

A REPORT ON THE PARTICIPATION OF AL-AHSA

in the International Workshop on Handcrafts
Held in Itcheon, South Korea, for the period
from 16-21 May, 2016

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Introduction

When Al-Ahsa became a member of the Creative City Network which encompasses 116 cities from 54 countries in the area of handcrafts and folklore, it received numerous invitations to participate in the formal activities organized by the Network or the member cities, among which is an invitation from Itcheon City Mayor, South Korea, addressed to Al-Ahsa Mayor to participate in the International Workshop on Hancrafts. Al-Ahsa is represented by:

- 1- Ahmed Abbas Matar, Al-Ahsa Coordinator for the Creative City Network
- 2- Dr. Ibrahim Hussain Al-Shubaith, an official in charge of the International Communication in the work team

We participated by making a presentation about Al-Ahsa and its craftsmanship. We also participated in the Complementary exhibition: we displayed three samples of the hancrafts: these are: (Al-Ahsa' Cloak, Arabic Coffee Pot and the wicker table cloth "leave").

- **Defining the workshop**
- The International Workshop on Hancrafts was held at the time when the Annual Ceramic Festival was held in Itcheon City since the city is renowned for its pottery, ceramic and porcelain industry. Al Ahsa from Saudi Arabia was one of Eight innovative cities participated in the workshop besides China, the United States, Italy, Japan and South Korea. The participation program includes the following activities:

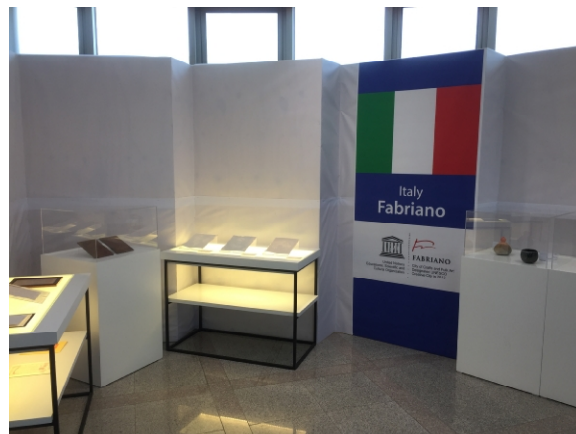
The first Day:

-The inauguration of the workshop by the City Mayor and the President of the city council: The Mayor gave a welcoming speech to participants hoping this workshop will make steps towards effective integration and cooperation between UCCN cities in order to upgrade and enhance crafts specially Ceramic works.

-The inauguration of the exhibition accompanying the workshop

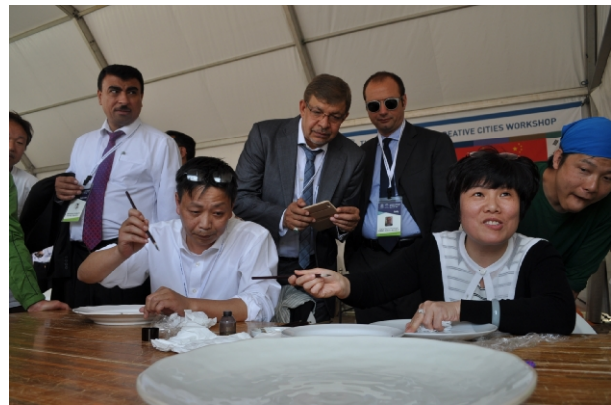


-Presenting the content of Al-Ahsa pavilion: The organisers requested only three craft products from each participating city so we chose our traditional mantle (Besht),the traditional coffee pot(Dalla) and the eating mat made of palmtree leaves.



-Introducing the participating cities (Badoka from USA and Jinkshin from China)

-Visting the ceramic Festival and the Korean Ceramic Foundation





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Samples of ceramic based art works



The Second Day:

The participated cities (Al-Ahsa from Saudi Arabia, Sasuyama from Japan and Tushau from China) made their presentations. Ahmed Al-Matar gave an introductory remark on Ahsa and its craftsmanship together with displaying a documentary film on the handicrafts in Al-Ahsa; the film is produced by the National Tourism and Heritage Authority





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-A visit is made to one of the professional craftsmen to witness how he makes pottery and to have a look at the displayed products.



-Another visit is made to the elevators of the Hyundai International Company site in order to have a look at the city from above



The Third Day:

The participating cities (the Chinese Hangshow and the Korean Itcheon , besides the Italian Fabriano) made their own presentations.

-The cities Hangshow and Itcheon performed some of the pottery works and made decorations on the ceramic in the complementary workshop



-A visit is made to the Korean Institute for Ceramic Engineering and Technology in Itcheon city: One of the most effective methods to develop handicrafts is devoting a research Institute for this purpose on the national level .

We visited Icheon branch of the ceramic traditional Institute where are many tests and researches are made for ceramic industry regarding materials ,design and manufacturing techniques .

Three- dimensional printing now is made to produce craft products.



The Fourth day:

- A visit is made to the Ceramic Village: It includes the main selling places for ceramic products with different sizes and shapes
- Another visit is made to the Korean capital Seoul for a sightseeing tour
- Besides the above program, we visited the Heritage Village as soon as we arrived at Itcheon. The village represents the traditional daily lifestyle of the Koreans as well as their folklore.



The lessons to be learnt from this visit; it is necessary to:

- Hold annual festival for a specific primary craft, in this case the Ceramic Festival, together with workshops and exhibitions for selling books and centers for training those who are interested; this is the corner stone for developing and maintaining the craft
- Making available the necessary infrastructure for maintaining the handicrafts which is represented by:
 - Taking proper care of the craftsmen.
 - Holding exhibitions and pinpointing selling sites to market the products
 - Training and qualifying the amateurs in this field.
 - Adopting scientific procedures to develop the crafts via founding specialized research institutions such as the Korean Institute for Ceramics.
 - Exchanging the expertise and visits between the participating countries as well as swapping presents represented by some craft products that the cities are famous for.
 - We presented the Itcheon City Mayor with an armor which is a minimized model of the Ahsai Cloak.
 - All these activities and the preparations for this international gathering focused on one craft; namely the pottery, ceramic and porcelain industry.
 - This event draws the attention of the highest ranking officials in the city (the mayor and the president of the Municipality Council)
 - The slogan of the Itcheon City has become well-known in different places of the city (on the buses, in the hotels, the craftsmen residence, museums, etc.).



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- The visitors need to be involved in the experiment of making pottery and drawing on the pottery containers
- Enhancing the presence of the different folklores while holding the activities since the diverse arts play an important role; they attract visitors and complement the innovation characterizing the city.

At the end of the workshop we gave the mayor of Icheon city a sample of traditional "Besht" of our city addressed by our mayor.

