



2001

Glazed stoneware partially covered with white slip and white slip inlay decoration
13 3/8 x 5 1/2 inches (34 x 14 cm)

YOON KWANG-CHO
Korean

Gift of the artist,
2003, 2003-134-1

KAOS

A contemporary Korean ceramist, Yoon Kwang-cho, made this unique ceramic piece. Yoon is particularly fascinated by *punch'ong* ceramic wares, and has studied them extensively. Early in his career, in order to learn more about this type of Korean pottery, he traveled to Japan to study at a kiln where Korean potters worked four hundred years earlier.

The words on the surface of this vessel are from the *Hunmin chong-um* ("Proper Sounds to Instruct the People"), the edict, issued in 1446, by King Sejong in which he presented the newly created Korean alphabet. King Sejong invented a Korean alphabet system, *Han'gul*, to provide a way of expressing written thoughts that was easier than the Chinese characters mainly used by the educated literati class. Read more about the Korean alphabet in the Teacher Resource for *He Who Tries to Travel Two Roads*.

This vessel was built with three slabs making a triangular tower. To make marks on his vessels, Yoon uses very simple tools made from found objects like straw, umbrella wires, and nails. Yoon used Korea's indigenous inlay technique called *sanggam* to create the written words on the pot (see *Cosmetic Box*). First, he cut the characters into the clay with a sharp tool. Then he filled the lines with white slip. The upper part of this piece was also dipped into white slip before firing.

Yoon Kwang-cho creates his pottery in today's world and nature. He takes his inspiration from the world around him and ancient Korean craft techniques. He has named this vessel *Kaos*, which means disorder and confusion, the same as the English word "chaos." When he made this ceramic, he thought of all of the changes and distractions of modern Korean life, and wanted to look back to older texts and traditional art forms to find peace and harmony in his own work.

RESEARCH IDEA: KOREAN INVENTIONS

In his pot *Kaos*, artist Yoon Kwang-cho used an inlay decorating process invented in Korea called *sanggam*. Many Korean inventions in science and art have contributed to the cultural development of the world. Have your students learn about other Korean inventions (e.g., *Han'gul* [Korean alphabet], movable metal type, and udometer [rain gauge]).

This object is included in Learning from Asian Art: Korea, a teaching kit developed by the Division of Education and made possible by a grant from the Freeman Foundation of New York and Stowe, Vermont.