Welcome.

The Korea Ceramic Foundation is now an established international entity in the promotion and development of those artistic endeavours related to the almost mystical coalescence of fire, clay and artisan.

We at KOCOF continue to look into the future and see much to be excited about – ceramics is a living and growing form that seems to know no bounds. Yet we glimpse the new with constant reference to those past masters of our craft and art who are both inspiration and confirmation of the rightness and direction of our path.

Please, come along with us on this journey.

Kim Chey-Ok, Making S-line
Awarded at the 4th CEIBKO photo competition, Korea, 2007

Gwyne Hanssen Pigott, Remembrance, 2003 h.31cm, l. 158cm, 2003

Kang Woo-Hyon
Chairman, Korea Ceramic Foundation

FROM OUT THE FLAMES
A JOURNEY OF CREATION
VISION

Within the province of Gyeonggi – with its astonishing diversity of land usage and population, from the rural to the meta-urban – the provincial government sponsors a foundation that leads in the development of an intrinsic part of Korean culture: ceramics.

Perhaps nowhere else in the world has there been such a complete vision to maintain and develop one section of a nation’s identity so thoroughly and with such commitment to innovation.

This public foundation doesn’t stop at the borders. Its gaze is wider and more inclusive – in fact seems to reject insularity. As such the Korea Ceramic Foundation seeks out the best way to integrate and nurture all the ceramic cultures of the world.

Its three venues – Icheon, Yeouju and Gwangju – allow exposure to and development of all that the ceramic arts can offer – historical, contemporary and beyond – and this offering is open at all who share our passion for cultural excellence in the world of ceramics.

MISSION

• We aim to create a real and lasting improvement in the working environment for all ceramic artists and in our ceramic culture.

• We are working toward repairing the environment, and everyday life, by returning ceramic materials to the center of our experience.

• We will make significant developments in the regional economy by returning ceramics to their position as a core ingredient to living well.
Korean ceramics have been part of the nation’s identity for thousands of years. From out of that tradition comes three talismanic styles that have influenced the world of ceramic art: Celadon, Buncheong and Baekja.

**CELADON** – The peculiarly beautiful blue oxidized iron within the clay – biseak – makes white clay brighter and red clay darker. Celadon is achieved by a 1300°C firing, with a calcareous glaze containing between 1 to 3% iron.

**BUNCHEONG** is a ceramic form unique to Korea and finding its way through necessity. Individual potters built their own kilns in response to instability within the government-run establishments – a more rustic form established itself: buncheong was born. For two hundred years it was the dominant ceramic until it was replaced by a more refined style.

**BAEKJA** – or Joseon white porcelain – developed from a central government-established royal kiln. Saongwon, the government department responsible for court dining and entertainment, sanctioned white porcelain for court and central government. Made of white clay and with a transparent glaze it was harder, clear, and more useful than celadon. With the start of the royal kiln in Gwangju, Gyeonggi-do in 1467 this iconic white porcelain began to dominate.

**KOREA, JAPAN and CHINA** have been – and are – at the centre of the ceramics world. In the ceramics ‘helix of influence’ China, Korea and Japan have, in turn, been producing glorious works of functionality and beauty for more than a millennium.

In terms of regional history China began as the leading player but cultural exchange and imitation saw first Korea then Japan surge ahead in areas of production, technology and artistic exploration.

Korea’s adoption of the Chinese models was, in the early-17th century, replicated by the Japanese when they acquired and then built upon Korean ceramic techniques. Since then the whole region – the white-hot core of the ceramics globe – has grown to dominate the world with each discovery sourced from an individual’s creativity whether they be from Korea, Japan or China.
MODERNITY

RECLAIMING THE LOST:
NEW MASTERS FROM OLD

THE DOWNTURN IN KOREAN CERAMICS
With the experience of the Japanese Colonial Period – which included the Second World War – and the culturally and physically fracturing nature of the Korean War, ceramics was at crossroads on the Korean peninsula by 1955.

Colonial influences and war have historically placed great strains on artistic endeavour and Korean artists were no different. Skills were lost and disciples turned aside as the business of living took the place of the furthering of a national cultural identity.

In such a difficult environment Korean ceramics were in a battle for survival. As recent as the first decade of the 1900’s, Joseon porcelain – with a 500-year history – had declined in the face of industrialized ‘imitative’ ceramics, changes in taste, and the rise of modern materials such as plastics.

THE NEW AGE OF KOREAN CERAMICS
In the 1930s, many potters had moved to their hometowns or local kilns. With that ‘flight’ there appeared modern trends, through formal education, and a growing diversity in the Korean ceramics – in much the same way as buncheong had come into being over 700 hundred years earlier – by developing ‘folk’ forms.

Since the 1960s, however, Korean ceramicists have fostered their potential by keeping abreast of international trends. While traditional forms and techniques remain, masterpieces of Korean porcelain are no longer limited by an inwardness of expression or inspiration.

However, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that many leading Korean potters still fall into three traditional categories though their works are sometimes anything but traditional: celadon masters You Geun-hyung, Hwang In-choon and Ji Soon-taek, Han Chang-moon buncheong’s champion, and white porcelain artists An Dong-oh and Kim Wan-bae.
With an artistic community as vital and as vibrant as Korea’s, it is perhaps difficult to choose a small handful amongst the many excelling in ceramics throughout the nation. However, these three important artists below are major contributors in a time-honouring cultural exchange between Korean ceramics masters and the wider world.

In paying tribute to them we acknowledge, as ever, we ride on the shoulders of the giants of past ages – giants whose names are lost in time or indeed were never recorded – yet who have left an enormous legacy of masterpieces, single works or contributions to ceramics technology.

**Hwang Kap-sun**

After graduation from Seoul National University and receiving his Bachelor and Master of Fine Arts in Ceramics from Kiel’s Muthesius Hochschule Gestaltung, Hwang started his artistic career at the famous German company, Staatliche Porzellan-Manufaktur, Meissen. He has been leading a new movement called ‘haptic-grinding ceramics’ combining traditional beauties – celadon glazes and Joseon white porcelain – with 21st century innovation.

**Park Suku**

After graduating in Fine Arts from Seoul National University, Park received an MA after study at Konstfackskolan, Sweden. After 30 years of exhibitions in Europe he is well known there – as Suku Park. His creations seemingly know no bounds from ceramic tableware design and ceramic light work to sculptural pieces and are housed in Korea’s National Museum of Contemporary Art, and held in several international galleries including the National Museum of Sweden, the Victoria and Albert Museum (London) and the Museum of International Ceramics, Czech Republic. He is currently Professor at the Sang Myung University’s Graduate School of Art & Design.

**Yeo Seon-gu**

With extensive exposure to the different historical and cultural influences in both the US and Korea, Yeo has made his unique experience of that cultural gap between Western and Korean cultures a centrepiece of his artistic expression. His outstanding ceramic works often feature ‘found materials’, trash or waste.

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*Kim Na-yeon, Alice in Wonderland* · Variable dimensions, Silk Porcelain, Slip Casting
The World Ceramic Exposition Foundation held the first World Ceramic Biennale, Korea in 2001. Of course, there are numerous biennales internationally, though few are centred on ceramics nor do they achieve consistent interest.

Of the ceramic biennales, the World Ceramic Biennale Korea has asserted and established itself in every respect, from the quality of works and research presented to its astonishing scale and dynamism.

The World Ceramic Biennale Korea aims to project internationally the dignity of Korean ceramics and display the confidence and resilience of a thousand-year-old ceramic culture.

As a cultural event, it also extends both the realm and reach of the ceramic arts and continues to generate a national and international demand for ceramics. The biennale plays a vital role: comprehensively introducing ceramic art and ceramics industries in all their splendor and creativity. At the same time it has re-energised and activated meaningful exchange between ceramics cultures by enlisting internationally acknowledged artists from throughout the world.

The World Ceramic Biennale continues to focus its effort on communicating the eternal value of ceramics: to culture, to art, the ceramic industry and practical developments.

As such the themes around which the World Ceramic Biennales have turned have included ‘Shaping the Future with Earth’ (2001), 2003’s thrilling ‘Passion for Creativity, Elegance of Tradition, Fragrance of Life’ and the bold 2007 call-to-arms ‘Reshaping Asia’.
ICHEON
THE HOME OF MODERN CERAMIC ART

ICHEON WORLD CERAMIC CENTER
This centre, focused on Modern Formative Ceramic Art, draws numerous visitors to it every year. Some are drawn by the special exhibitions on ceramics, some by the visual nature alone while others come to view the breadth of art held and to analyze the artistic and cultural impact contained by a world of contemporary ceramics. Further to this, talented artists – young and old – are afforded the opportunity to discover and be discovered within this precinct.

TOYASEUM
To allow for more of the Center’s holding of ceramic art works to be on display to the public, the Center’s employees made a creative decision of their own: to turn an office-building into a museum-gallery space. Achieved in three months – and with an imaginative design scheme – this new gallery showcases a rotating selection of over 3000 artworks from the KOCEF collection. Much of this material had hitherto not been accessible by the public and, with this innovation, visitors are now able to view a wider range of artworks – some of it for the first time. This venue has added a new spirit of energy to a previously cloistered collection.

CREATIVITY CENTER
This space functions as a cultural complex for multi-use. It includes a state-of-the-art information center, academic and artistic work spaces, recreation facilities and, as to be expected, a gallery.

The Creativity Centre will be the main facility at the core of the new Ceramic Theme Park where, by its multi-function nature, it will enable the establishing of a creative infrastructure drawing in various ceramics-based professionals as well as supporting potters – local and international – with residency programs.

Lee Chun-Bok, Forest 
White Clay, Paper, Assembling and Stacking, 140×80×40 cm, Korea, 2006

Shingo Takeuchi, Jar with Inlaid Decoration 
22×22×44 cm, Coiling, Stoneware, Japan
YEOJU
CULTURAL CERAMICS: COLOUR, RHYTHM AND LIFE

YEOJU WORLD CERAMIC LIVINGWARE GALLERY
This gallery presents the latest in ceramics design for 'everyday' use though some of the exhibitions take that concept to the extreme in terms of beauty, innovation and luxury.

Although ceramic ware is at the heart of each exhibition each instance allows for the use of other complimentary art forms including the living dynamism of interior design, the use of light and structure with a focus on architecture as well as the less often observed skills of display and multi-art coordination.

A recent exhibition – focused on the days of the week – drew from ceramicists and designers an almost fantastical response, with the gallery transformed by the use of the elements – earth, wood, water, metal and fire, along with sun and moon – as triggers for a sublime creativity that pushed at the boundaries while still possessing, in every gesture, skills in form, technique and sublime taste.

Yeoju Livingware Gallery – as a blank-canvas space – has the potential to transform the viewer and change their perception regarding ceramics in design for everyday use.

Located in a small town nestled within a semi-rural tourist-friendly area, Yeoju – while a pleasure in itself – also allows access to many places of natural beauty including the graceful Silleuksa temple, and the nearby Namhan River.
In 1467 the Joseon Court established the government-controlled kilns – Saongwon Bunwon – in Gwangju, so as to secure stable supplies of porcelain for the court and, until Bunwon came into private hands some 400 years later, these kilns produced the highest quality porcelains in Gwangju and arguably, the whole of Korea.

The Gyeonggi Ceramic Museum – which naturally specializes in Korean ceramics - was founded upon the principle objectives of collection, preservation, research, and exhibition of Korean ceramics from all ages.

The permanent exhibition shows, in impressive detail, the history and tradition of Korean ceramic making and houses some prime and exquisite examples of each major artistic tradition alongside earlier examples of primitive stoneware.

Ceramics education – achieving general knowledge of the form – is at the heart of this museum though the understanding and discovery that the importance of beauty is not sacrificed on the altar of dry scholarship.

With its greater emphasis on research, the museum convenes documental studies, archaeological investigations and excavations of kilns. The museum is also set amidst hills teeming with old kiln sites – with one soon to be moved from its current mountain perch and relocated in the museum's grounds.

Information collected from all these investigations and research is closely analyzed and, when and where possible, integrated fully into museum exhibitions and educational outreach.

Functioning as the center of academic research on Korean ceramics – as home to the Research and Investigation of Cultural Properties division – this museum also hosts education programs for children and adults from hands-on learning to academic lecture series on Korean art history, materials and ceramic techniques.
KOREAN CERAMICS – A NEW DEAL
A CERAMICS ‘NEW DEAL’ DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The plastic arts grew from the artisan. Making came before pure art but over time we have grown to love and accept the conditions of each creation having both a pleasing form and a successful function.

However, while functionality is important, too often in recent history it has muscled aside its companion – form – to the detriment of both.

The artist-artisan has suffered most from this battle, and that is where KOCEF – taking its lead from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his stimulus of the 1930s US economy – has decided to step. By encouraging endeavour and excellence in the field of ceramics KOCEF will create a stimulus to the economy of the region and the industry.

This three-section initiative – which aims to usher in a new era of productivity and prosperity directly linked to ceramics – is based, like any good idea, on simplicity of form and execution.

Purchasing of ceramic stock – where the market has failed to take the initiative or has lacked the courage to invest – is the first step. This warehouse of quality materials not only helps business to overcome short-term cash-flow issues but also then becomes the basis for the next move with the creation of KOCEF’s Ceramic Theme Park.

CERAMIC THEME PARK
CREATING A NEW WORLD OF EXPERIENCE

CERAMIC THEME PARK
With the ‘New Deal’ came the creation of a base from which all the new projects will launch – and that is the Ceramic Theme Park.

Within the vision of the Park is one important component: people. As such the Park will support a ceramics residency program where artists, academics and ceramics journalists will play a part in the living nature of the ceramic art form and supporting tourism by allowing visitors to see creative activity up close and personal as well as meeting practitioners ‘in the wild’. Within the Park themes abound and taking its lead from contemporary concerns part of the Park’s thrust will be in the area of environmental ceramics and crafts for use.

With such a hands-on approach visitors will be encouraged to become artisans and artists themselves; becoming ceramic craftsmen, women and children, as well encouraging cultural tourism and thereby creating both a national and even international pool of knowledge - and experience - rich tourists.

The final element in the nurturing of our international ceramics cultural industry – based on the ‘New Deal’ concept – is exposure. Exposure to the makers. Exposure to the beauty and functionality of ceramics. Exposure to the environmental friendliness of the techniques allied with the simplicity, wholesomeness and ancient familiarity with a trusted form. Exposure to honest excellence.

In fact much of the ‘New Deal’ is the Old Deal: faith in what works, in the natural environment and the desire in all, to create things of grace, skill and use.

Come along and be a part of this.
HOSTING A SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL EVENT

Celebrating the decade since its inception and with an aim of reinforcing and re-establishing the identity of the Korea Ceramic Foundation, the Gyeonggi International Ceramix Biennale 2011 – with its theme of ‘Journey from Fire’ – will address a host of pertinent and pressing issues for the world in general and the ceramics world in particular.

The three thrusts of 2011 will be upgrading, developing and reforming.

The Gyeonggi International Ceramix Biennale 2011 (GICB) after ten years, is now an international biennale, with accrued know-how, international reach and respect as well as the acknowledgement as the largest of its kind globally.

It's time for thought, reflection and action. Everyone who has an opinion on the direction of the event needs to share their thoughts, for no one person, or institution, has all the answers ... and there are plenty of questions.

GICB needs also to continue to push the boundaries of what it can achieve as an entity. Already an international meeting place for ceramicists it may well be time that the biennale created itself as part of, or the initiator of a national or even international cultural exchange festival, moving away from local – or solely ceramics-based – events.

The biennale thus transmogrifies into an international ceramics conference, an arts-focused forum and a public festival celebrating all artistic and cultural endeavours.

Finally, in reformatting what GICB can offer the practitioners, the academics and philosophers; a residency-based biennale filled with vital exhibitions and various symposia based on the biennale themes – and discussing the future of the industry and our chosen medium.

This is a ‘New Deal’ – creating a constantly-meeting, constantly-diverging, constantly-growing pathway toward a vigorous and exciting expansion of culture and excellence and international cooperation – and all through the language of clay and fire.
KOREA

With a land area of over 200,000 square kilometres Korea is at the center of one of the most important creative sectors of human civilisation. With China to its west, Japan to its east, Siberia to the north and the bountiful Northern Pacific to its south, Korea has developed a significant maritime history and with it, a major role in north Asian trade and discovery. From as early as the 8th century Korea was linked to the Middle East via the Silk Road with major trade items such as ceramics and silk making up the bulk of the westward exchange.

Divided in half by Korea’s largest river, the Han, Gyeonggi-do – or the province of Gyeonggi – has a population of close to 25 million and thus takes in close to 50% of Korea’s inhabitants. At its heart is the national capital – Seoul. Its northern reaches boarder North Korea, its western edge is coastal and the province’s total area makes up a little over 10% of the Republic’s land mass.

In climate Gyeonggi experiences hot summers and snowy winters with the average rainfall staggering high: in excess of 1000 milimetres. Mountainous, with several corresponding floodplains, it comes as no surprise that Gyeonggi-do possesses all the ingredients for high-quality ceramics: fine soils, plentiful supplies of timber and reliable, clean water.

It’s closeness to the coast, the broad reaches of the Han, and the governmental center and ancient royal city of Seoul meant that for centuries the province was well placed to be a supplier of ceramics to the demanding and discerning clients of the court – and to the international market of China and the developing worlds of the Middle East and Europe.

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Bang Chul-Ju, Celadon Bottle with Sgraffito Series of Circle Design
h.26.5cm, d.40.5cm, Korea, 1999
A JOURNEY OF CREATION