

Selfridge Ceramic Art

Carol and Richard Selfridge

The Macsabal International Woodfired Festival 2003 & Richard's Japanese Kanayama Pottery Residency



In the summer of 2003, I was an invited artist at the Macsabal International Woodfire Festival 2003 in Joryung, Korea.

I decided not to limit my trip to the festival which lasted 11 days, but to include an exploration of Seoul, Ichon and many pottery sites in Korea. Although Carol and I were both invited to attend the Macsabal Woodfire Festival 2003, Carol elected to stay home for health reasons and also because of a planned trip to Australia in 2004.

After spending 16 days in Korea, I returned to Japan where Carol and I had been invited artists at the Aomori International Woodfire Festival in 2002. I spent 14 days working with Ryoji Matsumiya at his Kanayama pottery studio in Goshogawara-shi, Aomori-ken, Japan.

This is a pictorial account of my month long adventure in Korea and Japan. I wish to thank the Alberta Foundation of the Arts and the Edmonton Arts Council for their financial support, a project grant from the AFA and a travel grant from the Arts Council.

This sixth year of the festival was attended by seven international artists from Canada, the U.S.A., Greece and Philippines. There were over twenty-five Korean artists invited as well. Kim Yong Moon and a dedicated committee of volunteers organized this multi-cultural festival which included not only clay, but other traditional Korean crafts and music performances. The festival lasted for ten

wonderful days; during which time we made work, fired the wood kiln, attended our show opening in Seoul, complete with a large musical public concert and enjoyed delicious Korean food and drink the whole ten days.



Kim Yong Moon, shown throwing tea bowls in Goshogawara in 2002, hosted the Macsabal Woodfired Festival 2003 in Korea.



Moon leading me through the side streets of Seoul before the festival starts.



Seoul is a modern city with interesting architecture, new cars and everyone has a cell phone



Moon, with his works in his gallery in Insidon in Seoul, South Korea

I flew from Edmonton to Narita, Japan and then the next day flew to Incheon, Korea and was met by Park Kook Hyun who we had worked with in Japan. He took me to Seoul where I spent two days looking at this city of markets, galleries and a thriving 20 million population.



Park Kuk-Hyun and his wife serve me tea at his studio in Wonju City, Korea.



Huge traditional coiled and paddled pot by Korean artist, Kuk-Hyun Park in Japan. I saw many of these large Onggi pots in Korea

After a first introduction to Korean food and rice wine, "makalai", I slept a jet-lagged night and was ready to explore Seoul. Moon showed me his gallery. We had a great lunch with two gallery owners and Park Soon Kwan, a paddle pot master that we had met in Iowa City, Iowa in 1999 and worked with in Japan in 2002. After lunch, Park took me to his studio in Hanam on the edge of Seoul for a fantastic viewing of his large onggi collection, his work and kilns.



Park Soon Kwan working on a paddle pot in Goshogawara, Japan in 2002.



Panorama of a part of the onggi collection in the brickyard of Park's father.



Onggi in Park Soon Kwan's huge collection



Paddled teapot in Park Soon Kwan's studio.



Park's woodfired teabowl in our collection,
traded for one of ours.



Park's anagama type kiln.

After the tour of his studio and tea, we returned to Seoul on the subway where Park helped me with some antique pottery shopping.



Park Soon Kwan's Raku "smoker pots" in
Moon's gallery in Seoul. Park has also
converted an old kiln in his father's
brickyard into a gallery showroom.



These large onggi from all over Korea and surrounding
islands have collected onggi stored inside them as well.



The onggi often have a plate/bowl type lid and they are used as storage vessels and for making kimchi, the traditional cabbage pickle.



Park Soon-Kwan's anagama kiln outside Seoul.

I spent an amazing collegial afternoon with Park, discovering the depth of his knowledge of tea, our many mutual Japanese and Korean colleagues and sharing our thoughts about making ceramic art. We were able to understand each other despite my complete lack of Korean and his limited English.



Park's paddle pots from the first festival firing in Moon's kiln. The one on right has our dragonfly stencil.



Some of the work destined for Park's New York gallery solo exhibition, the week after the festival.

Among his many skills, Park is a competitive acrobatic ski jumper. Last year he had a bad fall and broke both legs. He has barely slowed down and says he will jump again.



A small part of Park's collection of Japanese and Korean teabowls.



Tea and cakes in the studio.

Park Soon-Kwan has a tea group where he teaches Korean, Chinese and Japanese tea ceremony. Cheon Han-Bong's daughter attends this tea group and this association allowed us access to this Korean National Treasure.



Onggi pots in the brickyard.



The Master Potter, Cheon Han-Bong talking to Kirk Mangus and Park Soon Kwan at his kiln shed in Mungyung Pottery.



Fresh ginseng in the market, which finds its way into many Korean delicacies, including candy and some makalai.



Women selling fresh fruit on the sidewalk.

My second day in Seoul was spent cruising the markets and visiting art galleries and antique and contemporary pottery galleries. The variety of handmade pottery, textiles and masks was astounding.



A man tending his aloe display in the market.



Picasso painting in the gallery building of Moon's gallery in Seoul.

A rich Korean collector had mounted an impressive showing of his Picasso etchings, paintings and drawings. There were at least one hundred pieces on display.



Impromptu fish barbeque in the market.



Fresh flowers on the sidewalk of a busy Seoul street.



Pepper field in Chungbuk. Red and green peppers, a big and hot part of the kimchi, are raised on the farmland around the festival site.



In the market, I saw about fifty different kinds of kimchi.

After the bustle of Seoul, we made the two and one half hour trip through the Korean countryside to the mountains and Joryung, the site of the Macsabal festival.



A group of the festival artists on the trip to the temple site.



Kirk Mangus, Moon, Peggy, Christos, Hadrian, Michael Osborne and Park Je-Duck relaxing during a break.



The double chimney of Moon's kiln in Joryung.



The festival site buildings in the foreground and our hotel (maybe "love hotel" in winter) in the distance.

I made considerable preparations before the trip, bringing many o-myagi (gifts which signify meeting) as well as two works for an exhibition at the festival. A wonderful colour catalogue was awaiting us when we arrived with the images of every participant's work.



Rice field on the way to the provincial capital.



Peggy Bjerkan (U.S.A.), Michael Osborne (Canada) and Christos Tsimbourlas (Greece- looking a bit like Zorba) are at work in the hot July Korean sun.

Mask maker Peggy Bjerkan and I were at the festival site the day before the official opening so Moon took us to visit the local mayor and to the provincial capital to meet the "president" to drum up future support for the festival.



Kirk Mangus drawing on his sculptures.



Footed woodfired cup from the first festival firing in our collection by Kirk Mangus.



Woo Sung-Bo forming a paddle pot in Goshogawara in 2002.



Woo talking on his cell phone while working on two large paddle pots at the festival.

The ten days of the festival flew by with many activities, discussions and work with my wonderful international colleagues.



Rice in the Korean countryside in July.



Park Soon-Kwan, Choi Suk-Jin with Park Kuk-Hyun in the background.



Large ceramic bird pot made by Park Kyung-Hee at the Aomori Woodfired Festival in Goshogawara, Japan, 2002.



Park Kyung-Hee bringing refreshing watermelon and beer to the participants, her daughter in foreground.

Because of the heat, we stayed hydrated with refreshments from the festival kitchen adjacent to the studio area. The melons were in season as well as delicious corn from the surrounding countryside.



From the right, Myung Ji Hye, Hadrian, Christos and Michael Osborne.



One of the many river vistas in the Korean mountains.

We ate our meals, prepared by the volunteers, in the outdoor studio area. It was very informal and a great time for cultural sharing.



Hadrian Mendoza works on his bamboo vessels with traditional fish sculpture by Kim Won-Joo in foreground.



One of the volunteers working in the outdoor kitchen, preparing rice for our large group.



Kirk Mangus working on one of his "demented lady" drawings.



Rice field in the mountains in July.



One of my bowls in the outdoor throwing area. We had to watch out for the summer rains and their devastating effect on pots left unattended.

The generosity and helpfulness of the Korean hosts and volunteers was incredible.



Korean rock band performing in the evening.



Seong Jai Maeng observes Park Kuk-Hyun making onggi.



Daikotu figure on rice bags, gift carving by Seong Jai Maeng our impromptu barbeque chef for the festival.

One afternoon, Cheon Han-Bong and his apprentice came to the festival site and showed us an incredible display of throwing traditional Korean forms.



Cheon Han-Bong, Korean master potter, making tea bowls.



Woodfired tea bowl in our collection by Cheon Han-Bong.



"Cow's tongue" wooden rib used for forming tea bowls.



Cross section of Cheon Han-Bong tea bowl, showing compressed foot area detail.



Cheon Han-Bong throwing bottle form.



Stacks of traditional Korean onggi.

The Korean occupation and the Korean war had a serious impact on much traditional pottery production. Since the Korean war much household pottery, except onggi, was replaced by stainless steel. Cheon Han-Bong studied traditional pottery and kiln sites, long ago abandoned, and learned to make the kind of work which the Korean potters (kidnapped by the Japanese in the Momoyama

period) had made in Japan. This kind of "peasant"rice bowl continues to be valued by the tea masters in Japan.



Traditional Korean bottle forming.



Necking in the bottle form.



Finished bottle form.



Gallery with traditional Korean bottles in foreground at Cheon Han-Bong's studio.



Kiln doors at master potter's studio.



Traditional Korean kick wheel.



Lee Sa-Ly, Kirk Mangus, Cheon Han-Bong and Hadrian Mendoza in Han-Bong's kiln shed.



Lee Sa-Ly working in the festival studio that we shared in Joryung.

Lee Sa-Ly, who earned an MFA at Iowa City, Iowa, was invaluable as a translator, both for our visit to Cheon Han-Bong's studio and many other times during the festival. Her English, like her work, is excellent.



Cheon Han-Bong explaining his revival and study of traditional Korean woodfiring. We were given catalogues, refreshments and small Korean teabowls in wooden boxes.



Cheon Han-Bong's wonderful house in the mountain setting of Mungyeong.



The mountain behind the pottery with pine forest.



Mountain view as the backdrop for movie set.

Korean Broadcasting System has a large movie set for a weekly serial, historical mongol drama near the town of Mungyung. The festival participants were invited to tour the set and visit with the Korean stars.



KBS movie star painting on one of the festival plates during photo op on their movie set. He is adding his marks to my painting on the plate.



Mongol soldiers on set during a break in the shooting.



Lee Sung-Han and his wife in foreground in the courtyard of the palace movie set.



Peggy and Lee Sa-Ly explore the imperial palace on set.



Kim Yong Moon "captured" by a giant Canadian mongol warrior.



Lee Sung-Han, his wife and daughter pose with very famous Korean movie star.



Incense holder with gold fish by Lee Sung-Han in our collection.



Large wire cut vase by Lee Sung-Han with resting moth on side. This live moth alighted on the vase and stayed there for more than an hour

It was very interesting to watch my Korean colleagues and to learn traditional techniques and the way they determine the finished work.



Shin Dong-Yeo throwing the parts for a tea set with mural in background.



Wood fired teabowl from the first festival firing by Shin Dong-Yeo in our collection.



Forming a thrown and altered and cut teapot spout.



Shin making Korean teabowl to complete set.



Shin Dong-Yeo and Park Kuk-Hyun throwing tea set parts.



Park Kuk-Hyun cutting off thrown teapot handle.



Thrown lid, handle and spout drying before assembly of tea pot.



Fanciful frogs by Park Kuk-Hyun in our collection.



Kim Yong-Moon using shell rib to form interior of teabowl.



Moon's woodfired stoneware chawan bowl in our collection



Some of Moon's large pots and one of his friendly guard dogs.



Eighty-seven year old gentleman making traditional shoes at the festival.



Woo painting slip on onggi at the festival.



Woo working with paddle and anvil on onggi at the festival.

Two of my Korean potter friends from Goshogawara, Jeong Myung-Soo and Woo Sung-Bo, took me for a 200 km. drive around Mount Woreksaan which included rivers and mountain vistas and Korean camping.



My friends exploring a Korean river near the festival site.



Mountain vista in the countryside.



Woo and Jeong and painter sculptor friend (left) share lunch in the restaurant where the sculptor has his studio in the mountains.



Tigerlilies at lunch restaurant with river and glimpse of Korean camping cars in background.



River boulders and camping cars in background.



Onggi in park setting at Pangoh, site of annual woodfire festival.



Traditional wood kiln in Pangoh where we visited on their annual woodfire festival day.



A brief respite in cool mountain river water with my Korean friends.



Tea set from Pangoh potter in our collection.



Tea set maker under banner at woodfired festival in Pangoh.



Beautiful Korean woman serves us tea in traditional Korean tea ceremony on the Pangoh festival grounds.



"Koma Say Oh", she pulls out her cell phone to take a call during the tea ceremony.

A few days after my trip around the mountain, Woo and Jeong took me for a trip to Ichon, Korea's main pottery production center. Carol and I had a majolica piece in the Korean biennial in 2001 and that piece is in the museum in Ichon. I wanted to see the museum and some of the many pottery sites (400 kilns) in the Ichon area. Woo, who lives and works there, agreed to take me to see his studio and the village of potters where he lives. We began the day by driving about an hour and one half to Ichon and had breakfast with his mother, brother and children in his family home.



Mountains and rice fields near Joryung, Korea.



The tranquil stream which runs through the property of Woo's old studio.



Woo's mother with the delicious brunch which she prepared for us.



Pots in the studio of local potter, Lee Eun-Koo.

Woo and Jeong took me on a whirlwind shopping trip after we visited a couple of his neighbours potteries.



Onggi in the front yard of a pottery shop.



Multi-chambered woodfired kiln at Haegang museum in Ichon, Korea.



Woo in his usual traditional Korean attire in front of pottery galleries in his ceramic Korean folk art village, Ilwol.



Tea bowls in Ichon village gallery.



Institute of Haegang Koryo Celadon founder's statue, Ichon, Korea.



Teapot in the museum collection.



Traditional incised celadon vase in museum collection, Ichon, Korea.



Kiln area in museum yard.

After the closing session of the Korean Macsabal Festival, I had an extra day before my plane left Inchon for Japan. I thought I would make the 200 km. trip back to Seoul on Sunday for some shopping and museums. My hosts warned me that Sunday was not a good day to travel back to

Seoul because of the "camping people". It seems this trip, that usually takes under 3 hours on some excellent freeways, takes 7 hours or more because of the weekend campers returning from the mountains to metropolitan Seoul.



Wooden fish sculptures in the yard of Park Kuk-Hyun's former apprentice.



Park Kuk-Hyun and his wife visit wife of his former apprentice at their kiln in Pangoh, Korea.

My friend Park Kuk-Hyun took me instead for another scenic tour and to his home in Wonju-City where we had barbeque and the next morning, he drove me to Incheon with no traffic problems.



Park Kuk-Hyun showed me this famous historic Korean rock formation, which is featured in many historic paintings.



A collection of the work that I made at the festival drying and awaiting firing in the wood kiln.

I have seen some of the pictures of the finished works from the festival fired in Moon's kiln. Although in some cases the results are not what I expected, the experience in Korea was unforgettable.

Visiting Artist Japanese Pottery Residence

I returned to Aomori, Japan to work for two weeks at the Kanayama Pottery in Goshogawara. Ryoji Matsumiya, who organized the 2002 International Woodfired Festival, in which Carol and I were invited participants, invited me to work at the new artist residency facility at his pottery. When I arrived, the Nebuta Festival was happening in the evenings and the firing of the new Olson kiln, which had been built the previous month had just been unloaded the week before.



25 metre tall illuminated nebuta lantern sculptures were carried through the streets of Goshogawara.



Ryoji giving the O.K. sign in his sports car at the train station in Goshogawara.

As I was the only visiting artist during this time, Ryoji and I worked together in the new studio sharing techniques and ideas. It was a very productive time for both of us.



Kanayama gallery showroom.



Introduction of charcoal to give the traditional Bizen effects at Kanayama.



A soba-ya restaurant was a quick place for dinner before viewing the evening fireworks during the Obon time.



One of Ryoji's "toys" used for moving wood and building new kiln sites.



One of Ryoji's three noborigama kilns at Kanayama fired for five to six days with red pine found near Goshogawara.



A view of the new workshop studio for international visiting artists.

Obon is a time when Buddhists visit their ancestral grave sites, leaving offerings in remembrance of their deceased relatives. I was privileged to go with Ryoji and his 87 year old mother, as well his sister and cousins to the nearby village on the Japan sea where he grew up. We left offerings in the graveyard outside and inside the temple.



Offerings included these little animal sculptures made from vegetables.



Intricate wooden carvings adorned the temple where Ryoji's cousin was the priest who conducted the prayer blessing of the offerings.



The beautiful garden at the temple was hundreds of years old and amazing in its carefully designed portrayal of the natural world.



These offering sculptures are to remember children who did not reach adulthood.

After making the Obon offerings we went to the business of one of Ryoji's boyhood friends. At the seaside he has a squid business which provided the best snack of my summer experience.



Cuttlefish drying in the open air, later to be barbequed for the best bar snack ever.



Another view of the temple garden.



Barbequed squid on one of Ryoji's Kanayama Pottery plates with mustard and mayonnaise sauce.



Barbequing the tasty tender squid.

Working with Ryoji was a wonderful learning of throwing traditional Japanese pottery forms while I showed him the trompe l'oeil and stencil work Carol and I have developed in Canada.



Freshly thrown forms at Ryoji's wheel.



Some of the flattened work I made during my artist residency.



Ryoji working on one of his large slab constructions.



Ryoji's wife, Mytffyko and I watch him joining the slabs of his large sculpture.



Two-person sculpture turning.



Ryoji's sculpture in the drying stage. Much of the stamped detail came from images that Carol and I have used on our work. Ryoji and I freely borrowed tools and techniques from each other during the residency.



Ryoji and his firing crew with wood ready to stoke in one of the three climbing kilns.



Logs delivered to the pottery awaiting cutting and splitting for the firing.

Kanayama Pottery was a great place to work because I had a chance to observe and interact with Ryoji's 20 employees who kept the cycle of work going. There was always at least one kiln firing and usually one being loaded and one being unloaded and the work prepared for sale.



The climbing kiln with the charcoal stoke hole bricks in place.



Two of the workers unloading the kiln.



The stoke hole in the firebox of the climbing kiln.



These women are brought in to clean and sand the woodfired ware when the kiln is unloaded.



Bottles turned upside down awaiting trimming.



Jang mi hwa, a young Korean apprentice, trimming production ware bottles in the studio that she shared with us.

I was able to study many of Ryoji's finished works as well as the production work from the pottery to better understand the effects of the natural ash glazes from the Bizen-style firing with added charcoal.



Traditional flower vase with shell markings and natural ash glaze effects by Ryoji Matsumiya.



Tea ceremony water jar
by Ryoji Matsumiya.



Basket for floral arrangement by Ryoji
Matsumiya.



Summer soba-ya stream cooled noodles were a treat
for visitors at the pottery.



The noodles were sent down the pipe of running cool
water and quickly scooped up with waiting chopsticks
to be dipped in soba sauce.



A mix of my residency work shows traditional
Japanese forms and our signature flattened and
stenciled work.



Close-up view of tsubo vases drying before firing.



One of Ryoji's basket forms from the firebox of the anagama.



A basket form that Ryoji made to teach me the technique.

The residency was not only about making, but truly a cross-cultural experience sampling food, antiques, language and celebrations.



The Matsumiyas treat me to a sushi train in Goshogawara.



This couple, owners of an antique store, showed me numerous treasured antiquities over tea. I couldn't leave without some of them.



Rabbit pedestal plate in the studio.



Flattened forms await firing.



Ryoji's demonstration bamboo basket form.



Ryoji detailing bamboo on basket handle.



A portion of the forms I completed during the residency. They were fired in the regular kiln cycles after I left.



My wonderful host and sometimes chef, adjusts the handle on a flower basket of my making.

My one-month adventure in Asia came to a close after a visit to my ceramic colleague and friend, Hiroshi Ikehata, in Sakudaiera. I wish to again thank the Alberta Foundation of the Arts and the Edmonton Arts Council for their financial support, a project grant from the AFA and a travel grant from the Arts Council. Without this kind of support, it is quite difficult for full time artists like ourselves to experience these cultural exchanges.