

Showing the beauty of craftsmanship : Local galleries highlight the unique creations made by artisans

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The "Afterimage of Beginning" by Choi Byung-hoon is on display at the Gana Art Center in central Seoul. Choi's art furniture explores new limits and the future of furniture with its experimental forms. [GANA ART CENTER]

Finding beauty in the things we use in our everyday lives brings art closer to us, and recently galleries are offering the chance for people to enjoy works that blur the boundary between art and craft. From furniture to pottery, toys and other works made by master craftsmen, this summer is hot with exhibitions that show the work of artisans who have infused art with practical functions.

This summer, several galleries and museums are highlighting diverse works by master craftsmen who infuse beauty into their work.

Furniture as art

Some say that a house is not a home without furniture, but a house filled with works of art can be turned into an art gallery, like the Gana Art Center in Pyeongchang-dong, central Seoul. A special exhibition titled "Matter and Mass - Art Furniture" will run through Aug. 15 and features the works of Choi Byung-hoon and 13 other artists who have explored the functions and aesthetics of furniture.

A pioneer of the art furniture field and also a leading furniture designer in Korea, Choi has been nurturing young talent as a professor of woodworking and furniture at Hongik University for 31 years. The 13 other participating artists are all his pupils, who have taken part in this exhibition under his supervision. The artists push the limits of what furniture is, and venture into a new realm of art.

The works are not quite self-explanatory unless the viewers take into consideration that they are in fact furniture of some sort. Choi's stone bench, titled "Afterimage of Beginning" for instance, would just look like a sleek and shiny rock if it was put by a riverside; but indoors, its smooth curves carved on the rough surface provide a resting place not only for people to rest their bodies, but also their minds.

BY YOON SO-YEON [yoon.soyeon@joongang.co.kr]