

# Imperfectly Perfect

Hasami ceramics from the Japanese land of Nagasaki have been around since the 17th century. For its new flagship store, Maruhiro, a leading producer of Hasami ceramics, offers an ode to the artisanal know-how of the region through creative architectural knowledge and the innovative use of imperfect ceramic pieces with spectacular effect.



**D**esigner Yusuke Seki brings a simplistic yet exclusively creative charm to the store with its renovation of the pre-existing flagship. This store goes much beyond being just an aesthetically appealing retail design venture. Hasami holds close to itself, rich artisanal traditions and a heritage very intrinsic to the region. This art prides in possessing a regional virtue, which holds quite important for the design of the store. The translation of this factor into the physical being of the store is where Seki's expertise reflects. The resultant design is completely a

location and situation oriented experience. The Hasami art is something the local people relate so closely that its reflection in the design of the store touches an emotive chord in them, which nurtures a relationship which has proved to be the most effective loyalty bonding factor in retail. Essences of familiarity, local environment and the simplicity in design amplify the Hasami heritage. Minimal design interference, a modification in the level of the floor, not only utilizes the pre-existing space to alter the perspective and experiences held by the

users until the present, but also gives birth to an entirely new sense of flow within.

The stacked central platform marks the core highlight of the store. The innovation in technique sheds light on the fact at how differently a simple material can be alternatively used for an architectural advantage.

The use of these imperfect pieces to their full potential and engineering a way to make them stable architectural brick substitutes,





#### Did you know?

'Monohara' is the name given to the kiln-side specific areas where broken pieces of firing process are disposed. Existing solely in Nagasaki, these imperfect pieces have accrued for approximately 400 years—an archaeological proof of the long industrial history of this region.

is a subtle reverence accorded to the legacy of the art spoken of here. Hasami has earned a well-deserved respect owing to its heritage. One may call it an act of respect or a thoughtful design decision, but the rest of the store is left raw and basic which escalates the importance of the platform. Also, it is on this platform that the ceramics up for sale are displayed. One can interpret an indirect intent behind having an elevated platform for display as a sign of respect to the art form. A muted colour palette, ample natural light pouring through and a minimal display attitude join hands to render the sophistication a store of this stature demands.●

**Mansi Lavsi**

#### Art Direction & Total Design:

Yusuke Seki

#### Photos:

Takumi Ota



#### Fun Fact

25,000 pieces of imperfect tableware sourced locally from numerous pottery factories of the Hasami area came together with poured concrete to form the layered platform. Each of these pieces called "Shinikiji" in Japanese, were found to be flawed after the initial bisque firing by their respective local production facilities. As part of his re-evaluative design process, Seki revived these pieces, using them to make bricks, and transforming them to a new architectural material for this occasion.





