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Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Self-Taught Ceramic Artist Shinichi Sawada Explores Traditions of Japanese Pottery in Upcoming Solo Exhibition *Agents of Clay* at CAM, Opening September 6



Courtesy James Cohan, New York and Jennifer Lauren Gallery, Manchester, United Kingdom. Photo: Izzy Leung.

**July 11, 2024 (St. Louis, MO)**—The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM), in collaboration with The Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina, is proud to present the first solo exhibition in the United States of works by self-taught ceramic artist Shinichi Sawada. Based in Japan's Shiga Prefecture, Sawada has produced a mesmerizing variety of alluring ceramic figures for more than two decades. His creatures are singular and inventive, existing somewhere between the natural world and the artist's imagination. The surfaces are significantly worked, with repeated linear patterns, horns, scales, teeth, bumps, protrusions, and often, multiple faces and eyes. These hybrid animals, insects, birds, and dragons have presence and personality far beyond their modest scale.

***Shinichi Sawada: Agents of Clay*** will be on view at CAM from **September 6, 2024–February 9, 2025**.

The sculptures are made in centuries-old Japanese tradition, fired in single-chamber anagama kilns, also known as cave kilns, fueled by wood fires that are stoked for days at a time. As elemental vapors circulate through the kiln and settle on the sculpture's surfaces, they create finishes that range from russet red, orange and umber, to ashy white and deep, velvety black.

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10–5 Wed  
10–5 Thu  
10–8 Fri  
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This exhibition brings together a selection of works that Sawada made between 2004 and 2021. They have been produced with support from Nakayoshi Fukushikai Welfare Association, which offers social and developmental support to a range of neurodivergent and disabled individuals. Sawada, who has nonspeaking autism, has been making ceramics since 2000, prolifically creating objects in series, and revisiting certain characters and forms again and again. Their infinite variances underscore Sawada's artistic breadth, originality, and creativity.

"It was a great pleasure and honor to work with Dr. Jen Sudul Edwards and The Mint Museum to bring this captivating exhibition to fruition and to select objects that give audiences a view into the breadth of Sawada's work," says Lisa Melandri, Executive Director of CAM. "The personality, impact, and extraordinary character of these sculptures is far greater than their size. Simply looking at these works, you can feel Sawada's creativity and imagination, and that's what makes them so universally appealing."

*Shinichi Sawada: Agents of Clay* was developed in collaboration with The Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina, where it is currently on view through August 11, 2024 and will make its debut in the midwest at CAM.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication, *Shinichi Sawada: Agents of Clay*, featuring images of works in the exhibition, an introduction and acknowledgments by co-organizers Lisa Melandri and Jen Sudul Edwards, Ph.D., and a scholarly essay by independent curator, writer, and arts administrator of contemporary art and craft, Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy.

*Shinichi Sawada: Agents of Clay* is organized by Lisa Melandri, Executive Director, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, and Jen Sudul Edwards, Ph.D., Chief Curator and Curator of Contemporary Art at The Mint Museum.



This exhibition is generously supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, Alexis M. Cossé and Erik Karanik, and the Ferring Family Foundation. The exhibition publication has been generously supported in part by Jennifer Lauren Gallery and James Cohan Gallery.

### **Related Events**

#### **Friday, September 6**

Patron and Press Preview, 10:00–11:30 am (RSVP required)

Member Preview, 6:00–7:00 pm

Public Opening, 7:00–9:00 pm

#### **Thursday, January 23**

In Conversation

Lisa Melandri with Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy, 6:00–7:00 pm

For press access on September 6, including interview opportunities with the curators, contact Alexia Majors at [amajors@camstl.org](mailto:amajors@camstl.org)

For full event details, visit [camstl.org/calendar](https://camstl.org/calendar)



#### **About Shinichi Sawada**

Shinichi Sawada (b. 1982) lives and works in Japan's Shiga prefecture. Since 2000, he has attended Nakayoshi Fukushikai, a social welfare facility that supports disabled people. In 2020, a solo exhibition of his work traveled from the Museum Lothar Fischer in Neumarkt to the Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin. His work has featured prominently in major group exhibitions around the world, including *The Encyclopedic Palace* at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013 curated by Massimiliano Gioni and *The Doors of Perception* at Frieze New York in 2019. His work is held in the permanent collections of numerous public institutions, including the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Halle Saint Pierre, Paris; and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca. *Photo: Nakayoshi Fukushikai and Jennifer Lauren Gallery.*

#### **About the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis**

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis creates meaningful engagement with the most relevant and innovative art being made today. Founded by civic and cultural leaders in 1980, the Museum transformed from a small gallery into an internationally recognized arts institution, now permanently housed in a flexible, open, and inviting building designed by renowned American architect Brad Cloepfil. CAM's distinct architecture reflects the organization's values and supports a dynamic range of exhibitions, public programs, educational initiatives, and community collaborations. The only museum in the region solely dedicated to contemporary art, CAM is one of the preeminent non-collecting institutions of its kind in the United States. We are a site for discovery, a welcoming space, free and open to all. For more information, visit [camstl.org](https://camstl.org).

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#### Upcoming exhibitions in St. Louis:

##### **Pulitzer Arts Foundation**

*Scott Burton: Shape Shift* on view Sep 6, 2024–Feb 2, 2025

*Brendan Fernandes: In Two* on view Sep 6, 2024–Feb 2, 2025

##### **Laumeier Sculpture Park**

*Monika Weiss: Metamorphosis (Sound Sculpture)* on view Aug 24–Dec 15, 2024

**Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum**

*Design Agendas: Modern Architecture in St. Louis, 1930s–1970s* on view Sep 13, 2024–Jan 6, 2025

**Saint Louis Art Museum**

*The Work of Art: The Federal Art Project, 1935–1943* on view Aug 2, 2024–Apr 13, 2025

*Narrative Wisdom and African Arts* on view Oct 19, 2024–winter 2025

*Currents 124: Crystal Z Campbell* on view Oct 25, 2024–Mar 9, 2025

*Bolts of Color: Printed Textiles after WWII* on view Nov 8, 2024–Apr 20, 2025



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