



Foreground: Dango #11-06-03 Background: Dango #12-08-01 Photo by: Daniel Overhult

JUN KANEKO cedarhurst CENTER FOR THE ARTS



About the Artist JUN KANEKO

Jun Kaneko is one of the most famous ceramic sculptors working today. He is especially known for large scale, abstract sculptures that approach the limits of size in clay. Kaneko was born in Nagoya, Japan in 1942. He studied painting in his adolescence, working in a studio during the day and attending high school in the evening. He came to the United States in 1963 to continue those studies at the Chouinard Institute of Art in Southern California, when his introduction to Fred Marer drew him to sculptural ceramics.

He studied ceramics with Peter Voulkos, Paul Soldner, and Jerry Rothman in

California during the time now defined as the Contemporary Ceramics Movement or the "Clay Revolution"—a movement that upended the functional traditions of ceramic arts in favor of an unorthodox, personally expressive, and rougher sculptural medium. The following decade, Kaneko taught at some of the nation's leading art schools, including Scripps College, Rhode Island School of Design, and Canbrook Academy of Art.

Kaneko's artwork appears in numerous international, solo and group exhibitions annually, and is included in approximately fifty museum collections. He has realized

almost thirty public art commissions in the United States and Japan, and has been honored with national, state, and organization fellowships and an honorary doctorate from the Royal College of Art in London. Kaneko currently lives and works in Omaha, Nebraska. In 2006 he designed the set and costumes for a production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, and he and his wife are in the process of opening KANEKO, a non-profit scholarly and presenting organization for the exploration of creativity in the arts, sciences, and philosophy.

(Images and content adapted from junkaneko.com)



Welcome to Cedarhurst

Nestled on a 90-acre site in southern Illinois, Cedarhurst celebrates the arts year-round with exciting visual and performing arts programs for the public. Explore rolling meadows and woods, home to Goldman•Kuenz Sculpture Park, the museum's outdoor gallery with over 60 large-scale sculptures. Visit the Cedarhurst art exhibitions in five galleries, including the Beck Family Center. Enjoy works in the permanent collection gallery by Mary Cassatt, Maurice Prendergast, Childe Hassam and more, part of the museum's American painting collection acquired by founders John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell.

Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. & Sunday, 1 - 5 p.m.

EDUCATION Beck Family Center

Located inside the Mitchell Museum, the Beck Family Center is a hands-on environment providing endless opportunities for visitors to experience the textures, color, and excitement of discovering art in the world around them. It is designed to encourage family members of all ages to discover and kindle their artistic interest.

Teacher Resources & School Programs

Cedarhurst provides opportunities for art education through performing arts programs, in-school programs, student workshops, FREE tours of exhibitions and Goldman•Kuenz Sculpture Park, and the Art Resource Lending Library, offering materials for classroom instruction.

Family Events

Cedarhurst annually presents a series of family activities, which complement museum exhibitions. Conducted by the museum's Director of Education, Family Days and Story Times are held throughout the year. Check our website for specific dates.

Shrode Art Center

Cedarhurst classes and workshops allow children to have fun while exploring the arts. Programs include the popular Cedarhurst Summer Camp, ABC's and Art for toddlers and the afterschool program Art Time!



cedarhurst CENTER FOR THE ARTS

2600 Richview Road
Mount Vernon, IL 62864
618.242.1236
www.cedarhurst.org

2015-2016 School Programs sponsored by: Kane Insurance

Kaneko sculpture purchase funded by Jack and Joan Goldman

An activity of the John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell Foundation. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Art Council, a state agency, and in part, by the Schweinfurth Foundation.

ARTISTIC PROCESS



of drying time and a several day firing process. In the final stage of production, out of a group of 10 pieces, only 2 or 3 survive.

- Using thick clay slabs to form the walls of his sculptures, Kaneko must allow the bottom layers to dry enough to hold the top layers, while remaining plastic enough to incorporate the next layer of slabs.
- Each piece has to survive the drying process without breaking or cracking, and the bisque and glaze firings without exploding. This is challenging even with small clay pieces. With Kaneko's massive works, unfortunately many do not make it through this process.
- Some of the works can take up to 3 years to complete.
- The kilns Kaneko uses can be up to the size of a three car garage. (The larger pieces have to be built inside of the kilns.)
- Dango #11-06-03 weighs in at 958 pounds.
- Dango #12-08-01 weighs in at 690 pounds.

Upper Left: Untitled, Dango, 1996
Below: Untitled, Tanuki, 2012



Kaneko is perhaps best known for a particular type of sculpture—the Dango—that has become his blank canvas for a wide range of expression. A term adapted from the Japanese word for a rounded form, the Dango is usually a mound-like, freestanding sculpture made from slab-built clay walls. He has developed his Dangos into an intriguing family of shapes, from low boulders to broad shouldered, triangles to tall, sleek, and elegant pods. He has repeatedly pushed this form to the outward limits of size, as large as 13 feet high, with each dango's weight measured in hundreds of pounds and production time marked by years.

Kaneko's Omaha studio is industrial in scale, for his enormous pieces often require drive-in kilns sometimes as big as a three-car garage. The sculptures are sometimes so large they need to be built inside the kiln. Often with help from assistants, Kaneko builds his Dangos by wrestling massive slabs of wet clay into place, like building an igloo block-by-block. Kaneko glazes the forms with colored slips (liquid clay), using masking to create surface markings and patterns, and then finishes with a clear glaze.

Early on, Kaneko decided to restrict his color palette, a decision only in part a function of glaze chemistry's limitations. Black, white, gray, red, light blue, golden yellow and metallic bronze remain the main colors in his design arsenal. This set of colors is then deployed in mainly geometric motifs, including dots, drips, splashes, triangles, squares, and, most especially, lines.

Kaneko's sculptures can weigh as much as 1,000 pounds and take a type of technical aptitude that comes only from years of patient experience. After construction, his work generally takes four months



Kaneko's Kiln

VOCABULARY

Bisqueware (Bisque): Clay that has been fired in a kiln, but not yet glazed.

Ceramics: Objects made from clay and fired at a high temperature in a kiln.

Dango: Japanese for "rounded form," and also the word for dumpling. Kaneko also uses the word to refer to the rounded form of his designs. What began as a nickname became a formal title for his pieces.

Firing: Cooking clay at a very hot temperature in a kiln (see Kiln) until it becomes hard and durable.

Glaze: A special paint made for clay that comes in thousands of different color and finishes. Glazing gives ceramic objects their colored, shiny, translucent appearance.

Greenware: A clay object that has dried, but has not yet been fired.

Kiln: An oven, furnace or heated enclosure used for burning, firing or drying clay.

Ma: This concept is one that emerges out of the Japanese religion Shinto (See Shinto). It emphasizes the relationship between a piece of artwork and its surrounding space. Another way to think of ma is that it is negative space – the space that surrounds an artwork, not the artwork itself. Or, you can think of it as a conversation: it is not just the words spoken, but also the pauses and silences in between the words that give full meaning.

Shinto: A religion that is native to Japan that can be characterized by a lack of formal dogma, and the polytheistic worship of spirits of nature and ancestors.

Slip: Clay mixed with water until it forms a soupy mixture that can be poured.

Special thanks to Museums of Sonoma County for content of Artist Bio and Vocabulary List.



ART ACTIVITY 'GLAZE' A DANGO

Time Required: 30 - 45 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Dango shapes for each student
- Sample Kaneko dangos for glaze design ideas/ comparisons
- Black construction paper cut into strips and small circles
- Glue sticks (or glue)
- Scissors



INTRODUCTION:

Using the template, have students 'glaze' their own dango. As with Kaneko's dangos, the means supplied here are intentionally extremely simple – only two shapes and one color. The challenge for students is to see how creative and varied they can be with their designs.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Introduce the project to students, and have them look at the sample pictures of Kaneko's dangos.
- Decide on a design for your dango based on the available shapes, exploring different options before gluing is encouraged.
- Once the design is decided on, glue stick the pieces of paper to the dango.
- Cut the dango shape out of the paper. Optional: mount it with glue stick onto a black piece of construction paper for display.
- Display the dangos and discuss as a class. Note the great variety in designs, even with such simple materials.

