

Wallpaper*

Noe Kuremoto reconciles contemporary craft with Japan's ancestral mythology

PAD London 2026 preview: Noe Kuremoto creates clay objects that speak of Japan's ancestral traditions, her experience as a mother, and the role of the artist in today's world

By Rosa Bertoli | Published 9 hours ago In [Features](#)



'When I faced the complexity of life, I looked for ancestral wisdom:' Noe Kuremoto's contemporary ceramics are infused with Japanese mythology
(Image credit: Courtesy of PIK'D and PAD London)

Growing up in Japan as the daughter of two artists, Noe Kuremoto was raised around her father's painting practice and his job at the local university, where she would join him on campus to hang out with artists,

musicians and poets. 'I thought it was very normal to see adults who are so enthusiastic about life, so I was very surprised to find when I went to school that not all parents were so passionate about their jobs,' she recalls, hinting at the smell of oil painting from her father's work, or her mum always playing the piano in the background.



Images throughout: vessels from Noe Kuremoto's 'Jōmon'
(Image credit: Courtesy of PIK'D and PAD London)

Despite this natural connection to the artistic practice, she was fascinated by the freedom of the London art community and moved to the city to study at Central Saint Martins. 'I wanted to leave the Japanese-ness behind,' she explains. 'The Japanese art community is much more academic, technically driven, led by more traditional aesthetics.' Through

the magazines that her parents had at home, she had discovered a different kind of vibrancy: Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen, Sara Lucas, Damien Hirst, Gilbert and George were all working in London at the time, and it felt exciting. 'I was born in this little island: now I wanted to look for something more.'



(Image credit: Courtesy of PIK'D and PAD London)

Her chosen medium, ceramics, was also one that she was able to explore freely in London. If you want to be a ceramicist in Japan, she explains, you have to shadow a master and learn the skill as an apprentice, without much freedom to develop your own practice. But in London, Kuremoto started working freely on her own pieces – clay objects that feel totemic

and ancestral, based on abstract compositions featuring bulbous forms, anthropomorphic elements and often a sense of symmetry.



(Image credit: Courtesy of PIK'D and PAD London)

Her studio set-up, she insists, is 'very humble. My most important tools are hands, water, fire and clay. A ceramic studio can be fancy, but mine isn't.' Currently based in east London, she is in the process of building a studio in a forest in Lithuania, where her husband's family is from. But, she admits, the simple set-up of her practice also means she can work almost anywhere.



(Image credit: Courtesy of PIK'D and PAD London)

Despite establishing her work in a context so geographically and culturally far from Japan, she wound up establishing a connection with her native country that transcends her craft. Mysticism is at the heart of Kuremoto's practice, and the connection with such an integral part of Japanese life and culture doesn't feel casual. 'Perhaps when I started to face the complexity of life, I looked for ancestral wisdom; that mythology felt dusty when I was in Japan, it felt like shackles to my teenage self when I was trying to figure out who I want to be,' she explains. 'Now, that same mysticism gives me a map to figure out life's most complex moments.'

Discover Noe Kuremoto's work at PAD 2026



(Image credit: Courtesy of PIK'D and PAD London)

At PAD London 2026, she is bringing significant new bodies of work that reflect how the complexity of her heritage and her life merge in an inquisitive, personal way. 'Project Crane Wife', a series of black stoneware sculptures shaped like vessels with tall necks and elongated handles, refers to one of Japan's oldest folk tales. 'Like all great folk tales, *The Crane Wife* carries many layers of meaning,' she says. 'But the lesson that remains closest to my heart is this: the tragedy is not losing what we love. The tragedy is that humans only understand the true value of a gift once it is gone.' For Kuremoto, the allegory brings to mind her elderly mother, back in Japan, and the collection serves as a 'meditation on the impermanence of

true gifts'; the three pieces in the collection all feature a tear, added by the artisan during the process, to make them veritable in-between objects.



(Image credit: Courtesy of PIK'D and PAD London)

'Project Shodō', meanwhile, is a series of black, unglazed sculptural objects through which Kuremoto explores the dichotomy of her roles as a mother and an artist, and how these can (or cannot) coexist. The series is named after the traditional art of Japanese calligraphy: 'I vividly remember the smell of deep black *sumi* ink while a brush swept gracefully across white paper. As youngsters, we had to write *kanji* characters every morning that

anticipated our day ahead. We were told the process would engrave an ideal into our minds, and help us to make it real,' she explains. That practice and habit became useful to her as the mother of young children: 'I get just three sacred hours in my studio per day,' she says. 'To make the most of precious time, and distance myself from the failure to attain my ideals, I decided to treat my clay like *shodō* – to do everything in one go. I committed to make one "drawing in the air" with clay, each and every single day. Good or bad, it didn't matter. In fact, allowing myself to produce bad, ugly work was a game changer.'

Ancestral Japan also recurs in her final project shown at PAD this year. 'Jōmon' nods to the intricate fertility vessels of the eponymous Japanese era (between 14,000 and 300 BCE). 'It remains astonishing that such complex, expressive forms were created using nothing more than wild clay and pit fire,' she says. 'In a time defined by hunting and gathering, when survival was the primary, daily concern, the Jōmon people invested energy in something far greater than individual biological need.' Kuremoto explores the concept of the Jōmon vessel in a contemporary guise, drawing from her personal experience of and approach to motherhood. 'Motherhood cracks you open. It gives urgency, depth, a new way of seeing. But society rarely sees this labour as real,' she says. 'If your work isn't paid, it barely exists. We measure output, not care. Invoices, not endurance. I make fertility vessels for women walking this impossible line.'



(Image credit: Courtesy of PIK'D and PAD London)

Guiding her practice is something that Kuremoto's father told her as she was about to leave Japan for London, age 17. 'He said: "If you really want to be an artist, you have to bring light to the world." I didn't understand it at the time, but today I firmly believe that is my mission, and every artist and designer's mission is to bring light to the world.'

*Noe Kuremoto is at Pik'd, Booth B7, and Galerie Boketto, Booth A20, PAD London, 13 to 18 October 2026 at Berkeley Square**