KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

Contemporary Art Dealers Association Nippon

Ai Degaito Solo Exhibition
“To Choose What Remains”

■Period	November 17th (Tuesday), 2026 - December 5th (Saturday), 2026
■Hours	Tuesday through Saturday, 12:00 - 19:00 *-17:00 on final day (closed on Sundays, Mondays, and National Holidays)
■Venue	CADAN Otemachi 1F, 2-6-3 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004 JAPAN
■Organizer	KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY
■Research Cooperation	Yurakucho Art Urbanism YAU; Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd.
■Production Cooperation	nicodesign Co., Ltd.; Koichiro Azuma (Azumakobo Co., Ltd.); Hisako Irisawa (A plus C. LLC); Yoshimi Suzuki (tax accountant); Ryosuke Kurihara (attorney); Toshiyuki Isayama (architect); Danto Tile Co., Ltd.
■Essay	Kana Miyazawa (Curator, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa)

▼OPENING RECEPTION

November 20th (Friday), 2026 | 17:00-19:00



Glaze_5
2026 | shelf board (carborundum), oil bottle, washi paper, fried chicken bones, zinc white
10 × 250 × 250 mm | © Ai Degaito, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

CADAN Otemachi will present “To Choose What Remains,” a solo exhibition by Ai Degaito organized by KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY, on view from November 17 (Tuesday) to December 5 (Saturday), 2026.

Born and raised in Asuka, Nara Prefecture, a village with deep ties to ceramics, Degaito has researched glazes since her teens. At kilns and ceramics facilities across Japan, she encountered discarded pottery piled high. Once fired at high

temperatures, clay cannot return to its original state. Its durability and irreversibility led her to reflect on the profound consequences of the human cycle of making, using, and discarding objects.

Alongside these concerns, her practice is driven by an enduring fascination with glaze itself. She burns materials from her surroundings—plants, bones left after meals, letters, clothing—and uses their ashes to make glazes. She experiments with mixtures and firing conditions, returning again and again to the emergence of unexpected colors and textures. This exploration of how things can take on other forms leads her to a larger question: how far can we intervene in preserving what would otherwise disappear, and in choosing what to keep and what to let go?

The exhibition introduces this practice through *Ikudo*, *Glaze*, and *Heart*, her new venture into jewelry.

In *Ikudo*, Degaito repeatedly subjects materials to heat, drawing out the many expressions of glaze that emerge from slight variations in conditions. Observing unexpected changes and exploring their causes, she moves between what she can control and transformations that exceed her intentions. For this exhibition, with the cooperation of Yurakucho Art Urbanism YAU and Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd., she presents new works made from materials that have served their purpose, gathered from the daily lives of people working in the Daimaruyu area (Otemachi, Marunouchi, and Yurakucho), where CADAN Otemachi is located.

Lunch containers left after meals that nourished people and sustained their afternoon's work. Documents bearing personal information. In these everyday objects, Degaito sees traces of lives lived, work done, and time passed. Each of the countless people moving through the city has memories and stories of their own. By reducing these used objects to ash and transforming them into glaze, she seeks to preserve traces of an individual's presence as color and luster, even after the original forms and words have disappeared.

In *Glaze*, Degaito uses heat-resistant carborundum kiln shelves as a ground, presenting glaze itself as the object of contemplation. These boards can also be crushed and reused as ingredients in glaze. The layering of colors, the boundaries where they merge, the textures and sheen of a material familiar as a coating for vessels: attending to each reveals traces of its transformation through heat. By creating glaze directly on the very tools that support its firing, these works convey the expressions of matter that Degaito has explored through years of research.

The exhibition also introduces *Heart*: small, wearable works that distill the things Degaito has chosen to preserve. A cherished keepsake, or an object holding the memory of time spent with someone. In a world of constant change, she selects what she still wishes to keep close, transforming glaze made from its ashes into works worn against the body. Her work with the cremated remains of loved ones grows out of the same practice.

For Degaito, making a work wearable is a way of carrying the act of preservation into everyday life: moving with what one has kept, touching it, and sharing time with it. This approach echoes the longstanding human desire to keep memories and prayers close through personal adornment.

KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

Contemporary Art Dealers Association Nippon

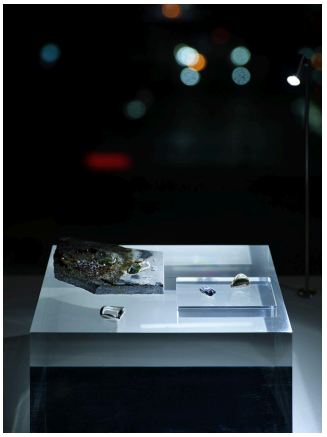
Degaito holds together a sense of awe and unease at creating things that will not return to the earth, and a belief in the preciousness of preserving an irreplaceable presence. Through the transformation of materials, she continues to explore the choices at the heart of *To Choose What Remains*. We invite visitors to encounter the rich expressions of glaze and the choices entrusted to each work.

—

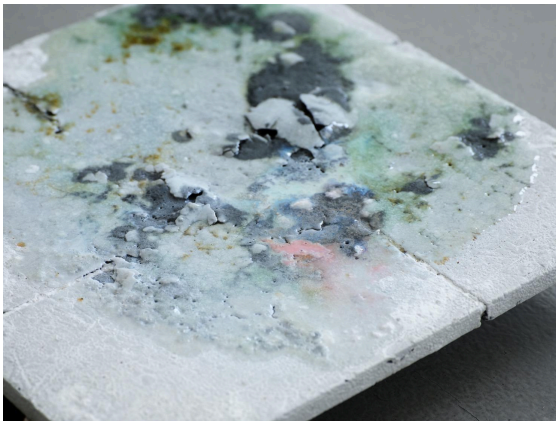
During the exhibition, inquiries will also be welcomed about commissioned works made from personal keepsakes, cremated remains, and other meaningful materials. For further information, please contact KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY.



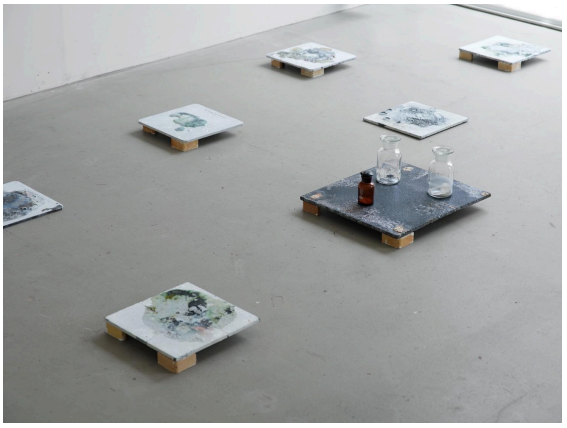
Heart
2026 | ash (sent letters, Pacific saury bones from meals, silicon carbide), pure silver
6 × 9 × 13 mm | © Ai Degaito, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY



Heart
2026 | © Ai Degaito
courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY,
photo by Keiko Chiba



Glaze_8 [detail]
2026 | shelf board (carborundum),washi paper, window glass, art glass, mother-of-pearl, chrome, eggshells | 10 × 250 × 250 mm | © Ai Degaito, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY, photo by Keiko Chiba



installation view
from Kazuto Imura, Ai Degaito "battery"
(2026, KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY)
© Ai Degaito, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY,
photo by Keiko Chiba

KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

Contemporary Art Dealers Association Nippon

Artist Statement

In my travels through pottery-producing regions, I have seen mountains of discarded ceramics.
They bear witness to human lives, yet they also evoke a fear of things that remain unchanged.

By making glaze itself into a work of art, I seek to preserve things while allowing their forms to change.
When heated again, glaze can melt, flow, and take on another form.
It is a pliant medium that can be kept, transformed, and returned to circulation.

Preserving something need not mean fixing its form forever.
I want to preserve, too, the possibility that what we keep may one day take on another form.

Ai Degaito

Artist Biography

Ai Degaito

Born in Asuka, Nara Prefecture, Japan, Ai Degaito studied ceramics and materials thermochemistry at college and ceramic facilities in various regions. Her practice centers on granting objects the choice of whether traces of existence should "remain" or "not remain." She burns materials that hold a human sense of distance—such as plants, bones, household waste, and personal belongings—and refines glazes using only their ashes. Holding the conflicting sensations of "the terrifying eternity of what does not return to the soil" and "the preciousness of objects as devices of memory," she pursues the concept of the "archive," which inscribes time indefinitely while transforming personal memory.

Her recent solo exhibitions include "Sincere Memory, Glaze" (2025, Suzusan Galerie Raum, Aichi, Japan), "And you" (2024, JITSUZAISEI, Osaka, Japan), and "a voice" (2023, JUU arts & stay by FIGYA, Osaka, Japan).

Selected group exhibitions include "Why, and How?" (2026, Paichu Gallery, Tokyo); "battery," a two-person exhibition with Kazuto Imura (2026, KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY, Tokyo); and the Recommended Artist Section of "BankART Alive! Exhibition" (2025, BankART Station, Kanagawa, Japan).

In 2026, Degaito participated in the artist residency program, "YAU ARTIST STUDIO," at Yurakucho Art Urbanism YAU. Her commissioned projects include works for xLINK Marunouchi Park Building and Shin Tokyo Building, as well as Geo Tower Osaka Juso and the Future Creation Laboratory at NOMURA Co., Ltd.

KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

Contemporary Art Dealers Association Nippon

The Alchemy of Time

Ai Degaito is an artist who makes glaze itself into works of art.
This vitreous layer covering the surface of pottery and porcelain has a long history, both in Japan and around the world, that runs alongside the history of ceramics. Yet very few craftspeople or artists understand how glaze is formed and go so far as to formulate their own. Degaito, who even undertakes collaborative research with glaze manufacturers, is a notable exception. It is easy to connect this to her upbringing in an area known for *Akahada* ware, a traditional craft of Nara Prefecture. Yet her relationship to this tradition cannot be reduced to a simple choice between carrying it on and rebelling against it.

Degaito often uses kiln shelves, the boards used during firing, as surfaces to which her glazes adhere. The fired clay ordinarily regarded as the "body" is absent. Instead, the *glaze*, normally seen as part of its surface, adheres to the shelf that supports the firing process. Through this absence, do Degaito's works offer an antithesis to ceramics? Indeed, she speaks, with a sense of the realities she has known since childhood, of how fired ceramics will not return to the earth even after hundreds or thousands of years, and how the day when pottery-producing regions across Japan exhaust their clay deposits is not far off. Fear and fascination mingle in her response to the irreversible process of making ceramics and to what it produces. Perhaps this ambience finds an echo in glaze's capacity to change form when heated again.

Yet Degaito's works convey an obsession with glaze that exceeds even this logic. The exhibition title, *To Choose What Remains*, may offer a clue to understanding it. Among her works is a series in which she reduces things from daily life, such as chicken and fish bones left after dinner and personal letters, to ash, then heats them at high temperatures in an electric kiln to make glaze. There is a technique known as ash glazing, which uses the ashes of plants and trees, but the range of materials Degaito fires extends far beyond these. Just as some people try to compost as much of their food waste as possible, is she trying to cremate as many things around her as she can? Degaito is also making glazes from cremated remains and using them to create jewelry; she says she is considering developing this practice further as artwork.
If composting returns organic matter to the soil and creates a cycle, turning ash into glaze might be understood as taking something out of that cycle and moving it into another time. The types and quantities of metals in the materials determine the colors of a glaze. Bringing those colors out requires scientific knowledge and accumulated practical experience in controlling temperature. While Degaito approaches familiar things in terms of their elemental composition, she also keeps detailed records of what they once were as part of the information accompanying each work.

Burning causes things to lose their original form. Yet it does not erase their histories. If reducing something to ash accelerates time, turning it into glass may grant it another kind of duration beyond that point. Here, choosing what remains is intertwined with choosing what does not. Even when a letter is burned, the fact that words were entrusted to it remains; bones left after a meal acquire new colors outside the body.
What Degaito forges through this alchemy is a time in which traces of daily life can be passed on to the future in forms other than their original ones. The glaze resting on a kiln shelf is at once evidence of something lost and the visible form of something that continues to remain. Before its luster, we return to the choice of what we wish to preserve, and in what form.

Kana Miyazawa
Curator, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa