

Distinguished Guests,

It is certainly a great pleasure to be with you all this evening to open what promises to be a fascinating exhibition, here literally in the heart of London.

We are honoured to have with us on this occasion the master potter who created the ceramic exhibits on display, Raku Jikinyū. He represents the 15th generation of truly an illustrious family of outstanding artisans that goes back to the 16th century of Japan. Jikinyū highly values and seeks to stay faithful to the unique philosophy that formed the vision of the first Raku master, Chōjirō, in the late 16th century. At that time, his tea bowls were regarded as decidedly avant-garde by his contemporaries. While Jikinyū rejects such a label for his own works, he has a distinctive style reflecting his mission of constantly searching for ways of imbuing the traditional tea bowl format with new modes of expression.

Having long been fascinated by the idea of exploring possible commonalities between 16th-century Japan and contemporary western artistic philosophy, Jikinyū shared his thoughts when he met Rupert Faulkner and David Juda in London in 2019. This led to the idea of a project juxtaposing Jikinyū's tea bowls with drawings by the Polish-Ukrainian Russian avant-garde artist Kasimir Malevich as Jikinyū saw parallels between Chōjirō's Black Raku bowls and Malevich's Black Square. This vision led to the recent exhibition Kichizaemon X Malevich at the Sagawa Art Museum in Japan. What we are about to enjoy is the UK or international version of that extremely successful project.

Of course, this exhibition would not be happening without the crucial involvement of Annely Juda Fine Arts, one of London's foremost galleries for showcasing contemporary artists from around the world. Thus, I would like to express my sincere thanks to David Juda and everyone associated with this impressive gallery.

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Now, I share a significant moment with you all. I declare this exhibition open.

Thank you indeed.