

# Major activities of museums in Korea from 2000 to 2006

KIM Byung-Mo

## **Abstract**

This paper represents the special exhibitions, symposiums, and publishing works which were organized by museums in Korea from 2000 to 2006. It also shows recent trends and new museums in Korea for the future. In the beginning of the 21st Century, Korean museums faced up to the importance of developing international relationships among the museums in the world. The number of corporate exhibitions increased and travel exhibits were extended to Japan, China, Vietnam, the U.S.A., and Australia. In addition, international symposiums to discuss museum issues such as ICOM 2004 General Assembly in Seoul have been held successfully. This paper features recent activities of Korean Museums and forecasts their future through the new national museum in Yong-san<sup>1</sup> and its new director.

---

<sup>1</sup> 龍山

The term ‘Museum’ in this paper is only applied to art and history museums, and museums of science or agriculture, excluding botanical gardens or zoos.

The number of museums in Korea which is only 428 as of 2006 seems few regarding the number of higher educational institutes and growth national products in the country. Yet, new and specific museums are being prepared so that the number of museums will grow in the near future.

### 1. The New National Museum of Korea

National museum of Korea was reopened at Yong-san, Seoul in Oct. 2005. It is built on the ground-300, 000 sq meters and consisted on 6 floors, 404m x 150m and basement for parking lot which includes exhibition space - 24,600 sq meters (Halls of History, Archaeology, Donated art, Oriental Art 1 & 2) and other exhibition spaces - Children's Museum and Special Exhibition are provided. Mobile Devices - PDA and MP3 Player are served on request.

Additionally theater (800 seats), restaurants, cafeterias, and museum shops are on site.

Dr. Kim, Hong Nam <sup>2</sup>, the former director of National Folk Museum, was appointed for its new director in August, 2006. Subsequently Dr. Shin, Kwang up, the former curator of National museum of Korea, was assigned to the director of National Folk Museum.

### 2. International collaboration with foreign museums in travel exhibitions

Museums in Korea have given great impetus to international exchanging of information, cultural relics, books and professionals.

The following tables are representing the exhibitions organized by the National Museum of Korea, the National Folk Museum, and the Kyung-gi <sup>3</sup> Province Museum from 2000 to 2006.

### 3. International academic activities in Korean museums

At first, ICOM General Assembly 2004 was held in Seoul from Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>. It was finished successfully as the first ICOM meeting, which is opened in Asia. Later *International Journal of Intangible Heritage (IJIH)* was founded in 2006 with collaboration of ICOM.

Secondly symposiums at National Folk Museum were held with two theme *The History and Living of Korean Migrants* (Mar. 10, 2005) and *Ethnology of Japan* (Sept. 27, 2005).

Thirdly *International Symposium for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and Preparations for the Museum Disaster* organized by ICOM- Korea was held at National Folk Museum on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006.

Exhibitions organized by National Museums of Korea (2000~2006)

Nature	Numbers	Operation	Remarks
National Museums	32	Central Government	
State Museums	71	Local Governments	
Private Museums	222	Individual, Private firms	10% unregistered
University Museums	103	National, State, Private Universities	
Total	428		

<sup>2</sup> 金紅男

<sup>3</sup> 京畿

### Exhibitions organized by National Museums of Korea (2000~2006)

Titles	Dates	Places
Master Pieces of Porcelains of Chosun Dynasty	2000.6.8~2001.3.13	Art Museum of Queensland, Australia
1000 Years of Living and Art of Russia	2000.10.17~2001.1.28	Kwang-ju <sup>4</sup> National Museum
Master Pieces of French Ceramics	2000.10.21~2001.1.10	National Museum of Korea
Art of Sari <sup>5</sup> Belief	2001.7.14~9.2	Nara Museum, Japan
Festivals and Food Cultures, History and Culture of Kwangju and Southern Cholla Province	2001.10.19~11.25	Nagoya Castle Museum
Mongol Invasion and Its Transition	2001.11.3~12.9	Fukuoka City Museum, Japan
Treasures of Korea	2002.2.22~8.10	Osaka History Museum, Tokyo Museum, Japan
5 Years of Archaeological Survey in Mongolia	2002.4.23~5.19	National Museum of Korea
Exhibition of Japanese Master Pieces	2002.5.14~7.14	National Museum of Korea
Exhibition of Korean Art	2002.10.26~2006.10.25	The British Museum
A Special Exhibition of Japanese Modern Art- Collections of National Museum of Korea	2003.4.3~12.6	Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Tokyo Art University, Japan
Living of Asians / Hearts of Asians	2003.7.22~8.17	National Museum of Korea
History of Sea Drifting	2003.8.8~10.12	Je-ju <sup>6</sup> National Museum
Koryo Dynasty-A Period of Enlightenment	2003.9.18~2004.2.5	Museum of Oriental Art, San Francisco, U.S.A.
Reviving Bronzes	2003.9.25~12.6	Osaka History Museum, Japan
Knots-Techniques and Beauties	2004.11.25~12.6	Osaka History Museum, Japan
Rediscovery of Ancient Art through Shell Products from Okinawa and Korea	2005.10.10~11.27	Jeju National Museum
Searching for Dream and Mystery of Love - Minute Paintings of India	2005.10.18~11.20	Choon-chon <sup>7</sup> National Museum
Colours of Asia - An Exhibition of Print Art, by Paul Jacoulet	2006.4.21~6.4	National Museum of Korea

### Exhibitions organized by the National Folk Museum (2000~2006)

Titles	Dates	Places
Lines and Smiles of Korean Costumes	2000.10.17~10.31	Art Museum of Vietnam
Native Lacquer Art of Mexico	2000.12.13~2001.1.15	National Folk Museum of Korea
Invitation to Korean Art	2001.6.15~12.14	Vladivostok and 6 other cities in East Russia
Art of Chosun Dynasty	2001.7.14~2002.5.19	Hokkaido and 3 other cities in Japan
Living Art of Japan	2002.2.20~5.6	National Folk Museum
History of Korean Costume	2003.11.1~2004.2.1	Pacific Asia Museum, LA
Living Art of Korea & Japan	2002.2.20~5.6 2002.3.21~7.16	National Folk Museum, Korea Museum of Ethnology, Osaka

### Exhibitions organized by Kyung-gi Province Museum (2000~2006)

Titles	Dates	Places
Chinese Ceramics	2000.10.16~12.15	Kyung-gi Province Museum
European Glass 500 Years	2001.8.18~10.28	Kyung-gi Province Museum
Special Exhibit for 2002 FIFA World Cup	2002.5.24~8.4	Kyung-gi Province Museum
Coree: Hippolyte Frandin's Photo Collections	2002.12.24~2003.3.2	Kyung-gi Province Museum
Matisse and Picasso: Exhibition for Children	2005.1.7~2.18	Kyung-gi Province Museum
Culture of People in Yunnan, China	2005.10.19~12.11	Kyung-gi Province Museum

- 4 光州  
5 舍利  
6 濟州  
7 春川

#### 4. Others

Visual Artist Paik Nam Joon's Memorial Museum is due to be completed 2008 near Kyung-gi Province Museum.

According to the Museum Act in Korea, all the registered museums are expected to get financial support from the government only when a museum can fulfill the basic conditions which Korean Museum Association defines. That is 'in a museum there should be a decent space of exhibition halls, laboratories. And also qualified curators depending on functions of the museum are essential.'

#### 5. Conclusion

Through domestic and international cultural activities, museums and the Ministry

of Culture and Public in Korea have learned much and also propagated the Korean culture. There are more and more exhibitions of collections imported from foreign countries and the Korean collections are having more chances to be exported abroad for exhibitions too. Most museologists compare the amount of museums to the Gross National Product, and the outcome ratio in Korea is still far from good. Many private museums are near closed because of the finance.

International exchanges between museums not only improve the national cultural life but also propagate the national culture. And we can hope to achieve world peace by gaining more understanding to each other. And we museum profession do have a great responsibility to this.

#### About the author

Prof. KIM Byung-Mo<sup>8</sup> is a pioneer in the professional museum world in Korea who served as a chairman of ICOM-Korea in 1998-2004 and he was in charge of ICOM 2004 General Assembly, in Seoul. He has taught archaeological theories and practices at Han Yang University since 1979 as a prominent archaeologist. Meanwhile, he elected as the first president in the Korean National University of Cultural Heritage, established in 1999, for 4 years. In 2004, Prof. Kim found Korea Institute of Heritage aiming not only to pursue and practice archaeological research, but also to train young archaeologists. Prof. Kim lately published *Kim Byung-Mo's Journeys in Archaeology* (2006) based on his 30 years of archaeological researches in the world. *Kim Byung-Mo's Journeys in Archaeology* has been recognized outstanding work for the general public to understand Archaeology and Cultural Heritage in the World. He has been invited on numerous lectures in public, private, and nonprofit organizations in Korea and abroad. Prof. Kim currently serves for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade as an ambassador for cultural cooperation. Qualifications include a Bachelor of Archaeology from Seoul National University and D. Phil in University of Oxford.

---

8 金秉模