

# Alone With Her Passion

Though born in Germany and living in Los Angeles, Burglind Jungmann has always been drawn to Korea — its culture, its history and its art

**B**urglind Jungmann feels homesick from time to time. But whenever nostalgia comes over this German-born professor at UCLA, there's a neighborhood she can visit with her husband and children — Koreatown. Perhaps more Korean in her tastes than a native, Jungmann likes her kimchi ripe and her peppers hot.

She has taught Korean art history at UCLA for 10 years, the first professor to do so in the United States. Professor Jungmann recalled that when she came to UCLA in 1999, "There was not much consensus in the country for the necessity of studying Korean art history as apart from the art histories of China and Japan."

In the last decade Jungmann has guided some 600 students to their master's degrees. For her, Korea is not just a field of study; it is a lifelong passion.

Jungmann's first visit to Korea came in 1973, when she was 19 years old. "At the time, I had a broad range of interests, and somehow it naturally led me to Korea." From the small town of Hildesheim in central Germany, Professor Jungmann grew up with little exposure to the outside world, heightening her intellectual curiosity. Her knowledge of German and European cultures led to Asia as "a sort of alternative."

As soon as she entered university,

Jungmann came to Korea as an exchange student. She spent a year and a half learning not only the language but Oriental painting and calligraphy as well. Six years later, she returned to travel around the peninsula and to "absorb" taekwondo. She studied Korean art history at Seoul National University in 1983 and worked as a researcher at the National Museum of Korea.

"The landscape, the people, their actions ... everything made me feel so at home," the professor recalled.

Korea had charmed her, and when Jungmann returned to Germany, she earned her doctorate in East Asian art history at the University of Heidelberg. She went on to stay for six years in Japan and study Chinese culture in Taiwan, but in the end, she chose Korean art as her true love.

"There is a certain balance of practicality and refinement in Korean art. For example, Korean porcelain pieces are designed to be used in real life, unlike specimens of Chinese porcelain, which tend to lean only towards artistic perfection." The many traces of cross-cultural exchange were another factor that appealed to her.


Fluent in Korean, Chinese and Japanese, Professor Jungmann emphasized that one had to interpret Korean art in the context of its relationships with other countries. She pointed out that current students of Korean art history

in particular don't make the appropriate effort to understand context. That's why Jungmann is studying the influence that the 15th-century Joseon Dynasty emissaries to Japan had on Korean painting, and Korea-Japan exchanges in the field of landscape painting.

Professor Jungmann came back to Korea at the end of June for seven weeks. She lectured during the summer semester at Korea University and traveled between Seoul and Busan to collect data.

The main focus of her stay, however, was to meet with pottery artisans whose work will be shown at an exhibition next August at the UCLA Art Museum that she is planning.

Jungmann explained the significance of the exhibition: the fact that it was conceived and planned in the United States and not "exported" from Korea, as is the case with most projects like it.

Professor Jungmann's summers are always busy. That's because she visits Korea every year. Her husband, who majored in German philosophy and taught at Dongguk University in the early 1990s, sometimes accompanies her on her visits. While the couple claims that they also try to visit Germany every year, somehow their hearts seem to lean towards Korea. 

By Kim Ho-joung



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