

TADAO KATO — The World of *Chokin* —

20 JANUARY 2026 - 26 JANUARY 2026, Gallery Gensoan

The Heritage of Kyoto Metalcraft

Since ancient times, Kyoto has been a center for exceptional metalwork, spanning diverse fields from shrine and temple ornaments to tea utensils and samurai swords. While "metalwork" is a broad term, its techniques are diverse and can be categorized into three primary methods: **casting** (*chukin*), **hammering** (*tankin*), and **chasing** (*chokin*).

While *chukin* involves pouring molten metal into molds, *tankin* is the process of shaping a single metal plate through repetitive beating and stretching. *Chokin* is the art of decorating surfaces using chisels and hammers, encompassing a vast array of traditional techniques such as *kebori* (fine-line engraving), *katakiri-bori* (Angled-chisel carving), *sukashi-bori* (openwork), *koniku-bori* (high-relief carving), *usuniku-bori* (low-relief carving), *zogan* (Inlay), *nanako-uchi* (fish-roe stippling).

The Kato Family: From Swords to Fine Art

The Kato family has served as *Shiroganeshi* (master metalsmiths) in Kyoto for generations. Prior to the time of his great-grandfather, Kahei Kato, the family specialized in crafting essential sword fittings such as the *habaki* (blade collar), *kogai* (ornamental skewer), and *seppa* (spacers).

However, following the Sword Abolishment Edict (*Haito-rei* 1876), the demand for sword hardware plummeted. The family transitioned their craft to fine silverwork and incense (*kodo*) utensils, preserving their exquisite skills through a period of profound social change.

The Art of Tadao Kato

Building upon the *tankin* and *chokin* techniques refined under the guidance of his father and the master *Takashi Osuga*, Tadao Kato continues to create unique motifs that embody a spirit of cherishing all life—even at the age of 86.

His representative works employ *koniku-bori*, a process where patterns are hammered out from the reverse side on a sandbag and meticulously finished from the front using chisels and pine resin. Additionally, the distinctive "bubble" texture on the surface—a signature technique developed through years of trial and error—infuses life into the inorganic metal materials. This exhibition is a comprehensive showcase of his lifelong dedication to metalwork. We hope you enjoy the essence of his artistry.

Artist: Tadao Kato 加藤忠雄

Curated by: Gensoan 玄想庵

Exhibition Dates: 20 JANUARY 2026 - 26 JANUARY 2026