

## **JUN KANEKO (1942- )**

For over 40 years Jun Kaneko has melded his Japanese heritage with his immersion in contemporary western ceramics and his origins as a painter with his development as a ceramic artist. His larger-than-life dangos and other sculptures push at the limits of what it is possible to do with clay and serve as canvases for his surface designs. "I find it difficult to leave the surface of my sculpture as it is. I almost always have a need to paint on it....When I can hear what a form has to say, I start seeing marks and colors on the surface."<sup>1</sup> Recently he has begun working with glass and even ventured into set and costume design. Kaneko continues to work in the studio compound he established in Omaha, NE, and is planning to construct a museum on the property in the future.

1. Kaneko, Jun. "On Being an Artist: A *Ceramics Monthly* Portfolio." *Ceramics Monthly* 36 (June/July 1988)

### **ARTIST'S STATEMENT – JUN KANEKO**

"I like pieces that I have to look up to."<sup>1</sup>

"To make a visual object out of any material involves two basic concerns. One is the energy to make the object; the other is craftsmanship to construct the ideas.....It is my hope, someday, that I would become as close to the material so there would be almost no distance between the material and myself. I hope to become one with the material, the feel what the material is feeling."<sup>2</sup>

1. Jun Kaneko quoted in: Kimmelman, Michael. "Art; Giants of the Heartland." *The New York Times*, section 2 (January 14, 2007): 26.

2. Kaneko, Jun. "On Being an Artist, a *Ceramics Monthly* Portfolio." *Ceramics Monthly* 36 (June/July 1988).

### **RESUME – JUN KANEKO**

1942	Born: Nagoya, Japan
1963	Emigrated to United States
1964	Chouinard Art Institute, Los Angeles, CA California Institute of Art, Los Angeles, CA Studio of Jerry Rothman, Paramount, CA
1966	University of California, Berkeley; studied under Peter Voulkos
1967	Resident artist, Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts, Helena, MT
1971	M.F.A. in ceramics from Claremont Graduate School, Claremont,

CA

1972-1973	Professor, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH
1973-1975	Professor, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI
1974 (summer)	Instructor, Scripps College, Claremont, CA
1979, 1985	National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship
1979-1986	Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI
1986-Present	Studio artist, Omaha, NE
1996	Fellow of the American Craft Council
2005	Honorary Doctorate, Royal College of Art, London, UK
2006	Honorary Doctorate, University of Nebraska at Omaha, NE

## ***BIOGRAPHY – JUN KANEKO***

Jun Kaneko was born in 1942 in Nagoya, Japan, where his parents were both dentists. While not initially affected by the war, Nagoya came under bombing about two years after his birth. The Kaneko's home took a direct hit and Jun was sent to Nagano, in the central part of Honshu Island, to live with his paternal grandparents. There he stayed for several years until his parents joined them. Kaneko has said he was not really conscious of the war and the difficult recovery; his life revolved around the normal one of a child in school and playing with other children.

Returning to Nagoya, Kaneko found the Japanese system of education very restrictive and stopped attending school regularly, instead spending his time drawing. His mother showed his drawings to an artist she knew, Satoshi Ogawa, and he agreed to take Jun on as a student. Ogawa also encouraged him to complete high school, which he did by attending night school while spending his days painting. Upon graduation in 1963 Ogawa put him in touch with California ceramic artist Jerry Rothman who arranged for Jun to move to Los Angeles to continue his art studies. There he stayed with Fred and Mary Marer whose collection of contemporary West Coast ceramics and introductions to the ceramic artists working in Los Angeles at that time would influence the direction his career would take. "Once I saw all of this, it was impossible not to be interested in ceramics," Kaneko said.<sup>1</sup>

Kaneko worked briefly for Paul Soldner at Scripps and then entered Chouinard Art Institute in 1964 where he studied painting and print-making as well as ceramics under Ralph Bacerra. In the summer, working for Jerry Rothman, he began doing his own work in clay, using flat clay pieces as canvases for his painting. Impressed by the work, Rothman entered two of the pieces in a national competition and one was accepted. Fred Marer sent photos of Kaneko's work to Peter Voulkos, then teaching at University of California-Berkeley, and in 1966 Voulkos took Kaneko on as an assistant.

Kaneko went from Berkeley to the Archie Bray in 1967 as one of the first summer residents. Upon returning to Los Angeles in the fall, he rented an old warehouse east of Los Angeles which he converted into a studio and small living quarters. However, Kaneko felt he still needed the discipline of instruction and working with other artists, but because he lacked a formal undergraduate education, being accepted for graduate studies was not easy. Paul Soldner took up his cause, but even so it took nearly two years to convince the Claremont Graduate School to accept Jun and then only as a provisional student. He persevered, both going to school and continuing to work, and received an M.F.A., working under Soldner in 1971.

Following graduation Kaneko started teaching, first at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, in 1972 and then at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, RI. He left Rhode Island School of Design in 1975 after two years to return to Japan – by this time he had been gone for over 10 years and wanted to go home. He also wanted to try establishing a studio in Japan and to learn more about Japanese ceramic art. He found it difficult, in some ways, to return to Japan where the formal structure of education and smaller spaces contrasted with his experience in California. Kaneko spent three years building a studio in Nagura, much of it done by himself, and opened it up to anyone who wanted to work. 700 artists took him up on his offer; two of those, he estimates, became major artists in Japan.

Kaneko returned to the US at the invitation of Rose Slivka and Susan Peterson who were establishing their Clayworks Studio in New York and suggested he come to work there. Within a few months Cranbrook Academy of Arts, Cranbrook, MI, which had tried to hire him while he was still in Japan, renewed their efforts and over the next two years they reached an agreement that took him there in 1979 to teach and work. He stayed at Cranbrook for seven years before moving to Omaha in 1986.

Kaneko had first gone to Omaha in the early 1980's, while he was still at Cranbrook, to participate in a summer workshop, returning the following year to give his own workshop and work on a project at the Omaha Brickworks. This was also the beginning of the dangos. The Brickworks had a large beehive kiln and, in wanting to make a piece that would challenge the kiln size, Kaneko settled on the dango shape. It also marked the beginning of his relationship with industry, combining the technical abilities and space made possible by large factories with his own visions of what materials could do. In addition to the Brickworks in Omaha, he has worked with Otsuka Ceramics in Japan, Mission Clay in Fremont, CA, and Arabia Museum in Helsinki.

While Kaneko works in all sizes, letting the work dictate the size, it is the dangos - large, rounded forms often weighing hundreds of pounds and as high as 11 feet tall - that probably are his most widely recognized pieces. They are hand-built in clay, finished with slips and glazes, and then the influence of Kaneko the painter comes into play with the marvelous, often free-form surface patterns. His work, however, encompasses far more than dangos, including heads, wall pieces, and other forms. He continues, as well, to paint; more recently he has begun working in glass, and in 2006 designed the sets and costumes for Opera Omaha's performance of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. His latest project is a museum, Museum Kaneko that he is planning to build on the Omaha property which presently houses his studios and offices. It will contain not only his work but also that of others whom he admires.

Jun Kaneko's career has spanned over 40 years, and he is still exploring the possibilities of what materials and color can do. His work is found in a number of prestigious collections including the Fine Art Museum of San Francisco, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, and Japan's Wakayama Museum of Modern Art. He has also been featured in many solo and group exhibitions both in the United States and abroad, and has received several public sculpture commissions.

1. Jun Kaneko, quoted in "Jun Kaneko." Biography presented by Frank Lloyd Gallery: [http://www.franklloyd.com/dynamic/artist\\_bio.asp?ArtistID=11](http://www.franklloyd.com/dynamic/artist_bio.asp?ArtistID=11)

## ***SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY – JUN KANEKO***

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Kaneko, Jun. "On Being an Artist." *Ceramics Monthly* 36 (June/August 1988): 51-58.

Kaneko, Jun and Rebekah Presson. "Making, Shipping and Showing Huge Sculptures." *Forum* 13, no. 3: 14-15.

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#### Videos and Cassettes

"Oral History Interview with Jun Kaneko, 2005, May 23-24." Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2005. 4 cassettes.

### **GALLERY REPRESENTATION – JUN KANEKO**

The Bullseye Connection Gallery, 300 NW 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Portland, OR 97209

The William Traver Gallery, 110 Union Street, Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98101

Elaine Baker Gallery, The Gallery Center, 608 Banyan Train, Boca Raton, FL 33431

Moderne Gallery, 111 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106

Gerald Peters Gallery, 2913 Fairmount at Cedar Springs, Dallas, TX 75201

### **WEB SITES – JUN KANEKO**

<http://www.bullseyegallery.com/News-Detail.cfm?NewsID=108>

Announcement of show of Kaneko works in kiln-formed glass

<http://www.kleinart.com/html/kaneko-articles-2000.html>

Article "Jun Kaneko: An Artist's Artist" by Victor M. Cassidy which appeared on Artnet, September 2000; courtesy of Klein Art Works

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Public art project of Jun Kaneko “dangos” installed at Sky Harbor International Airport, Phoenix, AZ.

[http://netnebraska.org/extras/nextexit/journeys/kaneko\\_03.html](http://netnebraska.org/extras/nextexit/journeys/kaneko_03.html)

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“Artist of the Week” article about Jun Kaneko.

<http://www.kleinart.com/html/kaneko - the making 1.html>

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Series of photos showing the making of Kaneko’s dangos; courtesy of Klein Art Works

<http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/4aa/4aa385.htm>

“Large Scale: Selections from the Permanent Collection” essay by Brandon Reintjes. Discusses use and meaning of scale in Jun Kaneko’s work, among others.

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