



**MAK**

Press Release

## **EARTH AND FIRE** **Asian Ceramics from the Slunecko Collection**

Press Conference	Tuesday, 24 April 2018, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 24 April 2018, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK DESIGN LAB MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	25 April – 10 June 2018
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m, Wed–Sun 10 a.m–6 p.m.

The MAK exhibition *EARTH AND FIRE: Asian Ceramics from the Slunecko Collection* presents ceramics from the region of Southeast and East Asia that are as yet little known in Europe and will open up impressive insights into the centuries-old tradition of the ceramic art. Arranged according to countries and chronologically structured, the show in the MAK DESIGN LAB displays a selection of around 120 objects discovered by the collector on his many journeys. The exhibits from Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Korea, and Japan spotlight the specific characteristics of the individual regions and convey Slunecko's passion for beautiful glazes, the structures of the material, and the potter's hand.

Heinz Slunecko focuses in his collecting on those countries that, despite being under China's strong influence, constantly sought their own language of form—and succeeded in doing so. In ceramics, cultural and technical developments are manifest in a way that scarcely any other material can rival; it is especially this aspect that has dominated the choice of artifacts in the MAK exhibition *EARTH AND FIRE*. "The personal affinity to the material plays a major role in every collection—like to sense the clay, the fire, the individuality," explains the collector, whose collection has been enriching MAK exhibitions for more than ten years.

### **Vietnam**

Ever since the 3rd century BC, Vietnam had been confronted with China's unification under Emperor Qin Shǐhuángdìs and his expansionist ambitions and thus exposed to its political and cultural influence, particularly from Southern China. Grave goods suggest that Chinese techniques, religions, and cults were adopted, but independent forms of expression were also pursued. The typical Vietnamese cup with handle derives from this early period. From the 7th century AD on, trade relations intensified between the countries of East and Southeast Asia as well as Central and West Asia, which promoted the production of everyday ceramic goods as a major trade factor. Diversity of forms and

richly varied decorations characterize the ceramics of this period.

The Japanese upper class valued Vietnamese ceramics very highly. In their tea ceremonies they used bowls from the Lý Dynasty (1009–1225) of North Vietnam, their bright glazes and decorations with lotus petals profoundly imbued with the spirit of Buddhism. In art and culture Vietnamese rulers oriented themselves on China, which was reflected in ceramics in both style and technique.

### **Thailand and Cambodia**

From the second half of the 13th century onwards, the Thai people set up their own state based on the high culture of the Khmer Empire with its capital of Angkor. The center of ceramics production was relocated to the region around Sukhotai and Si Satchanalai. Here the production thrived of a gray-tending stoneware with floral iron oxide painting, also luxury commodities with green celadon glaze. These ceramic artifacts of the Siamese peninsula are distinctive for their extraordinarily imaginative wealth of forms.

### **Korea**

In contrast to Japan, an autonomous ceramic industry evolved in Korea, its forms and glazes being highly valued all over Asia. Until the 13th century the most notable developments were in stoneware with celadon glaze. Forms seemingly borrowed from metalwork are decorated in a great variety of techniques and glazed olive-green. Most particularly—and known solely from Korea—is the intarsia technique (*sanggam*), which involves incising the decoration into the biscuit ceramic and then filling it with bright or dark clay. So-called Buncheong ware exercised great influence on the development of Japanese ceramics, and it dominated until into the 16th century.

### **Japan**

Besides a smaller selection of historical ceramics used in the tea ceremony, the pieces on show in the MAK exhibition *EARTH AND FIRE* are mainly focused on ceramic families—the collector Heinz Slunecko has been cultivating friendly relations with them for many years. Especially worthy of mention are ceramics from the Yamaguchi Province in West Honshū, where we can still detect Korean influence in the works.

Thanks to its deep-red earth, idiosyncratic designs, and irregular surface composition, Bizen ware gained fame far beyond the borders of Japan and since the mid-20th century has been enjoying a creative boom. The ceramic artist and craftsman Yū Fujiwara (1932–2001), distinguished as “Living National Treasure”, is represented in the MAK exhibition with several objects. His works are founded on a long family tradition and have achieved great significance for the further development of Bizen ware.

Countering the strong dominance of Chinese ceramics on the European continent, the MAK exhibition *EARTH AND FIRE: Asian Ceramics from the Slunecko Collection* with its focus on Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Korea, and Japan offers a revision of the European image of the ceramics of East and Southeast Asia and opens up a new perspective onto the plain and simple objects made out of earth and fire.

Object selection and exhibition texts: Heinz Slunecko

Press photos are available for download at [MAK.at/en/presse](https://www.mak.at/en/presse).

Press Data

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Guest Curator	Heinz Slunecko
Curator	Johannes Wieninger, Curator MAK Asia Collection
Curator-Guided Tour	Thursday, 3 May 2018, 5 p.m.
MAK Admission	€ 12 / Reduced € 9 / Family Ticket € 15 Every Tuesday 6–10 p.m.: Admission € 5 Free admission for children and teens under 19
MAK Press and Public Relations	Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head) Sandra Hell-Ghignone Lara Steinhäuser Veronika Träger T +43 1 711 36-233, -212, -229 presse@MAK.at www.MAK.at

Vienna, 24 April 2018