

For Immediate Release

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**Legends, Myths and Truths: Jun Kaneko
Exhibition in Millennium Park's Boeing Galleries
April 12-November 3**

As a pioneer in the field of monumental ceramic sculpture, Jun Kaneko has played with scale and proportion. Visitors to Millennium Park will be able to see his work displayed in the Boeing Galleries, beginning April 12 through November 3.

The installation Kaneko has created for Millennium Park's Boeing Galleries is representative of his past and present artistic practices. Works presented in the South Boeing Galleries feature Kaneko's signature *Dangos* (meaning "rounded form" or "dumpling" in Japanese). These ceramic *steles*, covered in a variety of vibrant shapes and patterns, allow viewers to examine their environment and focus on a sense of scale and place.

The *Dango* form links Kaneko's work to minimalist sculptors who played with simple and large forms, while at the same time, the pattern overlays show formal aspects – in repeating geometric shapes – similar to those of minimalist painters.

The North Boeing Gallery features a new body of work by Kaneko, drawing upon the myths and legends of the *Tanuki* figure. From ancient times, the Japanese have expressed the *Tanuki* in a variety of ways, for it is considered to be a trickster who causes trouble and mayhem in both the human and supernatural worlds. In our modern era, however, the figure is most commonly portrayed as a large, stout badger. The *Tanuki* is not only a creature found in mythology, but a small, nocturnal mammal native to East Asia.

The *Tanuki* is a symbol of fertility and in present day Japanese consumer culture, often represents prosperity and economic growth. The *Tanuki* has been present in Japanese art for centuries, specifically in the city of Shigaraki, Japan, where the "sake-buying errand boy" is currently the most famous incarnation of the *Tanuki*, upon which Kaneko has based his own *Tanuki* figures. The legendary *Tanuki* features special traits that are believed to bring good fortune, including big eyes to perceive the environment and help make good decisions, a big belly that symbolizes bold and calm decisiveness, and a friendly smile.

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Jun Kaneko Exhibit at Millennium Park/Page two of 2

Hybrid extensions of the artist's Eastern and Western identities, Kaneko's works balance elements of both American and Japanese aesthetics. His figures, as well as the meditative and reflective qualities of his pieces, are rooted in Japanese culture and mythology, but the monumental, public scale of his work descends from the American modern tradition. The works resulting from this transcultural heritage create a unique artistic statement which functions as a universal language for all viewing audiences.

Legends, Myths and Truths: Jun Kaneko is co-presented by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and Millennium Park, Inc., and is sponsored by The Boeing Company, with support from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

Millennium Park is located on Michigan Avenue, bordered by Randolph St to the north, Columbus Dr. to the east and Monroe St. to the south. Convenient parking is located in the Millennium Park Garage (entrance on Columbus at Monroe or Randolph), Millennium Lakeside and Grant Park North.

For the latest Millennium Park news and events, visit millenniumpark.org, like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter, @Millennium_Park.

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) is dedicated to enriching Chicago's artistic vitality and cultural vibrancy. This includes fostering the development of Chicago's non-profit arts sector, independent working artists and for-profit arts businesses; providing a framework to guide the City's future cultural and economic growth, via the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan; marketing the City's cultural assets to a worldwide audience; and presenting high-quality, free and affordable cultural programs for residents and visitors.

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Artist Bio:

Jun Kaneko was born in Nagoya, Japan in 1942. He came to the United States in 1963 to study at Chouinard Institute of Art, in Los Angeles, California. He was attracted to the world of ceramics and became a part of what later came to be known as the Contemporary Ceramics Movement. His technical skills and tendency for pushing artistic boundaries have led him to extraordinary accomplishments in public art, set design and architectural projects. He has taught at universities all over the United States, and his work is featured in more than 70 museum collections. He has designed three operas since 2003 – including Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and Beethoven's sole opera, *Fidelio* – which have been part of an artistic rethinking of classic operas. Jun Kaneko has resided and worked in Omaha, Nebraska with his wife, Ree Kaneko, since 1986.