



DONG HEE SUH

*Temporary
ceramics
from
Korea*

Ronald Andrew Kuchta

The uniquely esoteric art of Dong Hee Suh vibrates with a kind of metaphorical grace in sculptural works of clay that are lyrically abstract and apparently relevant to the artist's abiding System of faith.

She says that Biblical texts from the Book of Revelations and Genesis inspire her flourishing forms which are consistently rhythmic and resemble wave-like, flame-like, windswept-like foliage or vegetation-like configurations, perhaps; of sliced and fired clay in static "movements" that imply the existence of a mysterious super-natural world from which Dong Hee Suh regularly finds inspiration.

Her curvilinear forms of neatly sliced clay are often situated on pedestals of similarly jagged clay forms in a reversed position supporting the usually more flamboyant element on top. Strong, rather than precious, Dong Hee Suh's structures and surfaces always maintain a physical balance and con-

The *ILLUSTRATION* show a work from the series "Garden of Eden"

River 2 - 13 x 18 cm



left -
River 4
18 x 16,5 cm

tent-wise imply an esthetic and figurative connection to some remote or distant religious truth.

Unusual, exotic, fantastic, stylized, symbolic, and alchemical are all adjectives that could be applied to this Korean artist's carefully considered series of constructions which are more often than not rather restrained in terms of color or glazing. They are typically unglazed and pure in terms of the soft texture and nature of the brown or white material inherent in the clay itself. These structures might evoke questions as to their relationship to traditional Korean

ceramics in general and to other contemporary Korean ceramics which are just now becoming truly adventurous and claiming the attention of an international audience for exciting new sculptural works in clay from northeastern Asia.

I note that although totally original in terms of her message, her themes and her forms, Dong Hee Suh's work also represents some ties at least to the past, referencing the restraint she practices with color and glaze especially in her works which in this respect appear not unlike the serene, repetitive beauty of the old "hidden kingdom's"



mostly white, Chosun Dynasty ceramics as well as the even earlier muted green celadon colors of Koryo Dynasty porcelains of another earlier Korean tradition.

Whether her clay sculptures suggest iconic frozen clouds or vaporous natural phenomena or flourishing elements of a lush hermetic Garden of Eden, Dong Hee Suh's introspective art commands respect for its consistency and intimate pleasures to be taken in deciphering the mystical, rather occult yet genuinely creative expressions of a positively committed contemporary Korean artist's symbolical works of art.

The *ILLUSTRATIONS* show works from the serie "Garden of Eden"

- top left - **The Bird** - 18 x 13 cm
- top right - **The Tree of Life** - 25,5 x 28 cm
- below - **The Beast** - 15,5 x 18 cm

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Dong Hee Suh was born in Taegue, Korea, and is professor of ceramics at Konkuk University in Seoul, Korea. She was awarded her Master of Fine Arts degree at Seoul National University, a second MFA at the University of Kansas, USA, and a PhD at the University of Missouri, USA. She has worked as artist in residence or as a guest student at the City University in New York and Hunter College, both USA, at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, France, and the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, Israel. Her work has been shown in numerous publications and is represented internationally in major collections. She has been exhibiting internationally since 1977.