

 <b>한국문화원</b> Korean Cultural Center Los Angeles	<h1>Press Release</h1>		 <b>광복 80</b> 빛나는 발걸음 새로운 길
<b>Request</b>	For Immediate Release		Pages: 8
<b>Release Date</b>	August 12, 2025 (Tuesday)	<b>Contact</b>	Tammy Cho 323-936-3014

## ‘The Drawings of Mother-of-Pearl Inlay Artisans’

- Co-presented by the Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles & Seoul Museum of Craft Art, Aug. 21 - Oct. 10 -
- A Thousand Years of Tradition: Exploring the Artisans’ Spirit through Design Drawings -

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▶ <b>Exhibition Title:</b>	「The Drawings of Mother-of-Pearl Inlay Artisans」
▶ <b>Organized by:</b>	Korean Cultural Center Los Angeles (KCCLA), Seoul Museum of Craft Art
▶ <b>Supported by:</b>	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange
▶ <b>Date:</b>	August 21(Thursday) - October 10(Friday), 2025 / Opening reception: Thursday, August 21, 2025/ 6:00 pm-9:00 pm * Gallery Open Hours: Mon-Fri 9:00 am-5:00 pm
▶ <b>Location:</b>	Korean Cultural Center Los Angeles Art Gallery (2nd Floor) 5505 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036
▶ <b>Inquiries:</b>	Tammy Cho, (323) 936-3014 or tammy@kccla.org

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The Korean Cultural Center Los Angeles (KCCLA, Director Lee Haedon), in collaboration with **Seoul Museum of Craft Art** (Director Kim Soo-jeong), proudly presents the special exhibition ***The Drawings of Mother-of-Pearl Inlay Artisans***, on view from August 21st through October 10th, at the Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles (5505 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90036).

This exhibition is part of the Touring K-Arts program, jointly planned by the two institutions with support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE). It aims to introduce U.S. audiences to the beauty and value of *Najeonchilgi*—Korea’s signature traditional craft, preserved and passed down for over a thousand years since the Goryeo Dynasty.

*Najeonchilgi*, or mother-of-pearl inlay, combines the delicate iridescence of inlaid shell with the precision of lacquer craftsmanship. It was designated as Korea’s National Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 10 in 1966. Today, master artisans continue to practice and pass on this time-honored technique, keeping alive one of Korea’s most treasured cultural legacies.

Focusing on artisans who modernized the craft and contemporary artists carrying on their lineage, the exhibition highlights how this tradition has evolved and adapted over time. By spotlighting the “design drawings” (*doan*, 圖案)—the blueprints and starting points of each work—it offers visitors a rare glimpse into the craftsmanship and artistic sensibility behind the finished pieces.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Seoul Museum of Craft Art Director Kim Soo-jeong will deliver a lecture titled “Korean Mother-of-Pearl Inlay Craft”, providing local American audiences and the Korean American community with a deeper understanding and appreciation of this iconic heritage. The program will explore the history of *Najeonchilgi* from the Goryeo era to the present, situating it within a global context while also introducing the creative practices of contemporary artisans.

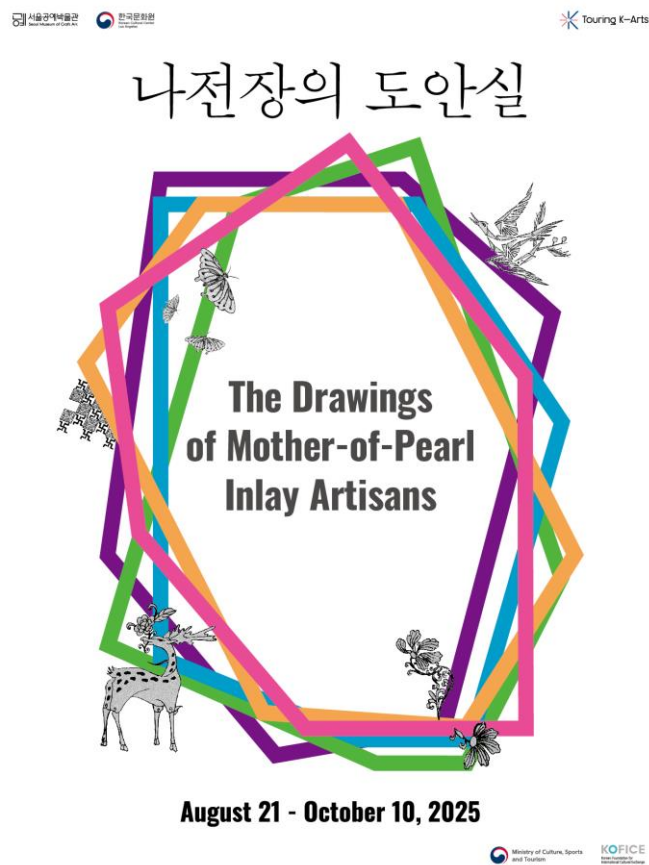
**Director Lee Haedon** of KCCLA stated, “This exhibition, beginning in Los Angeles and traveling on to Ottawa, Canada, will serve as an important opportunity to promote the excellence and creativity of Korean traditional crafts across North America. We hope more people will experience both the history and present-day artistry of *Najeonchilgi*, and that this will broaden cultural exchange through the arts.”

**Director Kim Soo-jeong** of the Seoul Museum of Craft Art stated, “This special exhibition introduces six master artisans who pioneered the modernization of *Najeonchilgi* by incorporating modern design concepts and improving tools, leading to the industrialization and popularization of the craft. We hope audiences will gain a deeper appreciation of the artisans’ creative process, their challenges, and their dedication to their craft.”

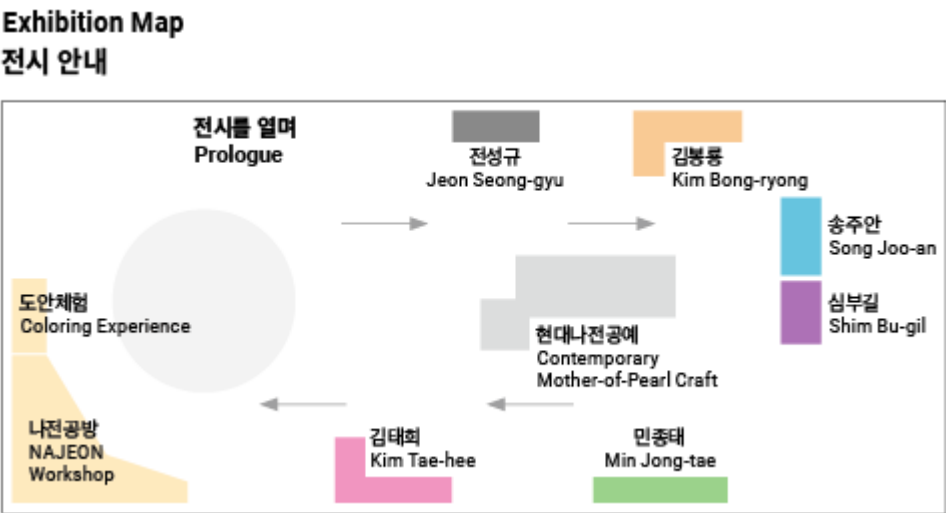
The opening ceremony for ***The Drawings of Mother-of-Pearl Inlay Artisans*** will be held on Thursday, August 21 at 6:00 p.m. at the Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles, with Director Kim Soo-jeong attending in person and Exhibition Curator Jung Eun-joo from the Seoul Museum of Craft Art providing a exhibition tour.

The exhibition will be open to the public from August 22 (Friday) through October 10 (Friday). For inquiries, please contact KCCLA Tammy Cho at 323-936-3014. /End/




-Exhibition Poster





< Exhibition Map >








## Artist Profile / Selected Works

<p><b>Jeon Seong-gyu</b></p>	<p><b>Jeon Seong-gyu (around 1880 ~1940)</b> is considered the first modern <i>Najeonjang</i> (master artisans of mother-of-pearl inlay) in Korea. He played a pivotal role in transforming <i>Najeonchilgi</i> (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) by introducing modern Doan (圖案, drawings) and popularizing the use of industrial fretsaw. Originally a painter, Jeon turned to <i>najeonchilgi</i> in the early 1900s after being captivated by its beauty.</p>	
<p><b>Kim Bong-ryong</b></p>	<p><b>Kim Bong-ryong (1902~1994)</b>, a foremost disciple of Jeon Seong-gyu, was designated as the Korea's first official holder of National Intangible Cultural Heritage: <i>Najeonjang</i> (master artisan of mother-of-pearl inlay) in 1966. After beginning his apprenticeship in 1919, he followed his master to Japan in 1920, contributing to the transmission of <i>Najeonchilgi</i> (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) techniques abroad. Returning to Seoul in 1922, he participated alongside Jeon in expositions held in Japan and Europe, earning international accolades.</p>	
<p><b>Song Joo-an</b></p>	<p><b>Song Joo-an (1901~1981)</b> was a renowned artisan who maximized painterly depth through the <i>Kkeuneumjil</i> (linear cutting) technique—cutting mother-of-pearl into fine pieces and arranging them into intricate patterns. In recognition of his mastery, he was designated as a holder of National Intangible Cultural Heritage in <i>Najeonjang</i> (master artisan of mother-of-pearl inlay) in 1979.</p>	

<p><b>Shim Bu-gil</b></p>	<p><b>Shim Bu-gil (1905~1996)</b> was renowned for his ability to create balanced geometric patterns by meticulous application of long, slender strips of mother-of-pearl—arranged directly onto lacquer surfaces without Doan (圖案, drawings). A disciple of Jeon Seong-gyu, Shim worked primarily in Seoul and won the Special Selection Prize at the 1942 Joseon Art Exhibition alongside his senior, Kim Bong-ryong. His works—composed directly on lacquerware—are often described as contemporary reinterpretations of traditional <i>Najeonchilgi</i> (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) motifs. Later, in 1974, he was officially designated as a holder of National Intangible Cultural Heritage: <i>Najeonjang</i> (master artisan of mother-of-pearl inlay) for the <i>Kkeuneumjil</i> (linear cutting) technique.</p>	
<p><b>Min Jong-tae</b></p>	<p><b>Min Jong-tae (1915~1998)</b>, Designated in 1996 as the holder of Seoul Intangible Cultural Heritage: <i>Najeonjang</i> (master artisan of mother-of-pearl inlay), Min Jong-tae was a pivotal figure in ushering in the renaissance of Korean <i>Najeonchilgi</i> (mother-of-pearl lacquerware). Following the Korean War, Min focused on crafting state gifts for presidential diplomatic use. In the late 1960s, he also supplied large quantities of lacquer furniture to Samsung Group. From the 1970s onward, he exported Buddhist crafts—such as incense boxes and altars—to Japan.</p>	
<p><b>Kim Tae-hee</b></p>	<p><b>Kim Tae-hee (1916~1994)</b> elevated Korean <i>Najeonchilgi</i> (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) to a new height by translating traditional techniques into a refined modern idiom. He was designated as a holder of National Intangible Cultural Heritage in <i>Najeonjang</i> (master artisan of mother-of-pearl inlay) for his contributions to the craft in 1992. Between 1957 and 1960, he achieved the rare distinction of winning the Special Selection Prize for four consecutive years, an exceptional feat for a lacquer artisan of his time.</p>	

## Contemporary *Najeonchilgi* (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) Craft

<b>Kim Seong-soo</b>	<p><i>Ottchil</i> Artist Kim Sung-soo (1935-2025) integrated traditional <i>Ottchil</i> (lacquer in Korean) techniques from <i>Najeonchilgi</i> (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) into contemporary art, pioneering modern <i>ottchil</i> painting in Korea.</p>	
<b>Song Bang-ung</b>	<p>Song Bang-ung (1940-2020), the only son and foremost apprentice of master Song Joo-an, was designated as a holder of National Intangible Cultural Heritage in <i>Najeonjang</i> (master artisan of mother-of-pearl inlay) in 1990, succeeding his father's legacy.</p>	
<b>Lee Hyeong-man</b>	<p>Lee Hyung-man (1946-), a disciple of master Kim Bong-ryong, was recognized in 1996 as a holder of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage: <i>Najeonjang</i> (master artisan of mother-of-pearl inlay), succeeding his master. He trained the craft through a long-term apprenticeship under Kim, and his pattern drawings are often noted for their resemblance to those of his master.</p>	
<b>Sohn Dae-hyeon</b>	<p>Sohn Dae-hyeon (1950-), Designated by Seoul Intangible Cultural Heritage <i>Chiljang-Ottchil</i> (master artisan of lacquerware making) in 1996, Sohn Dae-hyeon trained under Min Jong-tae after an unexpected encounter with <i>Najeonchilgi</i> (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) sparked his interest in traditional <i>Ottchil</i> (lacquer in Korean) craft.</p>	

<p><b>Choi Sang-hoon</b></p>	<p>Choi Sang-hoon (1954-), a top disciple of Min Jong-tae, also learned <i>Kkeuneumjil</i> (linear cutting) from Shim Bu-gil, mastering both <i>Jureumjil</i> (filing) and <i>kkeuneumjil</i>. As an artisan, he upholds the responsibility of preserving tradition, as well as striving to embrace the zeitgeist and elevate <i>Najeonchilgi</i> (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) into a form of artistic expression.</p>	
<p><b>Kim Seol</b></p>	<p>Born in Tongyeong, Kim Seol (1955-) is a <i>Ottchil</i> (lacquer in Korean) artist who has established her own unique artistic world by contemporizing traditional <i>Geonchil</i> (lacquer on hemp) techniques. She trained under Kim Sung-soo, a pioneer of Korean <i>ottchil</i> painting, and later served as a university professor, dedicating herself to fostering the next generation of artists and promoting exchanges between Korean and international <i>ottchil</i> artists.</p>	