

## ***Toshiko Takaezu: The Art of Clay***

Green Hill Center for North Carolina Art

May 18-August 25, 2007

Members Dinner: Thursday May 17

Public Opening: Friday, May 18

Green Hill Center for North Carolina Art is proud to present ***Toshiko Takaezu: The Art of Clay***, an exhibition of works by internationally acclaimed ceramic artist Toshiko Takaezu. Organized by the Japanese American Museum in Los Angeles in 2006, Green Hill will present an expanded version of the exhibition. Small and large-scale clay works created throughout Takaezu's career will be on display as well as her lesser known weaving. This will be the exhibit's only east coast venue. The exhibition pays homage to Takaezu's accomplishments as a master ceramist who has redefined her craft and brought it into the wider art arena. It also honors the many years she instructed and inspired a generation of North Carolina potters at the Penland School of Crafts and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro during the 1960's and 70's.

For over fifty years, Toshiko Takaezu has remained dedicated to exploring the art of clay, as an artist and influential teacher. Born in 1922 in Hawaii to Japanese immigrants from Okinawa, Takaezu studied at the University of Hawaii before attending the prestigious Cranbrook Academy of Art in the early 1950s. In the following decade, she became known for her "closed forms" which she achieved by the simple yet radical act of "closing the mouth of the vessel." Takaezu, along with Peter Voukos and other ceramic artists of the 1950s and 1960s, was instrumental in exploring clay as a medium for art beyond its conventional utilitarian purpose.

Takaezu's vocabulary of closed forms provides her with a "canvas" for her exuberant and painterly glazes. Similar in shape and style, these forms demonstrate tremendous variation. Takaezu often refers to these works as "pots." Yet, when queried about her closed forms, Takaezu replied with wry aplomb, "You can't put anything in and you can't take anything out." The interior of these pots remains a mystery, which can be likened to the mysteries of artistic process.

A holistic approach to art and life are a hallmark of Takaezu's practice. "In my life I see no difference between making pots, cooking, and growing vegetables. They are all related," she has said. While many of Takaezu's creations resemble objects in nature, she makes no claims for pre-conceived meanings and prefers an open interpretation. "Everything I make, you don't know why or how I make it or what it represents," she observed. "It's intangible. Something that I didn't know came through this pot. It's not my power that made me do this. The power is somewhere else. So now I can say without boasting, 'My pot is beautiful,' because I am not responsible."