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Fundació J. Llorens Artigas



**Organisation and production:**

Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya  
in collaboration with Fundació J. Llorens Artigas

**Curation:**

Ricard Bru, Doctor of Art History and professor  
at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

**Dates:**

from June 4 to October 3, 2021

Josep Llorens Artigas  
and Hamada Shōji  
at the wedding of  
Joan Gardy Artigas  
and Ishikawa Mako,  
1962. Detail.  
Fundació J. Llorens  
Artigas



# THE COLOURS HAMADA ARTIGAS OF FIRE

*The Colours of Fire.* Hamada-Artigas presents the work of two of the great ceramists of the 20th century: Josep Llorens Artigas (1892-1980) and Hamada Shōji (1894-1978). Featuring more than 140 pieces from public and private collections, the exhibition uncovers a story of friendship and mutual admiration built between the two artists.

The exhibition centres around Artigas and Hamada, as well as other artists inspired by the *mingei* movement, and who aided in the revival of Japanese popular art, such as Joan Gardy Artigas, Eudald Serra, Joan Miró, Elisenda Sala and Ramon Carreté. It explores artistic relationships and the influence of Japanese ceramics in Catalonia in the mid-20th century. The exhibition also features pieces by the most important artists of this movement, such as Kawai Kanjirō, Bernard Leach and Serizawa Keisuke (who, along with Hamada, is known in Japan as a National Living Treasure).

# FIRE AND EARTH

Hamada and Artigas coincide in their search for the meaning of pure beauty and in attributing the origin of their works to both tradition and their own intuition, even though their ceramics are very different.

Hamada Shōji is one of the most important Japanese ceramicists of the 20th century and in 1955 was declared a National Living Treasure by the government of Japan. He worked his pieces on a lathe, repeating shapes and motifs, particularly that of the Okinawa sugar cane, and used a small number of enamels extracted from the nearby natural environment, which were manipulated with great mastery. He never signed his works because he understood that they were the result of both his hand and of nature, fire and earth, and that they contained remnants of an anonymous artisan tradition.



The wedding of Joan Gardy Artigas and Ishikawa Mako. As well as the Artigas and Ishikawa families, Hamada Shōji and Hijikata Teiichi also appear as the best men. Tokyo, March 1, 1962. Fundació J. Llorens Artigas

Artigas, one of the great masters of modern European ceramics, did sign his works however, occasionally even giving them poetic and suggestive names. He created thousands of ceramic enamel formulas in order to avoid repeating the same piece or colour; his aim was to create unique and inimitable works of art. Artigas was one of the first Catalan ceramicists to explore the ceramic from East Asia. He incorporated the harmonic, simple and refined balance of this tradition into his work.

Artigas and Hamada met in England in 1952 and were brought together a decade later, this time in Japan, for the wedding of Joan Gardy Artigas (the son of Llorens Artigas) and Ishikawa Mako. From then on, their personal relationship grew, so much so that the kiln built by Artigas in Gallifa (Barcelona), in 1963, was made from the study of the kiln that Hamada kept in the Japanese town of Mashiko. Many of Artigas' pieces and some of the works he made together with Joan Miró were fired in this kiln.



**Hamada Shōji,**  
*Large bowl, c. 1968.*  
Sucesión Serra.  
Photo: Josep Casanova

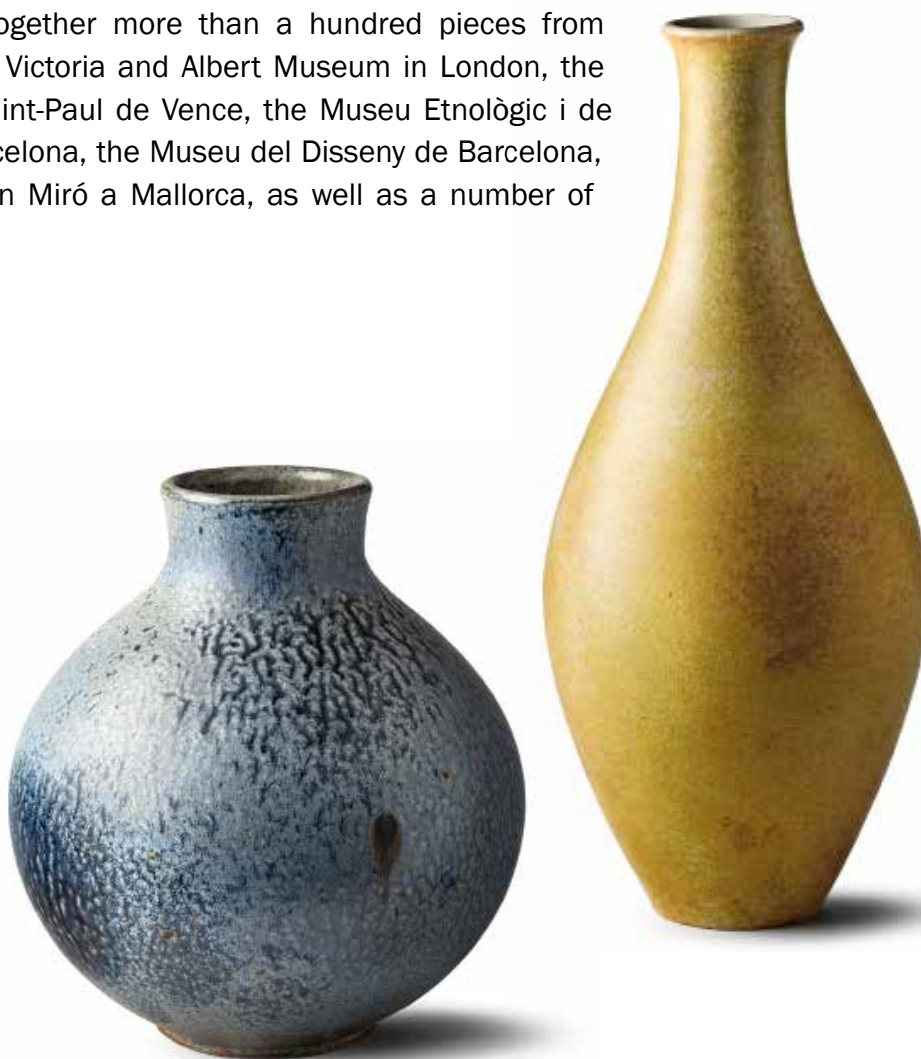
Artigas and Hamada coincided in a time of deep transformation. As ceramicists, they had to deal with the advent of industrial ceramic production that threatened the artistic quality of artisanal practices. The two men, together with the founding members of the *mingei* movement, were troubled by the loss of this artisanal practice built on the aesthetic values of tradition.

Since 1950, the *mingei* movement has been popular throughout Catalonia, mainly thanks to Josep Llorens Artigas and the sculptor Eudald Serra, a fundamental link in the relationship between Catalonia and Japan. Together Artigas and Serra also created the AR-SE project, to produce useful, low-cost ceramics that would offer beauty a place in everyday life.

This exhibition brings together more than a hundred pieces from institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul de Vence, the Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món in Barcelona, the Museu del Disseny de Barcelona, the Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca, as well as a number of private collections.

**Josep Llorens Artigas.**  
*Vase, 1943.*  
Private collection  
Photo: Josep Casanova

**Josep Llorens Artigas.**  
*Vase, 1949-50.*  
Private collection  
Photo: Josep Casanova





# ROOM TEXTS

## THE DISCOVERY OF ORIENTAL CERAMICS

Josep Llorens Artigas trained as a ceramist at the Escola Superior dels Bells Oficis in Barcelona, with the master Francesc Quer, and it was in 1917 that he discovered that his vocation lay in art ceramics. Through Quer, Artigas discovered the ceramics of modern French art and how they drew influence from the East Asian styles spread in the late 19th century, in the age of Japonism and modernism. In Catalonia, the first ceramicists to learn about models from France, ancient China and Japan were Francesc Quer, Francesc Elias and Josep Llorens Artigas. Before long, these Oriental styles paved the way for the harmonious, simple and refined balance found in ceramics of Artigas.



Yanagi Sōetsu and Josep Llorens Artigas, 1952. Detail.  
Fundació J. Llorens Artigas



## THE MINGEI MOVEMENT

Trained in Barcelona and Paris, Josep Llorens Artigas (1892-1980) was one of the great masters of modern European ceramics. Artigas stripped his ceramics of all artifice, utilising universal and timeless shapes, and always applying different and original colours. He produced thousands of formulas of ceramic enamels so he would never repeat the same colour, and had a willingness and awareness to produce unique and inimitable works of art. In his own words, "The shape is the support of the enamel, and it is in the enamel that I encrypt all my creative capability". Artigas' solo career, forged in the workshops of Paris, Barcelona and Gallifa, and with the collaboration of renowned artists such as Raoul Dufy and Joan Miró, was recognised in the world's leading museums and exhibition halls.



**Satō Haruji, Kokeshi, c. 1940.**  
Colección família Gomis Müller.  
Photo: Josep Casanova



**Bingata. Detail,**  
19th century.  
Museu Etnològic i  
de Cultures del Món  
Photo: Josep Casanova





# HAMADA SHŌJI

Hamada Shōji (1894-1978) is considered one of the most prominent Japanese ceramicists of the 20th century. Declared Important and Intangible Cultural Property (a National Living Treasure) by the Japanese government in 1955, Hamada was one of the key founders of the *mingei* movement and an important figure in the recovery of the values of Japanese ceramic tradition. Hamada worked and modelled his pieces on a hand lathe, repeated shapes and used a small variety of enamels, which he produced in large quantities. Furthermore, the honesty and humility with which he worked meant that never signed his pieces. As he himself said, "The important thing is not the name, but that the ceramic is good". Hamada's ceramics were the result of experience and a shared craft tradition, as well as the great mastery of the enamels, of fire and earth.

Hamada Shōji,  
Vase, 1962.  
Fundació J. Llorens Artigas  
Photo: Josep Casanova



# JOSEP LLORENS ARTIGAS

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**Josep Llorens Artigas.**  
*Vase, 1949.*  
Private collection  
Photo: Josep Casanova



## EUDALD SERRA / JOSEP LLORENS ARTIGAS

The years in which sculptor Eudald Serra (1911-2002) lived in Japan, between 1935 and 1948, were key to enabling the subsequent spread of the *mingei* movement and the work of Hamada Shōji in Catalonia.

In Japan, Serra began in the art of ceramics and when he returned to Barcelona in 1950, he began to promote his knowledge of Japanese ceramics and popular art. Two years later, Artigas and Serra joined forces to create AR-SE ceramics (1952-1955), a project which aimed to raise awareness, in a creative way, of the practice promoted by the *mingei* movement: utilitarian, low-cost ceramics, free from ostentatiousness, and which offered beauty a place in everyday life.

**Josep Llorens Artigas and Eudald Serra**  
*Flower vase, c. 1953-1955*  
E. Gaspar Farreras collection  
Photo: Josep Casanova





## JOAN GARDY ARTIGAS

Joan Gardy Artigas (1938), the son of Josep Llorens Artigas, began his career as a ceramicist and sculptor in Gallifa and Paris. He became interested in Japanese ceramics at a young age and in 1962 was awarded a scholarship to travel to Japan to learn about Hamada Shōji and his kilns in Mashiko. After marrying Ishikawa Mako that same year, Gardy Artigas' ties with Japan were consolidated, first illustrated by the construction of the kiln, called Mashiko, in the Gallifa workshop, designed from the study of Hamada's kilns. The Mashiko kiln in Gallifa is where some of the great works, made together with Miró and other artists, were fired.



**Joan Gardy Artigas.**  
Vase, 1959-1960.  
Fundació J. Llorens Artigas.  
Photo: Josep Casanova





# DETAILS OF THE EXHIBITION

## THE COLOURS OF FIRE: HAMADA-ARTIGAS

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**Curation:** Ricard Bru, Doctor of Art History and professor at the  
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**Modern Art collection rooms**

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Organised by:



Fundació J. Llorens Artigas

Colaboran



Press office  
Tel. 93 622 03 60  
[premsa@museunacional.cat](mailto:premsa@museunacional.cat)  
  
Parc de Montjuïc  
Barcelona  
[www.museunacional.cat](http://www.museunacional.cat)

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A committed Museum

