

## **Kookmin University Exchange Program (from 21<sup>st</sup> March ~30<sup>th</sup> Jun, 2009)**

Ai Yano (06002206): jewellery and silversmithing



**Image 1: Kookmin University (Building, Play ground)**

For my exchange program which sponsored by Incorporation of Hammermen of Edinburgh, I went to Kookmin University in South Korea from 21/Mar/2009 to 30/Jun/2009. This school has more than 5 buildings for each department. There are Law, Business, Art, Design, Foreign study etc. The department in which I studied is called Metal work and Silver smithing.

### **Course**

I took 3 different kinds of Metal smith class and one extra Glass class. This glass class was an elective course and therefore doesn't offer an academic degree in its own right. I had 4 every different class per week.

Monday was Stone and Gem class. In this class, I experienced the cutting and polishing process on everything from gemstones to rough stones and became familiar with the use of grinding and polishing machines. Before I started this class, we went to a stone shop to buy and choose stones. A lot of my pieces cracked and broke because I didn't have any knowledge about precious stones at the beginning of this class! We were given two projects during the term. One

project was to make jewellery with a simple shape so that we can learn how to use the new techniques and the machines and also learn how to drill into the stone. The second project was a self-project with gemstones. At the very end of this stone class, we needed to make a presentation about our works. .



**Image 2: Ants nest (brooch) 8x7x1cm  
Rhodochrosite, Brass, Silver, oxidized  
silver, steel wire**

On Tuesday, I had a computer class. In this class, we worked with 2~4 people in a group and for every class, we needed to do a presentation. In the first class, we could choose one theme out of 4 which we wanted most to research; Colouring and Printing on metal, Rapid Prototyping, CNC, Water Jet Cutting, and Laser Cutting. At the beginning of each class, we gave out our research. My group had found out about colouring and printing on metal and on the basis of our research, we actually tried to produce jewellery by using colour printing techniques like patination, colour pencils, oxidizing, digital printing etc. I can tell that this class was the most difficult class. In my team, there was one English girl, one Korean boy who doesn't speak English, one Korean girl who could barely speak English, and me (Japanese!). One day we had a meeting about our work, but almost all of the

meeting was spent on translation. But this wasn't the biggest problem. The biggest problem was every student wasn't used to working as part of a team. Everyone has their own ideas or taste and sometimes this resulted in arguments.

Through this class, I could learn not only new computer techniques but also how to discuss about ideas in the team, and how to explain my own ideas.



**Image 3: Works from digital class (Colouring test pieces)**

Wednesday was self-research day for exchange students and on Thursday, I had metal craft class. In this class, the American jewellery artist, Heather Bayless, taught us in English. Even though she could speak Korean, every student is required to try to speak English for the purpose of improving their English. This class allowed us to work with any kind of metal and any kind of techniques. So I could learn and see new techniques which I hadn't tried before. Instead, her class was actually tight scheduled and I needed to work hard. Surprisingly, almost all the students worked through the night before a deadline.

And on Fridays, I had Glass class. Basically, I learnt very basic glass techniques but everything in this class were a first experience and interesting for me. I experienced blowing a glass ball, laminating glass, fusing glass, slumping glass, and sanding glass. These are not related to jewellery directly, but I'm sure that this experience will be helpful for my future works.

This is outline of my course at Kookmin. And at the end of every course, we had an exhibition of all of our works in the gallery hall located at the entrance of our building.



**Image 4: Jong-no city (industrial area)**

## Shopping

I needed to go to the City Centre, 'Jong-no', by bus or taxi when I need to get tools or materials like silver, hummer, tubes etc. But the price of transport in Korea is very cheap. (Taxi for 30 mins is only



about 8000 won or around £4 with the subway and bus even cheaper

than this). These photos were taken in Jong-no. Even this is in the City Centre, this town has not been cultivated and there are lots of small factories for industry.

## City, Environment

While Korea is very similar to Japan, I still felt that there were many differences in their culture, city and people. The college is located in Seoul but it's surrounded by mountains. This made me feel as if I weren't even in the City Centre.

When I went to the centre of Seoul there are many huge shopping centres too. On the other hand, it is also possible to see Korean traditional palace, temples and architectures. Architectures are very different from European style. Buildings are arranged more randomly; very traditional Korean style buildings can find next to the highway or tall buildings. I like the colour and shape of the Korean traditional house. It beautifully warped and the inside of the roof decorated with green and red colour layers.



**Image 5: Gyeongbokgung Palace**

Since arriving in Korea, I felt people in this course are basically very kind to Exchange students. There are about 30 people in the class, and some people could speak English very well and the others only spoke a little English and a few people could speak Japanese. It was a little bit hard to study there and sometimes

this problem caused a discrepancy between Korean people and Exchange students. But, they tried to translate even if they were not good at English and were always concerned if we were inconvenienced. Of course, people in the Exchange affair team were helpful, but classmates helped us even more.

Also I felt this course tried to promote and build lots of relationship between foreign countries' colleges such as those in Thailand, America and Britain (Sheffield, Edinburgh etc) so that



**Image 6: City centre (classmate and wall graffiti)**

students can broaden their horizons for their works and future. This exchange principle is good not only for students but also for teachers.

If I explain about the difference between Edinburgh College of Art and Kookmin University, the most different thing is the weight of the courses. At the Kookmin University, they believe that techniques of making jewellery are more important than ideas. Students in the Kookmin

University have studied only techniques in their first and second year as students. It is only when they become third year students that they can work with their own ideas. So, their works were well-made and of a high quality, but I felt that this weighting also had the effect of making their ideas a little bit uneventful. But it is still awesome. This is a pretty different approach when I compare it to that of Edinburgh College of Art.

### Night life



**Image 7: Critique**

When I finish class, I went back to the Dormitory in the University. This dormitory is very small. There are space only for 2 beds and 4 desks. I shared this room with 3 other Japanese students which had already been decided. One more thing about this dormitory is the curfew. The doors were closed at 12 p.m. and if this was not obeyed, students would get two penalty points. When these points accumulated to eight points, students were forced to leave the dormitory. I think this wouldn't happen to Exchange students, but this system was so different and hard to become accustomed with for foreigners. Night life is more similar to British but also different. There are no pubs but they go out for drinks and eat Korean hot foods. Foods in Korea are very spicy and quite different from British food, but English friends got used to it in the end. We ordered food delivery almost every day because we were working at night. These foods were very cheap too. It costs only about £5~7 for food per day.



**Image 8: Students Dormitory**

I enjoyed everything in Korea and this Exchange program stimulated me very much. I really want to say to how much I appreciate that I could have this amazing experience in Korea. Thanks for Incorporation of Hammermen of Edinburgh, Edinburgh College of Art and people in Kookmin University.

(27/Sep/2009)



**Image 9: EARrings holder (6x2x1cm)  
Casting glass, Silver**



**Image 10: Korean BBQ**



**Image 10: B T infuser (6x6x5cm)  
Gold plated glass, net, silver chain, kumbu**