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## Two Fowler Exhibitions Showcase Arts of Korea

### *Life in Ceramics: Five Contemporary Korean Artists*

August 22–February 13, 2011

### *Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World*

August 22–November 28, 2010

Korean art is widely recognized for its fine traditions of painting and classical ceramics. Yet the arts of Korea run a much wider gamut, and this summer the Fowler Museum presents two lesser-known but equally compelling genres of Korean art in the exhibitions *Life in Ceramics: Five Contemporary Korean Artists* and *Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World*.

#### *Life in Ceramics: Five Contemporary Korean Artists*

Korean ceramics have long been appreciated for their superb craftsmanship and originality, first in China, then in Japan, and finally, since the nineteenth century, in the West. The celadons of the Koryo period (918–1392) and *punch'ong* and porcelain wares of the Choson (1392–1910) period provide an unceasing source of inspiration for forms, colors, techniques, and designs. Moreover, Korean ceramics are known for the spontaneity of the throwing and firing processes, often resulting in uneven, slightly distorted, and thus “imperfect” wares that evoke a lively, natural feeling.

This exhibition brings together for the first time the work of five important Korean artists— Kim Yikyung, Lee In Chin, Lee Kang Hyo, Lee Youngjae, and Yoon Kwang-cho— all of whom are represented in major museum collections worldwide. These artists create strikingly different and highly individual works, transgressing the border between “art” and “craft” through their impressive installations and the monumental, sculptural qualities of their work. At the same time each artist celebrates the utility of the Korean ceramic traditions by making wares for daily use.

#### About the Artists Yoon Kwang-cho



Yoon Kwang-cho was born in 1946 in Hamhung, Hamgyong Province (presently in North Korea). He now lives and works at his rural studio near Kyongju, South Korea. After graduating from Hongik University in 1973 he studied for two more years in Karatsu, a famous ceramic center in Japan that was inspired by Korean ceramic traditions. In 2003 Yoon had a one-person exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and in 2004, together with Kim Yikyung, he was named “artist of the year” by the National Museum of Contemporary Art in South Korea.

Yoon Kwang-cho’s devotion to Buddhism is reflected in his works. Building on the *punch'ong* tradition using coarse clay and white slip, he applies abstract designs with a brush or employs the slip as canvas for his free, playful sketches and inscriptions of the *Heart*

*Sutra*. Yoon abandoned the use of the potter's wheel in the late 1980s and began to build his ceramics from slabs or coils, producing irregular, edgy shapes that recall rock formations.

### Kim Yikyung



Kim Yikyung was born in Chongjin, Hamgyong Province (now North Korea) in 1935. Currently, she lives and works in Seoul and Paju, Kyonggi Province. After completing her undergraduate studies in chemical engineering, she earned a master's degree from the College of Ceramics at Alfred University in New York State in 1961. She then returned to Asia, where she served as a curatorial assistant for the National Museum of Korea and instructor at the Kyoto Municipal College. From 1975–2000, Kim was a professor at Kookmin University, Seoul. Together with Yoon Kwang-cho, she was honored as “artist of the year” in 2004 by the National Museum

of Contemporary Art in South Korea.

Many of Kim Yikyung's works have been inspired by the elegance of porcelain used in Confucian rituals during the Choson, Korea's last dynastic period. International ceramic conferences have been equally important because they introduced her to new ways of handling clay and constructing abstract forms. Although her pentagons form a sculptural ensemble they can also be employed as garden stools, recalling the use of drum-shaped ceramic chairs in outdoor settings in Korean and Chinese tradition.

### Lee In Chin



Lee In Chin was born in Seoul in 1957 and moved to Orange County, California, during his childhood. After starting his art education at California State University, Fullerton, he returned to Seoul to earn his bachelor's and master's degrees at Hongik University, and he eventually became a professor there. He now lives and works in Ilchuk in Kyonggi Province. He has broadened his exploration of East Asian ceramic traditions by studying in Bizen, one of Japan's distinguished ceramic centers, and through his recent work at a studio in Jingdezhen, China, where he began to produce white ware.

Lee In Chin's installation of jars, plates, vessels, and bowls stands as a testimony to his interest in the variety of colors and textures of clay under exposure to fire. The result is a spectrum of colors ranging from yellow to bright orange, red brown to almost black. Some pots recall the round “Moon Jars” of the seventeenth century while others, because of their earthy color, are reminiscent of the bold round jars of the Silla period (third century to 935 C.E.). Arranged as if stacked in a kitchen cabinet they point to the basic character of pots used for daily life.

### Lee Kang Hyo



Lee Kang Hyo was born in Inch'on in 1961 and now lives and works in North Ch'ungch'ong Province, South Korea. He graduated with a bachelor of fine arts degree from the Department of Ceramics at Hongik University in 1983, followed by a three-year apprenticeship in a workshop in South Kyongsang Province to learn to produce *onggi* ware. *Onggi* containers, which can attain the height of an adult person, are built from long coils of clay and then shaped on a potter's wheel. They are traditionally used for the storage of soy sauce and *kimch'i*, the pickled vegetables indispensable to any Korean meal.

Lee Kang Hyo's ceramics reflect the *punch'ong* tradition of gray stoneware decorated with white slip. The subtle color variations range from milky white to a spectrum of grays and beiges, to pink and rusty red, and to an earthy dark brown. Lee achieves such subtlety by firing the works in a kiln he built himself in 1992 in the traditional manner, using lumps of clay rather than bricks.

## Lee Young-Jae



Lee Young-Jae was born in Seoul in 1951 and currently lives and works in Essen, Germany. She did her undergraduate studies in Seoul and then continued her education at the University of Applied Sciences in Wiesbaden, Germany, and through internships with renowned German ceramic artists. Between 1984–1987 she served as lecturer at the Department of Ceramics at the Gesamthochschule Kassel and since 1987 has been the director of the Keramische Werkstatt Margaretenhöhe GmbH in Essen. Apart from Korean tradition, she receives inspiration from the strict tectonic structures of Bauhaus design.

Lee Young-Jae's bowls are simple yet elegant in their shape, repetitive yet individual in their form. Their colors often recall the refined hues of Koryo celadons. In Korea cups of wine are used for offerings in shamanist rituals and Confucian ancestor rites (as they are in Catholic Masses). Lee extends the idea of ritual to the process of throwing the ceramics. Performed again and again, it becomes a ritual repetition, driven by the constant search for the extraordinary in the multitude. Her installation of 111 bowls at the Fowler Museum is based on an acclaimed installation of 1,111 bowls in the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich in 2006.

### **Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World**



Also on display will be *Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World*, seventy-four Korean funerary figures—most carved in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—known as *kkoktu*. These charming and festively painted wooden clowns, tigers, acrobats and more—most not more than twenty inches tall—were created to adorn biers used to convey coffins during funeral processions.

Their clothing and poses reflect the realities of rural Korean village life during a period about which few written records remain. Perhaps even more interestingly, the *kkoktu* are a window on a characteristically Korean attitude towards death. Though the *kkoktus'* gaiety seems incongruous with mourning, they express a culture's deep desire that the dead enter the next world surrounded by joy—and an appreciation of the fleeting nature of all experience.

### **Additional Information**

*Korean Funerary Figures* was organized by The Korea Society. The works presented are on loan from the permanent collection of the Seoul-based Ockrang Cultural Foundation. Support for the Los Angeles presentation was made possible by the Shirley and Ralph Shapiro Director's Discretionary Fund.

*Life in Ceramics* is organized by the Fowler Museum at UCLA and guest curated by Burglind Jungmann, UCLA Professor of Korean Art History and former adjunct associate curator of Korean art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Major support is provided by the Korea Foundation. Additional generous support provided by Dr. Leland M. Garrison and Mrs. Kweesook K. Garrison with contributions from Korean Airlines, Duracoat Products, Inc. Chairman Myung K. Hong, Mr. Jae Min Chang and Mrs. Hyunjoo Chang, Mr. Daewon Kwon and Mrs. Chong Kwon, Dr. No-Hee Park and Mrs. Yu Bai Park, and Dr. Tom Han. The accompanying programs are made possible through The W.L.S. Spencer Foundation, the Yvonne Lenart Public Programs Fund, UCLA Asia Institute, UCLA Center for Korean Studies, and Manus, the support group for the Fowler Museum.

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**Opening Day Event:**

Sunday, August 22, 2010, 12-5 pm

The Fowler presents a day of free programs in celebration of the openings of *Life in Ceramics: Five Contemporary Korean Artists* and *Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World*:

1-4 pm

**Kids in the Courtyard: Play in Clay**

Families are invited to explore the ancient ceramics traditions of Korea by embellishing a clay tile with traditional designs. Incise or carve floral or animal motifs—lotus, peony, chrysanthemum, willow, cloud, and crane—to create patterns on the surface of an unglazed clay slab to take home.

2:30 pm

**Fowler OutSpoken Conversation: Burglind Jungman, Lee In Chin, and Kim Yikyung**

Guest curator Burglind Jungmann talks with Lee In Chin and Kim Yikyung, two of the artists featured in *Life in Ceramics: Five Contemporary Korean Artists*, about the differences in the education of artists and appreciation for ceramics in the United States and Asia. Both artists have studied ceramics in the United States, spent time in Japan, and taught at Korean universities. Their discussion will focus on their experiences both as students and teachers.

4 pm

**Summer Sunset Concert: Ye: Rak**

The ensemble Ye: Rak blends traditional Korean and western instruments and offer a unique sound promoting diversity through the universal language of music.