

Shio Kusaka

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108, rue Vieille du Temple
75003 Paris



Shio Kusaka, (*machine 5*), 2024.
© Shio Kusaka. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner.
Photo by Marten Elder.

David Zwirner is pleased to present its second exhibition with Shio Kusaka, which also marks the reopening of the gallery's newly renovated Paris location. Known for her playful and instinctive approach to the medium of ceramics, Kusaka makes vessels that embrace organic imperfections, recurrent techniques and patterns, and imagery that alludes to historical, contemporary, and futuristic forms. The artist's complex designs highlight poetic irregularities and optical qualities. Kusaka's work is inspired by a wide range of references: personal observations, textures, patterns, architecture, fantasy, and outer space, among others.

In the artist's Paris presentation—her first in the city—Kusaka places new forms across a pedestal spanning the length of the gallery, subtly echoing the installation of *one light year*, in which her works were arranged in a line on flat copper plates on the floor at her 2022 inaugural solo exhibition at David Zwirner New York. Here, the pedestal extends from the wall into the exhibition space and is raised to bring the viewer closer to the works themselves, which are arranged by height from shortest to tallest, and help navigate the gradual shift in scale. These works reflect Kusaka's desire to return to a more intimate scale of making and experiencing, inviting audiences to closely observe the meticulous details applied to her forms. By doing so, they evince the artist's recent interest in quantum mechanics, the field of physics that describes the atomic and subatomic behavior of nature, and the centrality of the observer in witnessing shifting states of matter.

The exhibited forms reflect a daily and organic process of inquiry, in which the artist is shepherded by moments of randomness and uncertainty. Kusaka also delves into familiar motifs and techniques – including her signature method of carving, which often steers her use of glazes and approach to firing. Some of the vessels elucidate details originally found on the pottery of the Jomon (c. 10,500–300 BC), Yayoi (c. 300 BC–AD 300), and Kofun (c. AD 300–552) periods in Japan. The gently scalloped surface of certain works mimics the draped clothing of *kouroi*, marble sculptures of human figures from Archaic

Greece (c. 650–480 BC). Other black and terracotta ceramics by Kusaka resemble Athenian vases from a similar era.

Kusaka also continues to explore themes relating to the cosmos, which she first engaged with in *one light year*. Merging references from movies and television shows like *Star Trek* and *The Mandalorian*, as well as American science-fiction digests such as *Imagination* (1950–1958), individual works and groupings invoke flying saucers and planetary ring systems. Likewise, quivering lines that mimic soundwaves and seismological signals express the artist's interest in the concept of wave-particle duality and the vibratory and responsive patterns that guide her relationship with form.

In an adjacent exhibition space, Kusaka debuts four large new paper lanterns, fabricated in collaboration with the Kyoto-based company Kojima Shōten. Archetypal alien spaceships and their attendant beams are constructed from paper and bamboo. Glowing with inner light, these celestial shapes are born not only from Kusaka's fixation with this iconic form but also our collective conception of outer space and interest in the unknown.

Shio Kusaka (b. 1972) was born in Morioka, Japan, and moved to San Francisco in the early 1990s. After receiving her BFA in 2001 from the University of Washington, Seattle, she moved to Los Angeles, where she currently lives and works.

In early 2020, the historic Neutra VDL Studio and Residences in Los Angeles held a solo exhibition of Kusaka's work, curated by Douglas Fogle and Hanneke Skerath. Museum Voorlinden in Wassenaar, the Netherlands, held a two-person exhibition of Kusaka and Jonas Wood in 2017. Kusaka's work has also been included in important group exhibitions, such as the Whitney Biennial (2014); *Going Public: The Napoleone Collection – International Art Collectors in Sheffield*, Graves Gallery, Sheffield, England (2016), which traveled to Touchstones Rochdale Museum, England (2016–2017); *Recent Acquisitions in Asian Art*, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio (2017); and *Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950–2019*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2019–2022).

The artist's first solo exhibition with David Zwirner, *Shio Kusaka: one light year*, was presented at the gallery's 19th Street location in 2022.

In 2021, Kusaka received the Isamu Noguchi Award alongside Toshiko Mori.

The artist's work is held in public collections worldwide, including the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio; The Broad, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar, the Netherlands; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kansas; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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