

Handwritten Chinese characters in black ink on a light-colored paper background. The characters are arranged in vertical columns, with some characters appearing to be '平安' (Anping) repeated across different sections. The paper has a slightly textured appearance and is marked with faint blue lines.

SUSAN CROSS

Drawing, Permanence & Place

In 2008 I visited South Korea as part of a new staff/student exchange programme between the Jewellery & Silversmithing Department at Edinburgh College of Art and the Department of Metalwork & Jewellery at Kookmin University, Seoul.

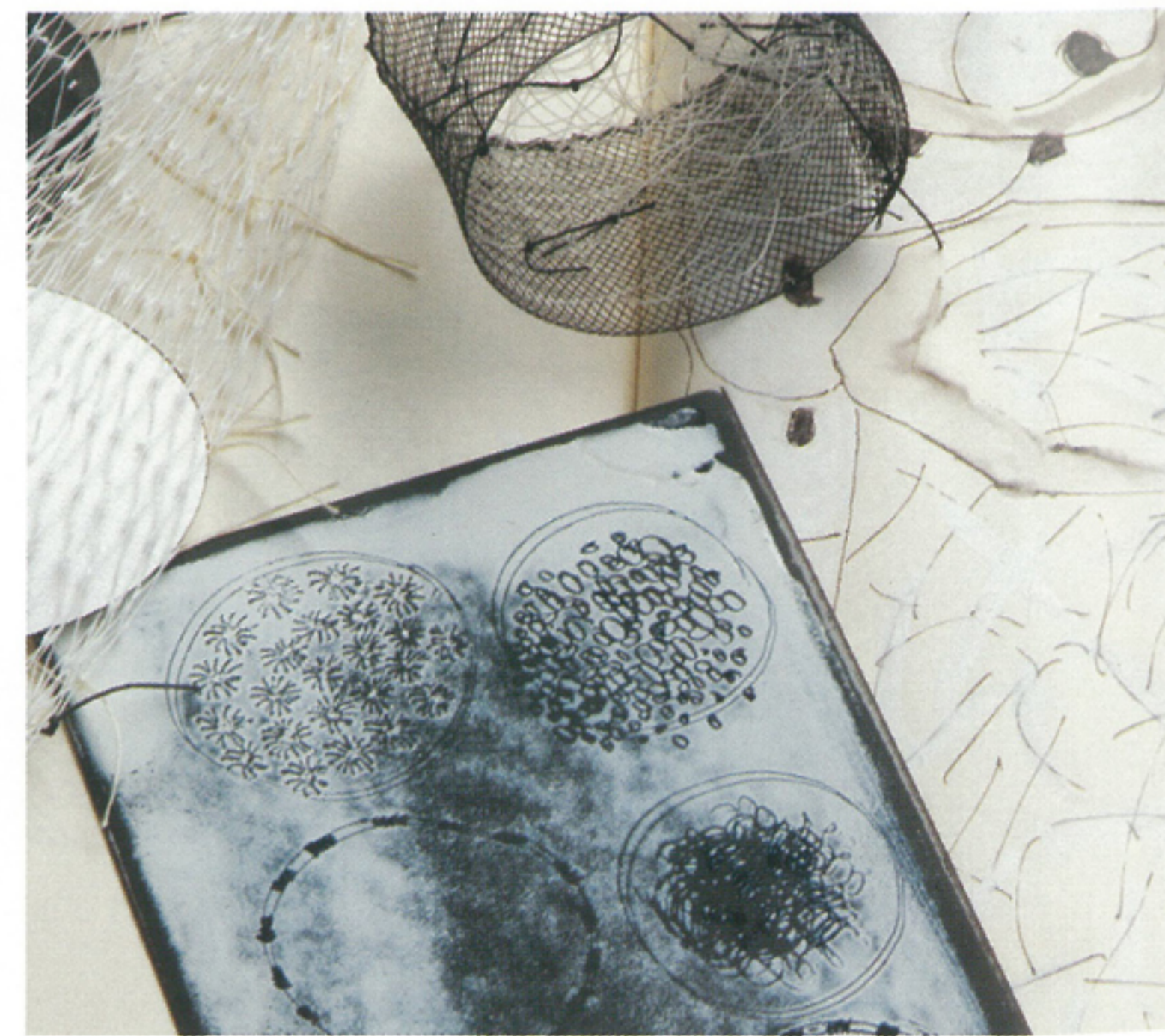
Over the years I have been invited to visit many fascinating countries to teach, give lectures and exhibit. Particularly memorable are Finland, India, Japan and New Zealand. The notion of 'Place' therefore and the experience of being in some other place continues to inform and enrich not only my teaching and jewellery practice but also my own personal development.



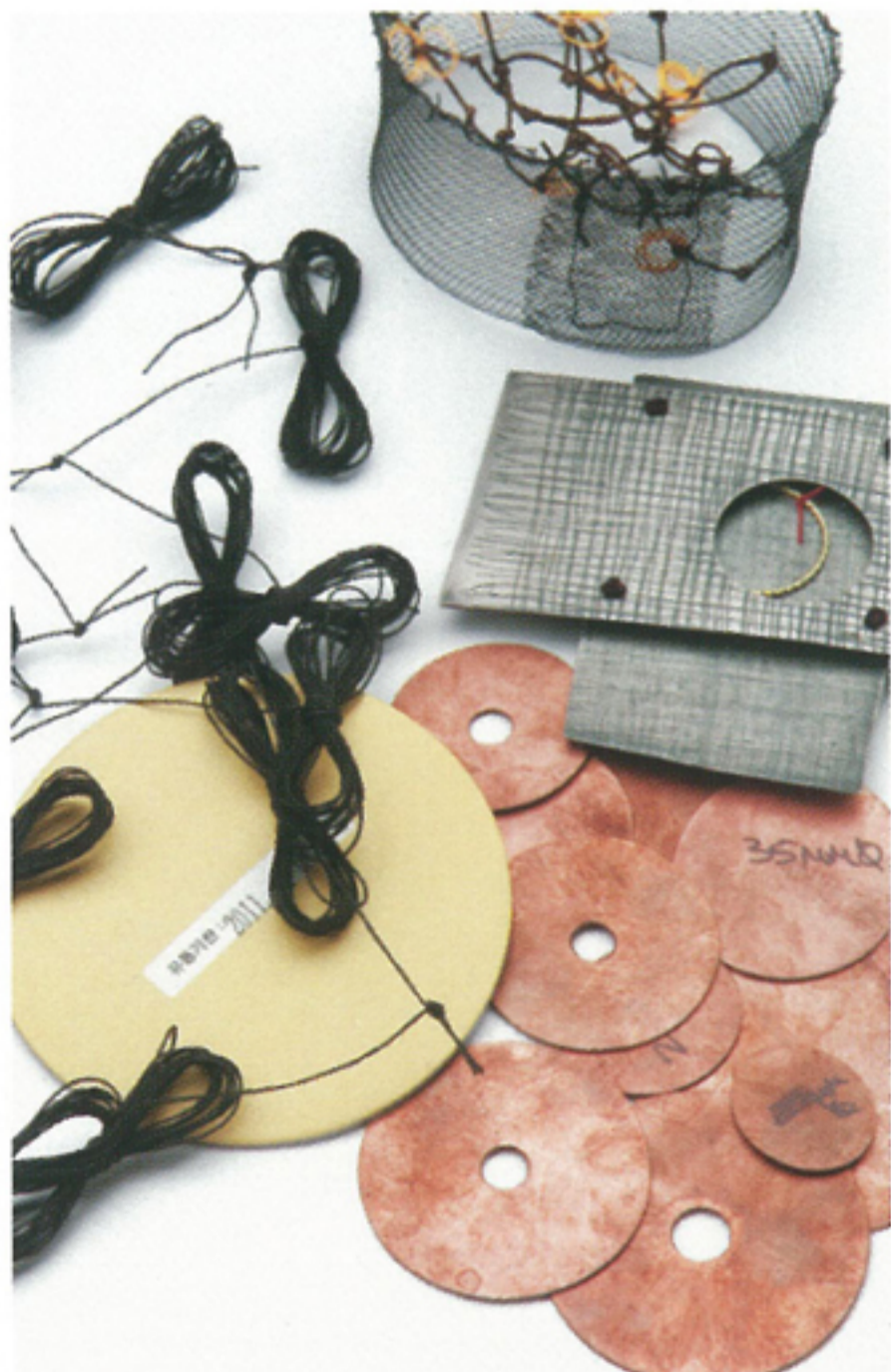


I am naturally drawn to travel eastwards, conjuring up as it does that sense of far off lands and the exotic; the cultures of people, places and ways of life that are very different to my own here in the West. In 2000 two Korean jewellers visited the department and organised 'Korean Week' as it was to become known. The week was a fascinating introduction to a country of which I had little previous knowledge. Since that I have always been intrigued and fascinated to learn more about the culture and its people. It was therefore fortuitous to be given the opportunity to travel to Korea through my work.

The invitation to participate in *Drawing, Permanence and Place* has given me an exciting opportunity to explore gathered research material from Korea in new directions and engage in ways of translating visual imagery through enamelling.



As I am learning, there are many different ways of working with enamel. For example, the interesting and immediate effects one can achieve by a photographic transfer image - as in the Korean text taken from a Buddhist newspaper picked up one evening at the *Jogyesa* temple in *Seoul* that is then overlaid onto an enamelled coloured ground and fired. This is a very direct way of applying surface pattern and visual texture, that is then overlaid onto an enamelled coloured ground and fired, this is a very direct way of applying surface pattern and visual texture. Similarly inscribing /drawing through a layer of dried white vitreous enamel slip poured over a black pre-enamelled sheet provides an immensely enjoyable and satisfying way of mark-making using various sharp points, brushes etc. Following the firing in the kiln the next stage of stoning back to reveal the hidden layers is yet another interesting stage of the 'drawing' process; blurring and blending marks and surfaces together to become unified, rather like smudging soft graphite or half erasing out a mark to leave but a suggestion.



Memorable experiences of my time in Korea include a visit to the Chinese Medicine Market, the weird and wonderful array of often dried plants and animals threaded artfully together, piled into huge sacks or packed neatly into chests of wooden drawers. The smell that was either perfumed or overpoweringly musty and repulsive! Studying at first hand the fascinating collections of textiles and traditional costume, richly coloured silks with exquisite details of embroidery and fastening details. The finely woven horsehair and bamboo hats worn traditionally by male scholars called *Hangul* were particularly interesting in their form and semi-transparent structure, designed to accommodate their top-knots.

An interest in Buddhism drew me towards temples both in Seoul and further south way up in the wilds of the mountains. The traditional structure of the wooden temple is in itself a marvel of construction and detailing, often very old and made from indigenous Korean Fir. Worn steps and floors polished naturally by many shoeless feet. The soft dun colouring of the wood illuminated by bright jewel like rows of strung lanterns. Sound became an aspect of Korean culture that I found myself drawn to often by default, listening to the meditational chanting of the monks and bell ringing within the temples. Twice daily - at 4am and 6pm - four symbolic instruments sound at the Bell Pavilion of *Jogyesa*: the bell, large drum, wooden fish and the cloud shaped gong are struck to call all beings to hear the words of the Buddha. Similarly the traditional music of the *Kayagum*, a twelve stringed Korean instrument that is plucked creates a unique quality of sound that I find so three-dimensional in its audio structure.

In working with these particular enamelling techniques for the first time it struck me how much of the process is about layering. As one layer is fired on top of another layer there is an analogy one can draw between the order of this process of making and the collected layers of experience gathered from travel and experience of a place; each reflected upon, selected and distilled over time.