





The work of Sangho Shin is dedicated to the incessant challenge and experimental searching for the new. Shin, who started to produce pottery with his own kiln in Yichon immediately after entrance into a college in the early 1960s, has been working intensively for 30 years. Today most ceramic artists and fine art colleges are undoubtedly equipped with at least one electric or gas kiln. When Shin was a student, however, there were only a few earthen kilns in Sukwangi, Yichon and Hakdong, Ryojoo. With his keen enthusiasm for ceramic art, the then-student Shin equipped himself with his own kiln. Since that time he has produced white porcelain, celadon and Bunchung ware, carrying out innumerable experiments in form and pattern with a variety of clays and glazes. These efforts demonstrate what great pains he has taken to answer the question of what today's celadon,

inlaid patterns on the surface of various jar forms; the other was forming a figure of an animal head on a body transformed by the wheel method. Here one could see his drastic innovations—the two groups of works were already diverging in spite of their same origins in Bunchung ware.

Now Shin presents two differing groups of works again.

The first group of works, developed from the traditional concept of Bunchung ware and the wheel method, are jars and plates which are made of ultrafine clay containing iron. On the whole, surfaces are randomly furnished with various stamping patterns followed by inlaid patterns made by rubbing, cutting, scratching and plating with white clay. Most patterns except for several scars are scratched away. After 5 or 6 repetitions of plating or inlaying over scratching and

Sangho Shin *The Incessant Experimental Spirit*

Yangmo Chung

white porcelain and Bunchung ware should be.

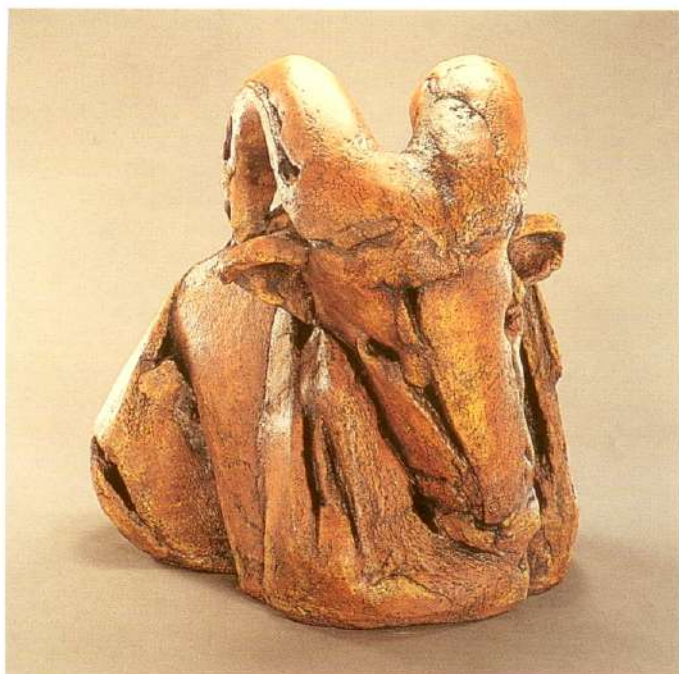
The spirit of experiment drove him for a time to pass over traditional pottery based on the concept of utility and the wheel method and get absorbed in full coloring of large-scale formative masses. Some were skeptical that his individuality might have been lost during his years in the United States as an exchange professor in Connecticut. However, he later ventured into Bunchung ware which showed the repetition of a new stamping pattern and a new plating and inlaid technique so as to embody his will in the world of the unknown and accidental. It was then that he completed his artistic adventure with a concrete orientation from repetitive experiments. The art of that period of Shin's work was divided into two categories though both were founded on the traditions of Bunchung ware. One was the pictorial work using stamping and

cutting away of the surface, the intention of the artist is realized. The stamping patterns and the scratched scars which remain through the repetition of rubbing and scratching remind us of the historical aspects of Bunchung. Brown, gray and red components of white clay make an effect as if they are the subtle and hazy moss of time. The repetition technique is found not only in the patterns but in the firing of the pottery. The third firing makes the iron in the clay penetrate and permeate onto the surface, with the resulting color a dark greenish-gray. A brief oxidation at the end of the firing achieves minute variations of color.

The second group of sculptural works are understood in the similar context of Bunchung ware: animal figures that were first exhibited in 1991. But this time no traditional means such as the wheel method or plating technique are found. Instead, a powerful building and attaching of rough clay slabs is employed. The

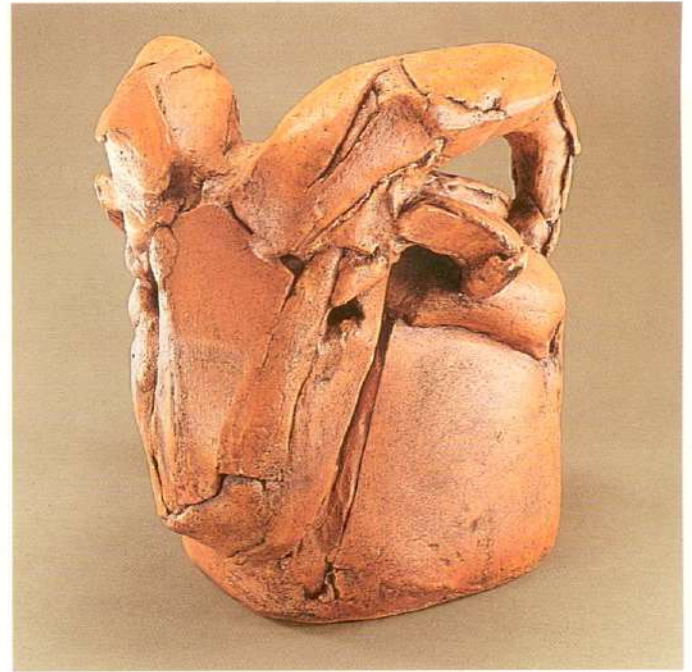


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already diverging in spite of their same origins in Bunchung ware.



Page 16: Dream Series (1995),
21¹/₄" x 3¹/₂", ceramic.

Page 18: Top left: Dream Series (1995),
13¹/₄" x 18¹/₄", ceramic.

Top right: Dream Series (1995),
12¹/₄" x 17¹/₄", ceramic.

Bottom left: Head Series (1995),
26" x 23¹/₄", ceramic.

Bottom right: Head Series (1995),
26" x 23¹/₄", ceramic.

various postures of the animal figures, are sometimes the result of chance. After the completion of the form, the clay is fired three times. The same repetitive procedures of rubbing and scratching as those of the Bunchung ware leave a sort of scar of time on the surface of the clay while the three firings give a splendid feast of colors.

In the exhibition of 1991 one could easily find that his incessant experiment towards a certain invisible goal was still alive. Since the various forms of double-mouthed jars of his last exhibition were changed to much simpler ones, one can still feel the harmony between the complicatedly produced patterns and the simplified forms. Furthermore, one must be fascinated by the fact that the pattern of birds, trees or other recognizable figures which were distinct in his last exhibition are erased through the repetitive

intricate nature of the human being by virtue of the animal figures. They represent the personification of animals and the allegory of human nature. It seems that Shin urges us to find and restore the goodness of human nature with the help of the innocence of animals or provide a chance at self-reflection stimulated somewhat by their greedy looks. After all, the animals are the fruit of his strenuous effort through years of contemplation and research—the innocent looks and the simple forms Shin achieved by endless experiment, chance and spontaneity.

One may assume that Shin's incessant experimental spirit owes a debt to his artistic environment. It is in the forest, by the waters and in an environment with sufficient materials and sophisticated equipment that he lives and works. It is in the midst of this natural setting that he makes artworks of pictorial beauty

He makes artworks of pictorial beauty and great plastic power.

Page 19:
Top left: Dream Series (1995),
19¹/₄" x 15", ceramic.

Top right: Dream Series (1995),
13¹/₂" x 14", ceramic.

Bottom left: Head Series (1995),
29¹/₄" x 27¹/₄", ceramic.

Bottom right: Head Series (1995),
31¹/₄" x 31¹/₄", ceramic.

Page 21: Head Series (1995),
13¹/₄" x 13", ceramic.

technique. Animal figures, though they originated from Bunchung ware animal figures, are totally different in the essence of the artwork, materials and production method. Coarse clay which is appropriate for large-sized pottery is used. The production method is the building and attaching of clay slabs which is appropriate for a plastic mass rather than the sculpting or carving of an image. In the animal figures the natural animals are represented as a plastic form, whereas in the work of Bunchung ware the comprehensive phenomena of nature is absorbed as a pictorial form. Therefore each animal figure contains its own personality and characteristics as an independent existence. All animal figures are seemingly contemplating deeply with various looks and postures. They are natural, simple and innocent looking as if acting on instinct (nature), without any artificial motives. Eventually one may conclude that Shin is trying to show the

and great plastic power.

Sometimes he might be disappointed to find that an exaggeration of repetition and an overemphasis on spontaneity can weaken the natural characteristics of the works. Or he might be disappointed by the fact that after three firings and despite the merit of firmness and the complete achievement of harmony between clay and glaze, the best outcome is produced at the sacrifice of the relaxation given by the unfulfilled. The artistic work of Shin, however, will be strong and healthy as long as he retains a fundamental foundation of tradition, a keen appreciation of natural beauty and an incessant experimental spirit.

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