

# North Dakota Museum of Art

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## **PERU'S LEADING CERAMIC SCULPTOR SHOWS AT THE NORTH DAKOTA MUSEUM OF ART**

### **LOCAL ARTIST MEMO GUARDIA TO LEAD GALLERY TALK**

Carlos Runcie Tanaka is Peru's leading contemporary ceramic sculptor. His exhibition at the North Dakota Museum of Art, *Fragmento*, includes four major installations and will be on display through April 11, 2010. This is a rare opportunity to view contemporary ceramics from Peru, a country with an ancient and glorious ceramic tradition.

The regional art community has followed the work of another ceramic sculptor from Peru, our local Guillermo Guardia Yamamoto, or Memo. His work is also underpinned by Peru's splendid Incan past, admired all over the world for its figurative traditions. On Tuesday, March 9 at 7 pm Memo Guardia will lead a discussion in the galleries about Runcie Tanaka's work.

Guardia, who came to UND for his MFA in ceramics, has joined the staff of the North Dakota Museum of Art as an Artist-In-Residence. He gives clay workshops throughout North Dakota as part of the Museum's Rural Arts Initiative.

Runcie Tanaka's exhibition is brought to Grand Forks through the generosity of James Harithas, Founding Director of the Station Museum in Houston, Texas. An admirer of NDMOA programming, Harithas made the experience possible by covering the international shipping to and from Peru, and giving the show to North Dakota for the cost of trucking it from Houston and back—a rare gift in that the booking fee along for such an exhibition would normally cost at least \$25,000.

Carlos Runcie Tanaka was born in the country of Peru. His heritage is not only Peruvian but also Japanese and British. His home, Lima—Peru's capital—is a metropolis on the Pacific coast of South America. This city has a diverse population of eight million inhabitants. Such diversity is a central issue of international contemporary art and is crucial because insight into ethnic identity is fundamental to the search for self-knowledge and in the artist's work.

A one-time philosophy major at the Universidad Catolica del Peru, Carlos Runcie Tanaka chose instead to dedicate himself to the art of pottery making, undertaking studies in Brazil, Italy, and Japan.

According to Harithas, "Runcie Tanaka is an artist of consummate artistic skill, compelling visual insights, and a profoundly spiritual sense of mystery. He has absorbed the lessons of traditional ceramics and pioneered an approach that goes beyond obvious or direct reference to ancient or modern Peruvian, European, or Japanese art."

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“The installations in this exhibition are among the most critical and meaningful works in the artist’s career. The monumental *Tiempo Detenido* is a ceremonial artwork that deals with issues of life and death,” continues Harithas. On December 17, 1996, the Japanese embassy in Lima was stormed by Marxist guerillas in protest of President Alberto Fujumori’s celebration of the Japanese Emperor’s 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Hundreds of high-level diplomats, government and military officials, artists, and business executives were taken hostage. Like Fujumori, Peruvian-born Runcie Tanaka was among them. The artist was released along with most of the hostages 10 days later but the final 72 were held for another 4 months.

*Manto* is a collection of ceramic fragments arranged in a 6.5 x 12 foot “textile.” Together the shards reflect the artist’s extraordinary ability to unify disparate elements into a cohesive whole. *Huayco / Kawa / Rio* is a series of twelve spherical sculptures that demonstrate a complex evolution from Zen-like simplicity to Peruvian complexity. The ceramic fragments, or broken fragments retrieved from kiln firings between 1988 and 2005, suggest the ritual common to Japanese Master Potters of releasing broken fragments into the river. *Progresion Organica* is a sculpture consisting of altered segments that are assembled back into a whole through repeated firings.

According to Museum Director Laurel Reuter, “Much of Carlos Runcie’s work involves breaking apart and reuniting as a new whole that bears witness to its earlier shattering, be the larger subject emigration across oceans, violence and rebirth after violence, or returning the earth, or the clay, back to the earth after transforming it through fire.”

Runcie Tanaka has had numerous solo exhibitions in Latin America, the United States, Japan, and Italy, and he has participated in group and other collective exhibitions in Peru and abroad. He has been introduced to the international art public through the biennial system. That is, Carlos Runcie has been chosen to represent his own country, Peru, in such contemporary art exhibitions as the Fourth and Fifth Havana Biennial (1991 and 1994); the 49<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (2001); the Eighth Cuenca Biennial in Ecuador (2003); the First, Second, Fourth, and Fifth Barro de America Biennial in Caracas; and the 26<sup>th</sup> Sao Paulo Biennial (2004). In the last few years Runcie Tanaka has also been invited to teach at prestigious American and Japanese universities as a guest professor and artist-in-residence. Since 1978 he has run a pottery studio in Lima, where, aside from his artwork, Runcie Tanaka creates functional pieces made from stoneware clays and local materials.

In addition to the Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, the exhibition is supported by the North Dakota Council on the Arts, the City of Grand Forks through the North Valley Arts Council, and the Minnesota State Arts Board.

The North Dakota Museum of Art is located at 261 Centennial Drive, Grand Forks. Museum hours are weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm and weekends from 1 pm to 5 pm. The Museum shop is open during Museum hours and the Museum Café is open from 10 am to 4 pm, with lunch served from 11 am to 2 pm. Admission is free. Suggested donation: \$5 for Adults, Change from Children.

For additional information on the news that is the subject of this release, contact the North Dakota Museum of Art or visit [www.ndmoa.com](http://www.ndmoa.com)