arms of an octopus. Styled as kitsch, sometimes the pieces are funny, and other times surprisingly frightening. However, the artist places these works within "the full context of the world's many values and rules. These are to decorate, to use."

If we look at the past, there is a similar controversy surrounding Bernard Leach's adamant concern for strict traditional practice and rejection of the mechanization of ceramics, summed up in the phrase "To Leach or not to Leach". Another is Oribe (織部) design and ceramics which were so cutting edge at the time they were considered a joke. This was complete heresy. Now they are seen as the pinnacle of tradition. I wouldn't be surprised if Masumoto's pieces were viewed that way in about 100 years.

However, even for artists who move against tradition, it is vital to possess perfect technique. If not coupled with technical skill, the expression of the piece will be imperfect. In the case of Masumoto's works, even though the pieces seem to have been made randomly, the style of modeling and white color have been used from ancient times. This technique combined with her aesthetic sense creates a big impact that can also be quite delicate. Despite being a young artist she has gained experience in an unprecedented amount of time; who knows where her career will take her. This sense of risk and the hidden perfection of her works makes her an artist to watch.

Hisami Omori  
ICN curator

**Notes to Editors:**

**For further information please contact ICN gallery:**

**Yulia Herzog or Pamela Jewell at [info@icn-global.com](mailto:info@icn-global.com) or 020 7729 7977.**

**About ICN gallery:**

Connecting the creative world from Asia.

ICN gallery is contemporary art gallery based in London that actively seeks to showcase and share with the UK public upcoming & young contemporary artists from Japan and other Asian countries. Neither seeking to imitate the West nor call for a return to pure tradition, the ICN gallery artists' works present messages on today's dynamically changing world of Asia. Producing works of pure creativity, they expand beyond established art boundaries, incorporating the ideas of art, culture and philosophy with originality and skill. Besides organising exhibitions, ICN also host events, seminars and workshops offering the public a chance to have a more personal engagement with creative work. By basing ourselves in Japan and UK, specifically London, not only are we able to discover new talent, but also able to lend support to more local artists; extending our ever-growing network for creative distribution.