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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KOREA

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE VOL.66 WINTER 2023

National Museum of Korea



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NATIONAL
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A STORY TO BE TOLD IN WRITING AND IN PAINTINGS

A SPECIAL EXHIBITION AT THE NMK

Wise and Unbiased: Royal Philosophy in Paintings and Calligraphy of the Joseon Dynasty
December 8, 2023 - March 10, 2024

Wise and Unbiased: Royal Philosophy in Paintings and Calligraphy of the Joseon Dynasty is a special exhibition that opened in late 2023. A total of 88 individual paintings and calligraphic works in 54 sets from the 18th century Joseon royal palace are on display, including an eight-panel silk screen entitled Events from King Jeongjo’s visit to *Hwaseong* in 1795. This thought-provoking exhibition visually showcases royal palace cultural achievements and artistic tastes with respect to painting and calligraphy in the 18th century while raising the question of how such works were used and what effects they had on viewers.

The words *tang-tang pyeong-pyeong* (Wise and Unbiased: Royal Philosophy) sound light-hearted when pronounced yet carry a deep meaning. The phrase was taken from the *tang-pyeong* (unbiased) political policy pursued by Kings Yeongjo (r. 1724-1776) and Jeongjo (r. 1776-1800), who ruled Joseon for most of the 18th century, and warns against showing royal favoritism toward any particular side in political struggles or disputes. It comes from a quote in the Great Plan (Hongfan) section of the Confucian classic *Book of Historical Records (Shujing)*, which reads: “Do not be partial or partisan, for the way of the true king is all encompassing; do not be partisan or partial, for the way of the true king is even and smooth.”

For some, the title of this event suggests praise for the accomplishments of Yeongjo and Jeongjo, but the special exhibition actually starts from the “power of paintings and calligraphic works.” People express or convey their thoughts and feelings through words in order to converse with others. Paintings and other visual images are employed to improve communication effectiveness. The ways people use words and images have advanced over time, reaching an unparalleled level in the 21st century with the commercialization of smartphones. The smartphone user becomes immersed in a maze of text and images from the moment the device is switched on. Sensational text and gorgeous images bedazzle users, who unconsciously press the “Like” or “Purchase” button. We live in a world where textual and visual messages are potent enough to identify the individuals who are easily persuaded in terms of their political or commercial choices.

What about the use of text and images in days gone by? This is precisely the point from which I began to contemplating the current exhibition. I considered the Joseon period(1392-1897), for which many materials remain. You might think that conveying your intentions and recording

events would be easy if ink and brush were available. However, knowledge is necessary for writing the words suitable for your objective, while paintings can be produced only if you have the talent to do them yourself or the money to pay a professional artist to do them for you. Thus, writing and painting are special methods for getting a job done, and their use becomes all the more significant when you have to overcome an adverse situation.

Indeed the number of people who have faced disadvantageous circumstances has always been great, today as well as in the past. However, arranging a museum exhibition requires the existence of important figures who have left behind numerous related materials and artworks. Kings Yeongjo and Jeongjo came to mind as historical figures of this sort.

Many people are under the impression that the Joseon kings were autocrats who could flaunt their authority in any way they wished. That was

not true in reality, however. Yeongjo was invested as the royal prince successor brother, who was to ascend the throne after his elder half-brother, King Gyeongjong (r. 1720-1724) passed away. The Noron (Old Doctrine) and Soron (Young Doctrine), the leading factions in the kingdom at that time, were bitterly at odds over the royal succession matter.

After his coronation, Yeongjo did not show favoritism to the Noron or Soron, instead appointing individuals from various political factions evenly. This policy of impartiality diffused the contemporary political difficulties.

The crowning of Jeongjo, Yeongjo’s grandson heir-apparent, did not proceed smoothly, either. An effort was made to allow Jeongjo to conduct routine government affairs by proxy at the end of Yeongjo’s reign. Opposition forces in the government sought to obstruct this move, but Jeongjo resolved the issue, which ultimately enabled him to ascend to the throne.

Fig. 1
Sapsaree Dog
Painted by Kim Duryang (1696-1763) in 1743
Text and calligraphy by King Yeongjo in 1743
Private collection
City of Busan Tangible Cultural Heritage





Fig. 2
Details from Personnel evaluation of 1726
 1726
 Private collection (entrusted to the Institute of Korean Confucian Culture for safekeeping)

Once crowned king, Jeongjo also maintained his position of fairness and equitability. Both Yeongjo and Jeongjo contemplated and practiced ways to use calligraphy and painting to solidify the position of the royal throne.

This special exhibition tells the story of how Yeongjo and Jeongjo, who each faced adverse political circumstances during their reigns, set forth *tang-pyeong* as their political ideology and made calligraphic and painting artworks a means for putting it into practice. For them, *tang-pyeong* was not about equitability in the horizontal sense. Rather, their approach was a ruler-led perfection of the sovereign through

impartiality (*hwang-geuk tang-pyeong*). In other words, the king's position was idealized as the central pivot for bringing order to the officialdom and creating harmony among the people.

The placement of the king's seat and the arrangement of the royal subjects' seats projected a strengthened royal authority at royal court events. A layout that vertically orders the participants around the king in the center is clearly seen at the royal court events depicted on silk screens during Jeongjo's reign. The ultimate goal of Yeongjo's and Jeongjo's *tang-pyeong* politics was to promote a policy that benefitted the people. The two rulers communicated

through calligraphy and painting to assemble the talents of the kingdom's most capable individuals.

The exhibition has been organized into four sections. Section I, "Laying the Path to Impartial Rule" **Fig. 1** covers the direction Yeongjo established in his writings for getting out the chaotic situation wrought by factionalism. It offers details on the *tang-pyeong* ideology that was widely proclaimed through writing and painting. Yeongjo and Jeongjo were required to expand their own base of supporters by appointing talented persons equitably in accordance with the principle of *hwang-geuk*

tang-pyeong.

Yeongjo and Jeongjo conveyed in writing **Fig. 2** their commitment to *tang-pyeong* in terms of personnel administration matters. In 1750, Yeongjo had portraits repainted of meritorious officials awarded for pacifying a rebellion by military officers in 1728, twenty-two years earlier **Figs. 3 and 4**. The two kings personally wrote inscriptions on the portraits of loyal or prominent officials. Moreover, Jeongjo presented poems brushed in their own hand as royal gifts to officials who were personally close and secretly sent them letters that conveyed their intentions confidentially and accurately.

Both Yeongjo and Jeongjo aspired to become a "sovereign teacher" of their subjects. Jeongjo particularly revered Zhu Xi and attached importance to Zhu Xi's poetry **Fig. 5**. The ways in which these rulers used writing and painting is expanded upon in Section II, "Achieving *Tang-*

pyeong by Appointing Talent Equitably."

Section III is called "Properly Establishing the Kingly Way to Achieve *Tang-pyeong*." Shown here are the various efforts by both Yeongjo and Jeongjo to bolster the legitimacy of their problematic royal successions. Yeongjo inherited the achievements of his father, King Sukjong (r. 1674-1720), and these he left for posterity in paintings.

Jeongjo presented a finely worded posthumous honorific name for his father, Crown Prince Sado (Sado seja) **Fig. 6**, and rewrote his tomb epitaph, putting a positive spin on his life's accomplishments. The king's project to improve his father's image proceeded in a careful and orderly manner. In 1795, Jeongjo finally put forward an eight-character honorific name, which is equivalent to one of a king's stature, and then he arranged for a royal progress to Hwaseong to celebrate the 60th birthday of Lady

Hyegyeong, his mother and Crown Prince Sado's primary wife.

Rank placement charts, silk screens and official records (*uigwe*) of state-sponsored ceremonies and projects produced during this 18th century period are on display in Section IV, "*Tang-pyeong* for Order and Harmony." **Fig. 7** The special exhibition is concluded with a display of paintings that depict (1) events with the monarch in the center, flanked by officials arranged in vertical lines and (2) scenes of the people leading peaceful lives. As such, these works envisage the world dreamed of by Yeongjo and Jeongjo, namely equitability achieved by perfecting the sovereign.

What is the power that the calligraphy and paintings in this exhibition seek to describe? These works served as the means for Yeongjo and Jeongjo, who had to become the center of the kingdom from their position in the deepest

Fig. 3(left)
Bak Munsu:
Courageously Martial
Merit Subject,
Full-length Portrait
 Presumably painted by
 Jin Jaehae (1691-1769)
 1728
 Private collection

Fig. 4(right)
Bak Munsu:
Courageously Martial
Merit Subject,
Half-length Portrait
 1750
 Private collection
 Treasure





Fig. 5
Paintings based on poems by Zhu Xi, Panels 3 & 6
 Kim Hongdo (1745-after 1806)
 1799
 Private collection

are interesting but difficult to grasp in many respects. Therefore, I carefully considered some approaches that would elicit interest while conveying clearly what the items on display are about.

To start, I created three kinds of posters that would intuitively convey the concept behind the exhibition. The first type features Kim Duryang’s *Sapsaree Dog* painting, the most popular among viewers of all the items on display. The second poster assembles the Chinese characters for “*tang-pyeong*” in the shape of stars, with the Pole (or North) Star in the center to illustrate *hwang-geuk tang-pyeong*, i.e., the Pole Star, is the pivot around which all the other stars in the heavens rotate. For the third poster, I used Panel 8 of the *Offering Congratulations* silk screen, which has the scene of the subjects assembled in vertical rows according to rank, with the king’s place in the center, reflecting the meaning of *hwang-geuk tang-pyeong*.

These promotional materials are conceptually appropriate for an exhibition that deals with “*tang-pyeong*” (Wise and Unbiased: Royal Philosophy) and the “power of calligraphy and paintings.” An upcoming catalog will offer a wealth of textual information and detailed illustrations to explain the overall meaning of the exhibition and the individual items on display. In addition, the voice of actor Lee Deokhwa delivers a reading of Yeongjo’s calligraphy into the exhibition hall over directional speakers, and visitors can access detailed information on the display items via Mobile Leaflet. Thus, the exhibition planners have worked hard to communicate with visitors through numerous written texts and visual images. It is hoped that visitors will appreciate their sincere efforts and hard work.

recesses of the royal palace, to communicate with the world. At the same time, they were a repository of meaningful memories for the people who lived and worked with these two kings. The calligraphy by and paintings of Yeongjo and Jeongjo stand as important records to us who view them today. These records inform us of the political, cultural, and artistic standards of 18th century Joseon and they exude the great personal anguish of two individuals who wished

to lead their country in the proper way. It is hoped that visitors to this exhibition will come to understand the multiple levels of meaning found within the calligraphic works and paintings on display. While preparing for this exhibition, I established a place in advance to explain it to both the people who work inside the Museum as well as to the general public. A frequent response to the exhibition has been that contents

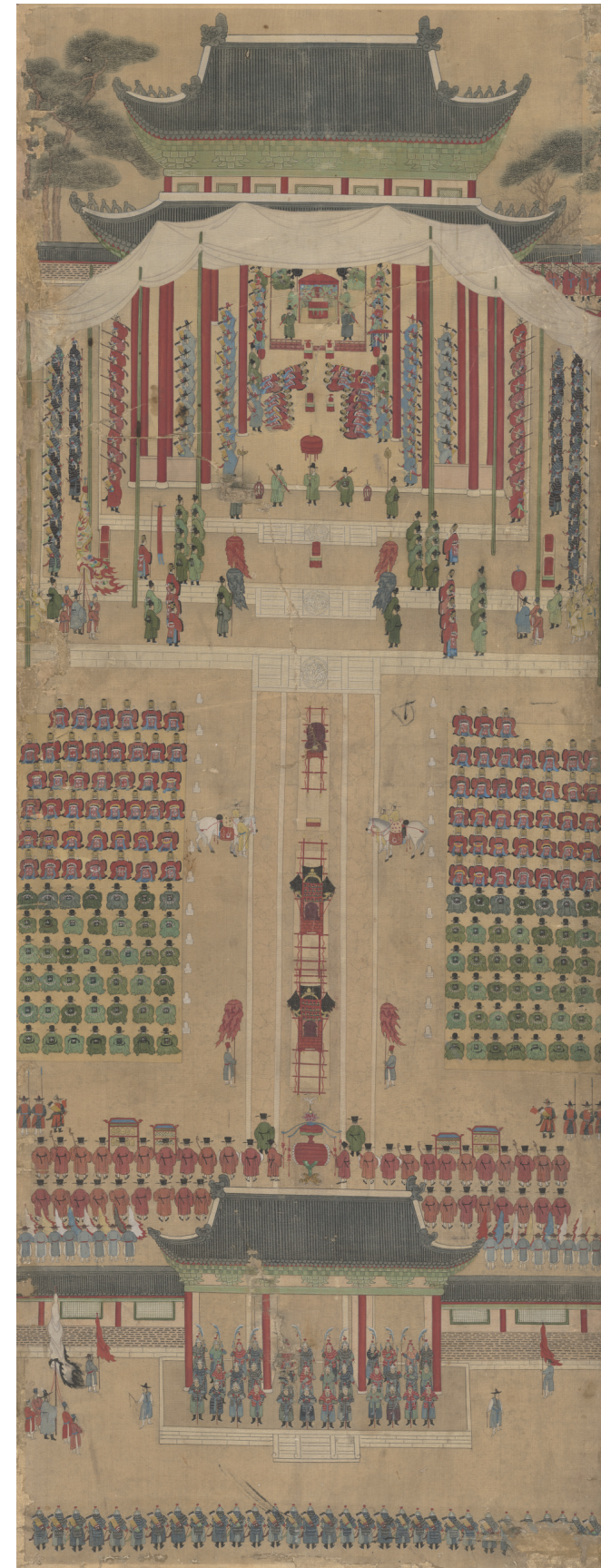


Fig. 6
***Offering Congratulations*, Panel 3**
 1783
 National Museum of Korea



Fig. 7
Archery and Fireworks Display at Deukjongjeong Hall, Royal Progress to Hwaseong, Panel 6
 Choe Deukhyeon, Kim Deuksin et. al., 7 artists in total
 1795
 National Museum of Korea



NOBILITY READ FROM BARREN BRUSHSTROKES

Kim Jeonghui's (1786-1856) desolate looking Wintry Days consists solely of a house and a few trees. He painted the work as a gift to his disciple Yi Sangjeok (1804-1865), who had showed steadfast loyalty to him. The work was designated a National Treasure in 1974 in recognition of its value as the epitome of literati painting. The painting passed through the hands of Son Seki, who gave it to his son, Son Changkun, who donated it to the National Museum of Korea in 2020.



An article on Wintry Days is accessible via the QR Code below

SIX MUSEUMS SELECTED FOR 2023 NMK OVERSEAS KOREAN GALLERIES SUPPORT PROGRAM



Korean Gallery at the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Photo by Colleen Dugan



Korean Gallery at the National Museum of Denmark

The National Museum of Korea considers the Korean galleries at museums outside Korea to be the focal point for introducing Korean cultural heritage, and moreover, K-culture to global audiences. In this sense, the National Museum of Korea launched the Overseas Korean Galleries Support Program in 2009, and in 2022 took over the support program from the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, significantly increasing the scope of support provided. With the transition, the National Museum of Korea now determines grant recipients and support details by an extensive review of various criteria, including institution eligibility, project feasibility, and cost-sharing ratios. Particularly for major museums, the Support Program offers comprehensive support that encompasses renovating Korean galleries, organizing special exhibitions, and recruiting specialized personnels. At the same time, it continuously seeks to expand its scope to conservation of Korean cultural heritage, publication, education, or online database service, according to the needs found in the annual application process.

For 2023, the Support Program will extend its support to Korean galleries in six museums across five countries located in the US, Europe, and Asia: National Museum of Asian Art (Washington D.C., USA); National Museum of Denmark (Copenhagen, Denmark); Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam, the Netherlands); 26 Martyrs Museum (Nagasaki, Japan); Oriental Museum at Durham University (Durham, UK); and Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art at California State University, San Bernardino (San Bernardino, USA). Projects under this year’s support will include reinstalling Korean galleries, organizing special exhibitions, conservation, and others.

One of the most notable recipients this year is the National Museum of Asian Art, the Smithsonian Institution’s only museum dedicated to Asian art. Already holding a gallery exclusively for its Korean collection, it is set to highlight Korea further with the soon-to-be-established Korean curatorship, funded by the Korea Foundation(KF). This year’s support by the National Museum of Korea is a follow-up to the MOU signed between Korea’s Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism and the Smithsonian Institutions in April 2023 to expand cultural exchanges and cooperation.

Accordingly, the National Museum of Asian Art has scheduled a series of Korea-related activities over the next four years. For example, the National Museum of Asian Art will be the first venue of a traveling exhibition featuring items from the artworks donated by the bereaved family members of the late Samsung Chairman Lee Kun-Hee, slated to open on November 8, 2025 through February 1, 2026. Additionally, its Korean gallery will be reinstalled. Various Korea-related programs are planned as well, including Chuseok (Harvest Moon Day) celebrations and Korean film festivals. Moreover, the National Museum of Asian Art will continue its close relationship with the National Museum of Korea,



Korea Section at the Rijksmuseum

particularly through reciprocal staff exchanges. The National Museum of Denmark is a leading state-run institution that houses ethnological and anthropological collections worldwide. It runs a gallery exclusively dedicated to its Korean collection with a curator specializing in Korean culture. For these reasons, the results of Korea-related activities have been building up, and its Korean gallery has extensive potential to develop further. The National Museum of Denmark, with this year’s support from the National Museum of Korea, is now planning a multifaceted project that encompasses both traditional and contemporary Korean culture. Korean cultural heritage in the National Museum of Denmark’s collection, such as the 19th-century genre paintings by Kisan Kim Jungeun, are to be reinterpreted, put on display, and published, while a web-comic is to be produced with modern Korean society and culture as its themes.

This year’s support also includes the world-renowned Rijksmuseum in the Netherlands, which will showcase the National Museum of Korea’s collection on loan and further bolster the Korea section inside the Asian Pavilion. Conservation treatment will be conducted on the collection of the 26 Martyrs Museum, which was established in Nagasaki, Japan to commemorate Christian martyr saints. The Oriental Museum

on the Durham University campus, the only university museum in the UK specializing in Asian and North African civilizations, will hire dedicated staff for the Korean gallery, providing the personnel needed to organize a special exhibition and reinstall the gallery. Finally, the Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art on the San Bernardino campus of the California State University will receive support in conducting a survey of its Korean collection. As university museums, they will make the best use of their on-campus setting, using the project results to develop educational programs for their students as well as the local communities, deepening their understanding of Korea.

Going forward, the National Museum of Korea will continue to build a solid cooperative network with museums around the world to invigorate the operation of their Korean galleries and support them to fully preserve and utilize their Korean collections. To achieve this, the National Museum of Korea is tailoring its Support Program to the needs of each recipient institution, focusing on customizing and expanding the scope to include academic consultations, collection loans, and staff exchanges. Through these relentless efforts, the National Museum of Korea hopes to contribute to elevating the publicity and stature of Korean culture.

THE NEW LOOK OF THE KOREAN GALLERY AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Korean Gallery at the British Museum

In October 2023, the British Museum unveiled a new look of the Korea Foundation Gallery after a recent reinstallation. Since its establishment in 2000, the British Museum’s Korean gallery has presented a diverse array of cultural heritage from ancient to modern times, playing an important role in deepening UK audiences’ understanding of Korea’s history and culture. Given the limitations of its own collection in fully representing Korean art and culture, the British Museum has received support from the National Museum of Korea in the form of a long-term loan since 2004.

Over the years, the British Museum has endeavored tirelessly to expand its Korean collection through donations and acquisitions,

but its efforts to introduce an in-depth view of Korean culture have faced constraints due to limitations of space and number of objects. Therefore, for the past decade, the National Museum of Korea has been lending objects from its collection to the British Museum, particularly celadon and white porcelain wares which have captivated Western culture from the late 19th century onward.

This loan has sparked greater international interest in Korean art and prompted the British Museum’s continuous requests for a broader array of objects. With a new set of loans from Korea, the reinstalled gallery focuses on showcasing various aspects of Korean culture, particularly by presenting less-seen objects

like clay bricks and roof tiles, which provide a glimpse into Korean traditional architecture. To achieve this, the reinstalled gallery now exhibits loans from not just the National Museum of Korea but also from the Gyeongju National Museum and the Gimhae National Museum collections.

A total of 30 objects from Korean national museums are currently on display at the British Museum. These include important objects from multiple time periods that were not featured previously—from slender bronze daggers from Korea’s Bronze Age to metal movable type from the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910)—transforming the gallery into a comprehensive illustration of Korean history as seen through cultural heritage.

Among the most noteworthy objects are the roof tiles from Unified Silla (676-935). A single roof tile, despite being just one of many architectural elements used in building structures, can help visitors imagine a grand cityscape from ancient times. Moreover, the tiles come in numerous shapes and are decorated with a variety of patterns, vividly showing the exquisite craftsmanship of Unified Silla^{Fig. 1}. Particular standouts among these are the roof-end tiles with beast design, notable for their dual functions of enhancing the structure’s dignity and warding off evil spirits^{Fig. 2}.

Displayed in a showcase dedicated to metalcrafts, a belt ornament from the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392) is one of the must-see objects. While Goryeo is best known for its celadon, its metalcraft techniques are also highly sophisticated. Engraved with exquisite scroll patterns on the front, the belt ornament is a piece that visitors should not miss^{Fig. 3}. Another key object is the metal movable type from the Joseon

dynasty^{Fig. 4}. With the growing global interest in the Korean alphabet (Hangeul), this Korean letter metal type on display reveals the historical significance of Hangeul as well as Korea’s superb printing techniques.

On top of these, two magnificent glass necklaces from the Gaya confederacy (42-562 CE) are now on display for the first time at the British Museum^{Fig. 5}. Gaya artisans excelled at crafting glass, considering glass to be more precious than gold or silver, and they produced beautiful necklaces in diverse colors. Visitors are sure to be captivated by their clear and bright hues, giving a fresh perspective on the beauty of Korean culture. Last but not least, the celadon and white porcelain wares on display will certainly attract visitors’ keen attention, demonstrating Korea’s outstanding pottery-making traditions^{Fig. 6}.

In addition to the loans from Korean national museums, the British Museum displays 160 objects from its own collection, ranging from

Silla and Gaya earthenware to contemporary artworks. They are organized in the gallery by material and use, such as pottery, paintings, and more, providing a solid display for helping viewers to understand the best of Korea’s cultural heritage. Also placed on one side of the gallery is a re-creation of a *sarangbang* (men’s quarters), which traditionally served as both a scholar’s study and reception room for guests. Embodying this same spirit, the gallery invites visitors to experience and engage with Korean culture in its welcoming atmosphere. The recently reinstalled Korean gallery at the British Museum is expected to showcase the beauty and excellence of Korean culture from antiquity to the present day, and leave a lasting impression upon its visitors.



Fig. 1 Unified Silla Tiles



Fig. 2 Unified Silla Roof-end Tiles with Beast Design



Fig. 3 Goryeo Belt Ornament



Fig. 4 Joseon Metal Movable Type



Fig. 5 Silla Gold Earrings (left) and Gaya Glass Bead Necklaces (right)



Fig. 6 Goryeo Celadon Ewer with Inlaid Design

PERFECTLY IMPERFECT: KOREAN *BUNCHEONG* CERAMICS

Special Exhibition at Denver Art Museum
December 3, 2023- December 7, 2025

The special exhibition *Perfectly Imperfect: Korean Buncheong Ceramics* opened at the Denver Art Museum(DAM) on December 3, 2023^{Fig. 1}. The event is being held in accordance with an agreement to support Korean galleries at overseas museums, signed between the National Museum of Korea and DAM on December 1, 2022. The Korean gallery in DAM is at an important location in the central US, and more cooperative projects are planned based on the special relationship it has established with the NMK.

DAM has a three-year plan (2023-26) in place for hiring people to run the Korean gallery, organizing special exhibitions, and engaging in projects related to Korean modern artists. The first of these special exhibitions is meant to shed

light on the beauty and historical significance of Korean pottery. The event is being held in the Jackson Gallery and Korean Gallery inside DAM between December 3, 2023 and December 7, 2025.

Buncheong ware first appeared around the 15th century, early in the Joseon dynasty. The genre served as a temporary bridge between the Goryeo celadon and Joseon white porcelain traditions, but these pieces, with their satirical and freewheeling spirit, catch the eye of modern viewers. The point that makes this special exhibition garner the most attention is how it lays out seven different methods for producing *buncheong* ware, with its bold and modernistic aesthetics, and displays vessels in a variety of different of shapes.

The *inhwa* (stamping) method^{Fig. 2} is the act of impressing uniform patterns with a stamp, a process that closely resembles modern industrial pottery production. Employing the *guiyal* (brushed white slip) method^{Fig. 3}, the potter dips a wide brush into the slip and then applies it boldly onto the vessel surface in great strokes, while the *bunjang* (dipped white slip) method^{Fig. 4} entails the pot's being plunged playfully into the slip all at once, reminiscent of the work of improvisational performance artists today.

In addition, exhibition visitors will discover the diverse social connections behind *buncheong* ceramics made during the Joseon period. They will view certain pieces^{Fig. 5} produced for use inside royal palaces and government offices; they will learn about the meanings of inscriptions^{Fig. 6} on some vessels and see ritual vessels that were produced collectively for burial with the deceased. Sometimes, mistakes during the firing

process in the kiln resulted in distorted or piled-up vessel shapes^{Fig. 7}. Thus, the exhibit provides a remarkable look at *buncheong* ware's special allure, a rare aesthetic that can be found in both complete and incomplete pieces.

The special attractiveness of *buncheong* ware is being showcased alongside Korean modern artworks, and this collaboration with Korean modern artists is aimed at presenting a Korean artistry that transcends specific time periods. The special exhibition at DAM contains a total of 124 items in 76 sets. Of these, 92 items in 42 sets from the National Museum of Korea

Fig. 6
***Buncheong* Placenta Jar Set for Prince Gyeayang**
Joseon dynasty, 1439
H: 25.1 cm, Max. D: 18.7 cm



Fig. 1
***Buncheong* Jar with Peony and Scroll Motif**
Joseon dynasty, late 15th century
H: 42.7 cm, MD: 15.2 cm, BD: 31.8 cm



Fig. 2
Large *Buncheong* Bowl Inscribed with "Yeongsan Office of Benevolence and Longevity"
Joseon dynasty, 15th century
H: 8.1 cm, MD: 17.6 cm, BD: 5.8 cm
Bequest of Lee Kun-Hee

Fig. 3
Rice-Bale-Shaped *Buncheong* Jar
Joseon dynasty, ca. late 15th century-early 16th century
H: 27.0 cm, BD: 12.1 cm



Fig. 4
***Buncheong* Cup**
Joseon dynasty, ca. late 15th century-early 16th century
H: 6.3 cm, MD: 11.5 cm



Fig. 5
***Buncheong* Cup Inscribed with "For Use by Officials at Long Prosperity [Warehouse] at Jangheung"**
Joseon dynasty, 15th century
H: 3.3 cm, MD: 16.7 cm



Fig. 7
***Buncheong* Jar with Vine Pattern**
Joseon dynasty, ca. late 15th century-early 16th century
H: 8.7 cm, MD: 10 cm

collection are brought together with pottery pieces by modern *buncheong* artisans as well as modern Korean paintings that can be compared against *buncheong*'s appeal. The special interest in *buncheong* ceramics inside and outside Korea is covered in a documentary that is set for release in January 2024. *Perfectly Imperfect: Korean Buncheong Ceramics* has been organized to leave a lasting impression on US visitors today concerning the modernistic aesthetics and beauty that *buncheong* ware has possessed from the Joseon period to the present day.

YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR FIRST-EVER LOOK AT SOUTHERN INDIA'S BUDDHIST ART AND THE FOREST OF *STŪPAS*

Special Exhibition at the National Museum of Korea: *Tree & Serpent, Early Buddhist Art in India*
December 22, 2023-April 14, 2024

For much of this past year, the Special Exhibition Gallery highlighted European artworks dating from the Renaissance and later, delighting museum goers with masterpieces from the collections of the Austrian Habsburg royal family and the National Gallery, London. This winter, the focus has shifted more toward the east and a millennium or so earlier to introduce Buddhist artworks from the 2nd century BCE through the 4th century CE. On December 22, the National Museum of Korea opened a special exhibition of artworks from steamy southern India, brimming with spiritual energy and *Śākyamuni* narratives. Those of us in Korea may typically consider Buddhist art to be a familiar topic, but you can look forward to a unique

experience when you get a close look at the strange and exotic art from South India.

Tree & Serpent, Early Buddhist Art in India is the first ever special exhibition of South Indian Buddhist art to be held in Korea. To date, exhibits of Indian Buddhist artworks have mainly covered the North of the country, to include Gandhara and Mathura. The Korean public has lacked the opportunity to fully appreciate the art originating from the Deccan Plateau and points further south.

This exhibition was organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in collaboration with the National Museum of Korea. A total of ninety-seven South Indian Buddhist artworks are on display from 18

different institutions in four countries. Of these, sixty-one are from the collections of twelve Indian museums, including the National Museum of New Delhi. The remaining thirty-six are on loan from six museums outside India, including the British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, Museum Für Asiatfische Kunst-Staatliche Museen Zu Berlin and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York among them. A number of the items brought together for this exhibition are being shown outside India for the first time, after they were found among ancient Indian ruins in recent years.





Fig. 1
Stūpa Drum Panel with Protective Serpent
 2nd half of 1st century
 Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh
 British Museum, London
 © The Trustees of the British Museum

This exhibition was ambitiously prepared by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and scheduled to start in November 2020 as part of the Met’s 150th anniversary celebration. Unfortunately, the opening was delayed to July 17 of this year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, pushing back the Korean launch date to December 22. Given the great time and effort spent in its arrangement, this is your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see in Korea important relics from well-known South Indian Buddhist archaeological sites such as Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda as well cultural properties newly discovered at Phanigiri and elsewhere in the 21st century **Figs. 1 and 2**.

The New York exhibition organizers sought to fully reflect the latest research results regarding South Indian Buddhist art. On the other hand, the planners for the Korea event that opened in December thought deeply about ways to provide a new perspective for approaching an unfamiliar indigenous religion and its art from the South India. Most of the relics on display are decorative relief carvings from Stūpas in the South.

The term “Stūpa” is of ancient Indian origin and refers to a mound-like structure used to enshrine the relics (Śarīra) of the Buddha or other prominent monks; the Korean word *tap* is a transcription of Stūpa. Many stupas still stand on a site to the east of the Deccan Plateau in South India, and the largest of these structures measure some fifty meters in diameter. Pieces from South Indian Stūpas have been arranged around the exhibition hall to provide you, the visitor, with the impression that you are traveling to a “The Forest of Stūpa.”

You are first briefed on the kings who ruled over this region of India two thousand years ago before you enter The Forest of Stūpa, which comes with multiple faces. In the “The Forest of Mystery” segment, nature spirits that the South Indian people worshipped from time immemorial are sometimes depicted as buxom women, while a gracious spirit in half-human, half-bird form occasionally appears wearing a lotus crown with coins copiously flowing from it **Fig. 3**. The “The Forest of Stories” segment is filled with stories about Buddhism and Śākyamuni that had been newly conveyed to the South from North India.

Once inside The Forest of Stūpa, you encounter how the South Indians who, having long believed in the power resting in Nature’s bounty, became fervent supporters of the new Buddhist religion. You may come to appreciate Śākyamuni’s life drama within the artworks crafted by the Southerners after they had reinterpreted the Buddhist stories that had come down from the North.

During the cold winter season, come and feel the special vibrancy and freshness of South India at *Tree & Serpent, Early Buddhist Art in India*. Who knows? You could very well come away energized and ready to take on the new year!



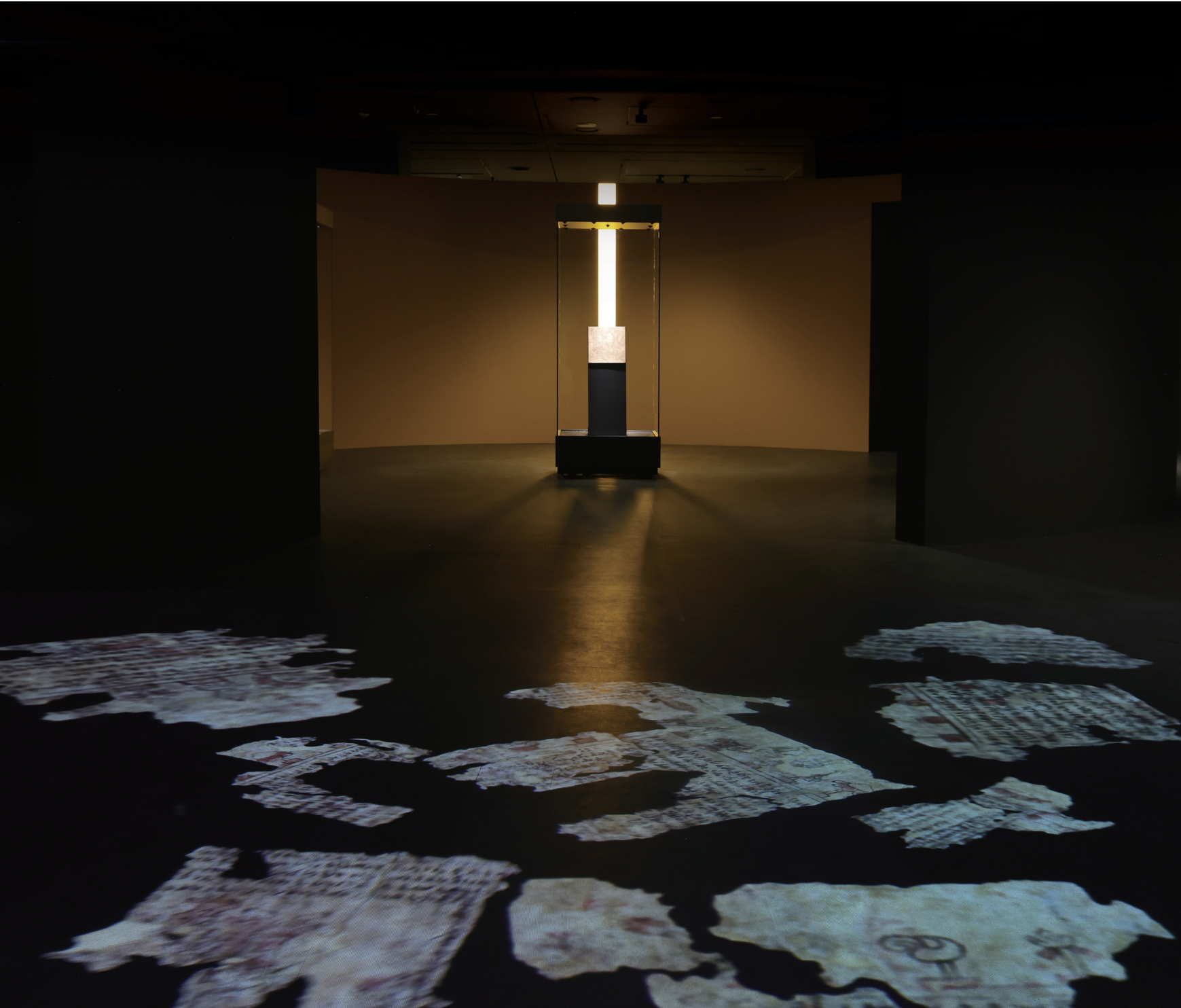
Fig. 2
Torana Architrave with Lion Makara
 3rd-4th century
 Phanigiri, Telangana
 Department of Heritage, Telangana
 Photo by Thierry Ollivier



Fig. 3
Yaksa Padmanidhi, with Coins Flowing Out of a Lotus Crown
 End of 3rd century
 Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh
 Archaeological Museum ASI, Nagarjunakonda
 Photo by Thierry Ollivier

MAHĀPRATISARĀ-DHĀRAṆĪ FROM UNIFIED SILLA: TEEMING WITH SUPPLICATIONS FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF EARNEST WISHES

Special Exhibition at Gyeongju National Museum: *Incantation of Wish-fulfillment Amulet*
October 24, 2023 - January 28, 2024



The Gyeongju National Museum is currently running *Incantation of Wish-fulfillment Amulet*, which opened on October 24. This special exhibition is the first-ever public showing of a gilt-bronze case from the Unified Silla period (676-935), thought to have been originally from Namsan Mountain (South Mountain) area of Gyeongju, along with the texts of incantations (dhāraṇī) written in both Sanskrit and Classical Chinese. Just three display items are introduced inside the Special Exhibition Hall, renovated this year, in a bid to focus attention upon this important cultural legacy and disseminate its importance far and wide.

Incantation of Wish-fulfillment Amulet Produced on the Korean Peninsula During Unified Silla

“Dhāraṇī” is a Sanskrit word that refers to spells believed to contain mysterious power derived from the essence of the Buddha’s teachings. The Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī, or *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment*, is just one of diverse dhāraṇī types and also goes by the name Incantation of Mahāpratisarā (the Protectress) Who Grants Great Freedom.

The *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment* is based on the *Scripture Preached by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī Spirit-Spell of Great Sovereignty of Immediate Wish Fulfilling*, a sutra translated from Sanskrit into Classical Chinese by the Kashmiri monk Mañicintana (Ch. Baosiwei) in 673, during the Tang dynasty. Multiple versions of the translated text have been handed down. Initially, the dhāraṇī would be inscribed on paper and then worn as an amulet in the belief that the chant’s efficacy would be directly transferred to the bearer, who could see the results. The practice diversified over time, and placing such amulets inside Buddha statues or enshrining them in pagodas became popular.

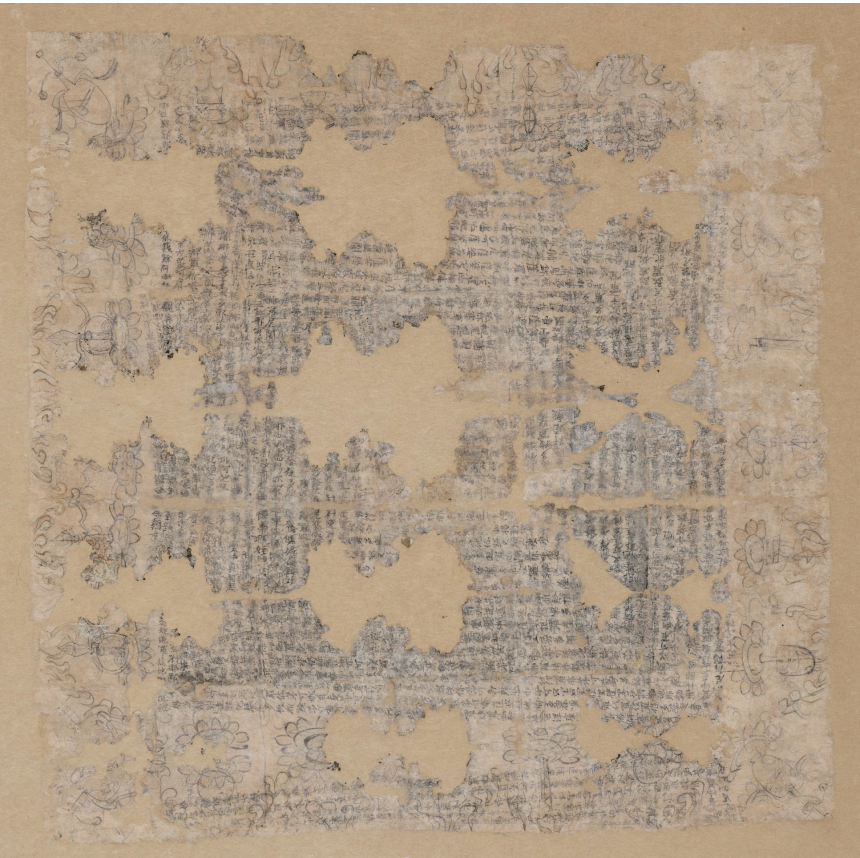


Fig. 1 (above)
Incantation of Wish-fulfillment Amulet in Sanskrit
Unified Silla
Ink & color on paper
Excavated from Namsan Mountain
Gyeongju (presumed)

Fig. 2 (below)
Incantation of Wish-fulfillment Amulet in Classical Chinese
Unified Silla
Ink & color on paper
Excavated from Namsan Mountain
Gyeongju (presumed)



Fig. 3
Gilt-bronze Case
Unified Silla
Gold plating on copper
Excavated from Namsan Mountain, Gyeongju (presumed)

The *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment Amulet* thought to have come from Namsan Mountain in Gyeongju was purchased by the Museum of the Government-General of Korea in 1919 and catalogued at the time as “Dhāraṇī stylized floral medallion in Sanskrit and Classical Chinese.” The amulet was inscribed in both scripts side by side on a rectangular (32.9×46.8cm) paper sheet with a layer of backing paper pasted onto it. Research on the piece confirmed its identity, and it underwent preservation treatment during which individual fragments were separated and restored. In the process, the Sanskrit sheet (29.7×30.3cm)**Fig. 1** and the Classical Chinese sheet (29.5×30.9cm)**Fig. 2** were both found to have originally been cut in squares.

The Sanskrit version of the *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment* had been folded up tightly and stored inside a gilt-bronze case**Fig. 3** for a long time, causing it to fragment into sixteen pieces, unlike the way it looked originally when attached to a single sheet of backing paper. Fundamental research also determined that part of the Classical Chinese version was improperly laid out and connected. The two amulets underwent multiple examination processes to discover their original appearance: Experts in ancient Buddhist literature translated and deciphered the

contents, while infrared pictures were also taken, along with high-resolution scans and digital photographs. In addition, an analysis of the paper quality revealed that the amulet manuscript had been inscribed on Hanji Korean paper.

Meanwhile, the case that served as the amulet container was determined to be made of copper and plated with gold. The top is decorated with a stylized floral medallion (*bosanghwa*) and the sides are engraved with the image of a guardian. The rest of the surface space is filled in with a fish spawn pattern. The techniques used to make the piece appear to be like those applied on the gilt-bronze case discovered inside Seokgatap, a pagoda dedicated to Śākyamuni Buddha in Bulguksa Temple in Gyeongju, as well as on the reliquary enshrined inside the five-story stone pagoda in Nawon-ri, Gyeongju. These containers were produced during Unified Silla in the 8th or 9th century, leading to the conclusion that this case is also from Unified Silla. The amulets enshrined inside it were produced during the same period as well, and as such, they are the oldest hand-written copies of the *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment* ever found in Korea.

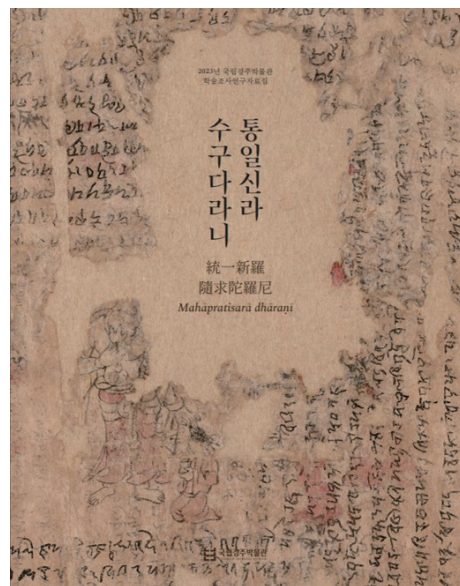
Appearance of the *Incantation of Wish-fulfillment* and Survey Results

The *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment* was first introduced in 2020 at symposium on Namsan Mountain in Gyeongju, and the amulet’s value was openly recognized. Subsequently, the need arose for scientific research studies in order to obtain accurate information and research materials, and so preservation treatment and research projects were started at the National Museum of Korea and Gyeongju National Museum.

Full-fledged basic research activities, starting from preservation treatment, along with various scientific analyses and restoration processes began to show results in 2021. A special exhibition was then held, and the Gyeongju National Museum published the details in an academic research book called *Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī* of Unified Silla.

Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī of Unified Silla gives an overview of the dhāraṇī’s value, covering the amulet purchase during the Japanese colonial period, the physical restoration process, the textual deciphering and associated research, and the manufacturing techniques for the amulet container. The academic research book was not

Cover of the Academic Research book



published as a special exhibition catalogue but rather serves a new purpose for the Museum: deliver academic findings accurately and let the wider world know about the dhāraṇī’s importance. As such the publication presents various surveys and studies by specialists as well as the results of preservation treatment and the arduous restoration processes. In the future, the Museum will continue efforts to introduce and display various cultural properties on the basis of research studies.

Special Showing of the *Incantation of Wish-fulfillment* and Plans Going Forward

The research book provides public access to the *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment* research results, and the special exhibition lets visitors view the *Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī* of Unified Silla directly. Information on the two amulets and gilt-bronze case is provided through various formats in addition to the physical display. A video presentation and digital contents via touchscreen discuss the sutra that includes the Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī, as well the form and production methods of the amulets. Tactile graphics are also available.

The *Scripture Preached by the Buddha on*

Exhibition of the *Incantation of Wish-fulfillment Amulets* and Gilt-bronze Case



the *Dhāraṇī Spirit-Spell of Great Sovereignty of Immediate Wish Fulfilling*, the sutra upon which the *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment* is based, was the source for introducing various topics at the special exhibition, from the procedure for chanting the invocation and the merit received from it to the way in which the dhāraṇī is written and drawn. Section I starts with a video that relates how Brahma-Deva in the beginning approached Buddha and asked for the dhāraṇī. Section II presents, in video form, how the *Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī* of Unified Silla was initially conceived and enshrined as well as how it resurfaced in modern times and was restored.

Next, the video directs visitors toward the exhibition space, where they are provided with a first-hand look at the *Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī* of Unified Silla. The final section features various digital contents and tactile images that allow visitors to identify with and experience stories about the merits and efficacy of the *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment* written in Buddhist scripture, the narrative style of the incantation, and tales of famous characters who wanted to possess the amulets.

Meanwhile, the Museum scheduled an educational program and various other events in addition to the special exhibition in an effort to

spread the word about the *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment*. Young children who wanted to know more about this exhibition and the dhāraṇī were invited to “Make a Wish with Dhāraṇī,” which ran every Tuesday from November 21 through January 10, 2024. The program began at 2:00 PM and was able to accept up to 100 persons on each occasion on a first-come, first-served basis. The young participants received a special activity item in conjunction with the exhibition and were given time to write down their wishes. This item was a modern reinterpretation of the *Incantation of Wish-Fulfillment*, which was loaded with the wishes and desires of people long ago. Here, the children were able to write their own “wish cards” for the coming new year.

The *Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī* is a cultural property that has long remained difficult to learn about. The subject matter is somewhat esoteric and not easy to grasp. It is hoped, however, that this special exhibition serves as an opportunity for many visitors to increase their understanding of and interest in new and diverse aspects of the Korean cultural heritage. In addition, researchers are paying greater attention to the dhāraṇī and their studies of the subject are increasing, raising our expectations for more chances to examine the nature of ancient Korean Buddhist culture.

The Way to Write and Draw the Dhāraṇī with Tactile Images



TO OLD STONE FIGURES

Surrounded by Solace: Stone Child Attendants from Jeju and Stone Arhats from Yeongwol
at the Jeju National Museum
October 13, 2023 - February 18, 2024

Coming Across an *Oreum* Spot in an Exhibition Hall

The entranceway is dark, and a small window stands open at the end of a short passageway. Walk up to the window and a pair of statues comes into view, consisting of a stone child attendant from Jeju and a stone arhat from Yeongwol, in Gangwon-do. Step around the wall to enter the exhibition’s Section I, entitled “Solace by My Side: Stone Child Attendants from Jeju.” Unfolding before you are nature’s contours and colors, fragrances and sounds, just like coming across an *oreum*, one of the numerous volcanic cones found on Jeju Island. Bracken pushes from the volcanic rocks, and stone child attendants stand in pairs among the rocks, looking like the soul of Jeju. This is how the special exhibition entitled *Surrounded by Solace: Stone Child Attendants from Jeju and Stone Arhats from Yeongwol* begins at the Jeju National Museum.

The Mind Soothed by the Most Proximate Solace

Much thought went into deciding name for the exhibition. Initially I considered using the phrase “stone person” (*dol saram*), since this sounds friendlier than “stone figure” (*Seoginsang*) does. The Korean dictionary defines *dol saram* as a “human shape carved from stone and placed in front of a grave.” The most appropriate name for this exhibition would combine “stone child attendant” (*dongjaseok*) and “arhat statue” (*nahansang*). Thus, I pondered the naming some more. The phrases “stone child attendants” and “stone arhats” were to be included in the subtitle, so I considered “stone person” to be a redundancy. In this case, what words could capture both the stone child attendants of Jeju and the 500 arhat statues on the Changnyeongsa Temple site in Yeongwol?

Both statue types are similar insofar as they were created to console minds tormented by the stark reality of life and death. None are well-balanced figures from classical sculpture; all are unsophisticated human

characterizations. The stone child attendants were traditionally set up very close to the burial mound, just below the feet of the deceased, standing by to serve at some unspecified time in the future. The arhat figures were erected closest to temple structures used by ordinary persons rather than beside the halls for honoring buddhas or bodhisattvas. I sought to explain how these various stone human statues provide comfort with respect to life and death, and so I organized this exhibition called *Surrounded by Solace*.

The Experience of Encountering Stone Child Attendants in Nature on Every Volcanic Cone and at Every Gravesite

Graves on Jeju Island are referred to as mountains (*san*). The dictionaries say that one of the readings for the Sino-Korean character for “mountain” is “grave,” indicating that the character has been used since ancient times in this capacity. Therefore the stone wall (*dol dam*) built around gravesites is known as *san dam* on Jeju Island. Stones are piled up to serve as a barrier, so one must climb over this wall to access the grave.

Livestock are allowed to graze on the *oreum* (volcanic cones) that dot the island, and these animals care not that the graves are the resting places for the deceased. Therefore, these stone barriers are erected to protect the burial mounds. The dark-colored basalt walls found on every volcanic cone are a unique aspect of the Jeju landscape, while the stone child attendants are believed to bring warmth to the walled in burial mounds. In this exhibition, the statues are not displayed separately but rather arranged to conform with the *oreum*-shaped structures. These structures were specially built

to resemble open spaces atop an *oreum* covered with basalt boulders and pumice.

Early this past summer, I examined the *san dam* on various volcanic cones, and the experience reminded me of the time I saw stone child attendants in the *gotjawal* (forested area) of Jeju Stone Park. The *san dam* walls are typically overgrown with bracken and thistles until families come to tidy up the ancestral graves in preparation for Chuseok (the Harvest Moon Festival). Thus, the faces of the stone child attendants were shyly peeking out of the sprouting vegetation. I wished to re-create this effect of being nestled in nature inside the exhibition hall, so I decided to employ natural fragrance and sounds. I worked with a perfume blending specialist to achieve that fresh scent that wafts through Jeju’s forested areas. The bush warbler songs commonly heard on Jeju spring days are unmistakable above the crow and brown-eared bulbul calls played inside the hall. The fragrances and sounds of early summer experienced inside the special exhibition at the Jeju National Museum let visitors forget the seasons as they pass through autumn and winter while waiting for spring to arrive again.

Restored Stone Child Attendant with Hands Joined Together

Child Attendant with Hands Joined Together, unveiled to the public for the first time at this special exhibition, vividly depicts a lifelike child pressing his hands together. Parted hair tied in a long braid is clearly depicted, and even the muscles around the tightly closed mouth are apparent. This statue was originally erected in Waheul-ri, Jocheon-eup, Jeju, beside the grave of Kim Dae-jin (1611-1685), the official keeper of range horses. The time and purpose of the stone figure’s production is unmistakable. Kim Daejin’s father was Kim Manil (1550-1632), who was granted meritorious subject status for donating horses to the government.



The stone child attendant at Kim Daejin’s grave, previously only seen in photographs, is now recognized as the oldest known stone figure of its kind. *Child Attendant with Hands Joined Together* was discovered in two pieces, buried in the rubble of the grave’s protective wall. According to Jeju folk belief, these images represent the earth spirit and if broken are not to be moved. Instead, they are supposed to be buried on their original site or incorporated into the stone wall around the grave, and this particular stone child attendant is a case in point. After the statue was donated by a descendant of

Kim Daejin, Jeju National Museum Curator Bu Hyeseon and Gimhae National Museum Curator Kim Jongu teamed up on its restoration. They labored long in the hot summer weather to wash the pieces thoroughly before adhering them together with resin, bringing *Child Attendant with Hands Joined Together* back to its original appearance^{Fig. 1}.

Some of the Stone Arhats from the Changnyeongsa Temple Site at Yeongwol Cross the Waters

A number of the five hundred stone arhats

originally on the Changnyeongsa Temple Site at Yeongwol have made their first trip to Jeju Island. The rock pillars on the sheer cliff at Hallasan Mountain’s Yeongsil giam is also called referred to as “the 500 arhats,” suggesting an unseen connection between these statues from the mainland and the island. The Yeongwol stone arhats were displayed in a special exhibition at the Chuncheon National Museum called *Five Hundred Arhats of Changnyeongsa Temple Site: Reflection of Our Hearts* in 2018. They subsequently were shown in Seoul and Busan in 2019; in Sydney, Australia and Jeonju in 2022; and in Gangneung in 2023, deeply moving many viewers at each event. Thus, the special exhibit was newly organized for Jeju this time.

What stories might be elicited from the 32 arhat figures transported to Jeju with the assistance of the Chuncheon National Museum? Section 2, “A Familiar Smile: The Stone Arhats from Yeongwol,” was designed to express the message through “dialogue” and “waves.” Metaphorical spaces for dialogue between the stone child attendants of Jeju Island and the stone arhats of Yeongwol were arranged inside an open exhibition hall with free-flowing visitor traffic ^{Fig. 2}. For example, *Child Attendant Holding Scepter* and *Arhat Holding the Wish-fulfilling Jewel* stand face to face, as if talking to one another. The stone child attendant is depicted with his hands together in a submissive posture and a smile on his face, while the arhat’s body is leaning forward as if in response to what his counterpart is saying. Displayed on a screen behind the stone figures is a scene of the waves ebbing and flowing at Jeju’s Seongsan ilchulbong (Sunrise Peak).

After seeing the meeting between a stone attendant and arhat on Jeju Island, the viewer’s gaze will shift toward the arhats brought from the Changnyeongsa Temple Site at Yeongwol. The statues are placed on stands of various heights and colors, representing their riding the



Fig. 3 Yeongwol Arhats in Conversation

waves of the South Sea to reach this island, in the fashion of Bodhidharma when he crossed the Yangzi River on a reed. Some of the arhat statues are standing alone while others appear seated in groups as if in conversation^{Fig. 3}. Perhaps endless stories will well up in the heart of each visitor who peers at these stone human figures with their rich facial expressions. The subtle fragrance of coniferous forests along with the sounds of windchimes and breaking waves are piped into the exhibition hall to enhance the viewing experience. It is hoped that visitors will feel total engagement in the moment of Selflessness, where the stone and person become one like the *Arhat Seating Behind a Rock*^{Fig. 4}.



Fig. 4 Arhat Seating Behind a Rock

Finishing Touches of Modern Art to Complete the Heart’s Journey

The Jeju stone child attendants which console deceased souls on behalf of the living and the Yeongwol arhat figures that answer the various prayers of the faithful. Both of these stone figure types were sculpted to soothe the anxieties felt by mortal humans. Thus, *Surrounded by Solace: Stone Child Attendants from Jeju and Stone Arhats from Yeongwol* is also an exhibition that follows the journey of the heart.

The final section of the exhibit, “Old Stories Retold Today,” ^{Fig. 5} presents stories of the heart expressed by contemporary Jeju artists. Artist Hyun Chung-Aen treats the human heart as a temple metaphor in his *Western Sea at a Temple*

(2021), which expresses the colors of emotions that unfold beyond the heart. *Space in the Past* #001· #002 (2012) by Park Hunil captures in a photograph a slice of life in a windswept field of silver grass. A stone child attendant called *About a Wish* (2023) was newly carved out of trachyte by Kim Namheung specifically for this exhibition.

These works put the finishing touches on journey of the heart that started from stone human figures. The exhibition closes with the phrases “the time spent by stone people, the time spent by living people, and the time spent by you here today.” We invite you to take a day to join us on a journey of the heart with the stone human figures at the Jeju National Museum.



Fig. 1 Reconnecting the Pieces of Child Attendant with Hands Joined Together



Fig. 2 Conversation Between Stone Child Attendants from Jeju and Stone Arhats from Yeongwol



Fig. 5 Epilogue: Old Stories Retold Today

WOLJEONGSA TEMPLE ON SACRED ODAESAN MOUNTAIN : A STORY THAT UNFOLDS AT A TEMPLE IN THE MOUNTAINS

Special Exhibition Held in Conjunction with Gangwon Forestry Exhibition 2023
September 26, 2023-December 25, 2023

The Chuncheon National Museum opened *Woljeongsa Temple on Sacred Odaesan Mountain: Stories that Unfold at a Temple in the Mountains* inside its special exhibition gallery on September 26. The exhibit highlights the unique characteristics of Odaesan Mountain and shares the Buddhist cultural significance that the mountain embraces as well as its value for people today. On display are a total of 57 items important to the cultural heritage of the Gangwon region, including one National Treasure, seven Treasures, one National Folk Cultural Heritages designated by the central government as well as thirteen Cultural Heritages designated by Gangwon Special Autonomous Province.

“Odaesan Mountain is the most sublime and beloved of places, unlike anything seen anywhere else.”

– from a travelogue by Jeong Sihon (1625–1707)

Reliquary of the Octagonal Nine-story Stone Pagoda at Woljeongsa Temple
Goryeo dynasty
Gold, Copper, Crystal
Woljeongsa Museum Treasure



Spotlight on Odaesan Mountain

The focal point of the exhibition, which is being held in conjunction with Gangwon Forestry Exhibition 2023, is nature perceived through Buddhist religious beliefs, i.e. stories that sprung up among the mountain summits. Odaesan Mountain, which consists of five peaks of similar size spread out like tines on a rake, is located along the Taebaek Mountain Range that forms the backbone of the Korean Peninsula. Odaesan Mountain lies deep in the layered mountains of Gangwon-do, amidst a natural landscape that leaves beholders in awe. As such, the area has long been considered a sacred and pristine space.

Buddhist-related tales set in mysterious nature relate how persons with various aspirations were summoned to assemble deep in the mountains. The *Overlooked Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms (Samgungnyusa)* notes that Odaesan Mountain was the most auspicious of all the famous mountains in the land, and that the Dharma of the Buddha had been flourishing there for ages.

Various Buddhist centers remain on the five heights that surround the Odaesan area. The Silla monk Jajang (590-658) is said to have brought relics (*sarira*) of the historical Buddha back when he returned from China. He founded Woljeongsa Temple (Lunar Essence Temple) in the center of this area, and the relics are preserved

there in a special shrine called Jeongmyeol (the Jeweled Palace of Tranquil Extinction). According to legend, Sangwonsa Temple (Upper Courtyard Temple) is where Joseon King Sejo (r. 1455-68) encountered the Child Manjushri (Bodhisattva of Wisdom). There are also stories and recollections about each of the hermitages dedicated to the 50,000 Buddha and Bodhisattva incarnations dwelling on the five heights.

Stories that Unfold in the Mountains

The special exhibition sheds light on the history, culture, legends, and religious beliefs regarding Odaesan Mountain. It is organized into three

sections and begins with a video presentation of a trail leading into the quiet and beautiful fir forest deep inside Odaesan Mountain. The sighing breeze and tolling temple bells are heard through the trees, while the forest trails are so ancient that they are mentioned in travelogues by Odaesan Mountain visitors going back to Joseon times. The audience is taken leisurely along while contemplating the Gangwon mountains, where timeless Buddhism and fantastical tales are ensconced amidst nature’s sounds, and suddenly the temple comes into view.

Section I delves into the origin of the religious beliefs surrounding Odaesan Mountain, recounting the story of Vinaya Master Jajang and examining the Buddhist practice of relic worship. The topics covered include the history of Odaesan Mountain, Woljeongsa Temple, and the Jeweled Palace of Tranquil Extinction, where the Buddha’s *sarira* have been enshrined. Reliquaries excavated from an octagonal nine-story stone pagoda at Woljeongsa Temple symbolizes the flowering of Buddhist culture during Goryeo and represents this particular cult of Buddhism.

Woljeongsa Temple
Artist unknown
Joseon dynasty, 19th century
Light color on paper



Front View of the Exhibition Gallery for Section I



Front View of the Exhibition Gallery for Section II

Section II is Buddha and Bodhisattvas Dwelling in the Mountains, where visitors ascend to the summit to encounter the pinnacle of the religious faith. Odaesan Mountain is considered a sacred ground inhabited by Manjushri, the bodhisattva who symbolizes the highest form of wisdom. The Joseon royal family supported the monasteries and hermitages on Odaesan Mountain, including Woljeongsa and Sangwonsa Temple. The incarnation of Manjushri on Odaesan Mountain appears as a young boy who was said to have cured King Sejo of a skin ailment.

The *bokjangmul* (relics and votive objects placed inside statues) taken from Buddhist statues and shown in the illustrated video were created to manifest in reality the contents of tales transmitted orally over the centuries. In particular, the Korean traditional jackets (*jeogori*) once hidden inside a wooden seated Child Manjusri and wooden seated Manjusri Bodhisattva at Sangwonsa Temple have been taken outside the Odaesan Mountain area for the first time in order to be shown in this special exhibition. Visitors to the five heights that spread

out like a lotus blossom beyond Woljeongsa and Sangwonsa Temple will encounter Joseon period statues that symbolize the worship of fifty thousand Buddha and Bodhisattvas incarnations within the Odaesan Mountain perimeter. Section III, Tales Made Together, Beyond the Mountains, is an opportunity to view the broader landscape from atop the Odaesan Mountain heights. Odaesan Mountain is not just home to Buddhist culture; copies of the *Annals of the Joseon dynasty (Sillok)*, which represent the record-keeping practices of Joseon,



Donation Requests for the Rebuilding of Sangwonsa Temple
Joseon dynasty, 1464 or later
Ink on paper
Woljeongsa Museum
National Treasure



Plain jeogori-style Jacket from the Wooden Seated Child Manjusri at Sangwonsa Temple
Early Joseon
Plain silk, unlined garment
Woljeongsa Museum
Treasure



Jeogori-style Jacket with Decorative Blocks Attached, from the Wooden Seated Manjusri Bodhisattva at Sangwonsa
Early Joseon
Plain silk & patternless silk brocade, unlined garment
Woljeongsa Museum
National Folk Cultural Heritage



Front View of the Exhibition Gallery for Section III

were preserved here as well. From this elevated vantage point, observers can identify traces of the Odaesan Mountain Repository, and when they shift their gaze across the mountains, they can see Buddhist events taking place with monks from other regions. Woljeongsa Temple, the head temple for District 4 of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, has in its jurisdiction temples and hermitages in the southern part of the province. Buddhist cultural properties from several regions of Gangwon-do that are introduced in this special exhibition have been preserved in the Woljeongsa Museum collection. They reveal the network involving temples all across the mountains. Also on display in Section III are the writings of Venerable Hanam (1876-1951) and Venerable Tanheo (1913-1983), prominent monks who were instrumental in recovering temples that had been destroyed in war.

The exhibition ends with an essay by Venerable Tanheo, in which he discusses the meaning of the blooming lotus in Buddhism. He explains that the expression “The Lotus Springs Forth within Fire” (*Hwa ri saeng yeon*) refers to Woljeongsa Temple, the center of Gangwon-do Buddhist culture, that reemerged as a major temple complex after enduring great hardship. Behind the resolute will that the Master shows in his extraordinary writing, the reader can

discover the true value of the Buddhism imbued in the Odaesan Mountain terrain. The mountains of Gangwon-do are not isolated areas but rather a place where potential abounds. Moreover, the mountains are a space that shapes the identities of its human inhabitants. The “Odaesan” placed in front of the phrase “Odaesan Woljeongsa” is much more than a simple geographical name. In addition to being a physical space, Odaesan Mountain implies temple history and culture as well as mythology and religious faith. The present special exhibition provides visitors with an opportunity to appreciate anew the value of Gangwon-do Buddhist culture that has been molded within the mountainous environment.



The Lotus Springs Forth within Fire, Written by Venerable Tanheo
Modern period
Jagwangsa Temple in Daejeon



The Three Bodhisattvas, from Guryongsa Temple
Baek Gi, et. al.
Joseon dynasty, 1727
Woljeongsa Museum
Treasure

THE PATH TO EMPATHY: THE SENSORY LEARNING SPACE, OGAM

“When all the people in the world lie asleep, are trapped in the dark,
and even their dreams fall asleep, don’t be afraid of the dawn when you wake up alone.
Instead, be the one who takes a walk to the stars. Be the person who creates hope.”



Congratulatory Performance Upon the Opening of the OGAM

A beautiful harmony resounded inside the National Museum of Korea Education Center on the afternoon of September 14, 2023. After more than a year of preparation, the Sensory Learning Space, OGAM was officially opened. The Raphael Chorus, a choir consisting of blind vocalists, sang the above song, which was unexpectedly added to the six on the original program. The concert was held just after the singers had experienced the OGAM, a new multiple sensory experiential space completed to address feedback provided by participants in a pilot education program last July. Congratulations and thanks were shared among the many people who had worked together to create the OGAM, from the planning stages to test operation. The harmony the singers achieved by listening to one another’s voices filled the hall and moved all who were present.

The OGAM at the National Museum of Korea is the new “exhibition learning space,” with special sensory experiences and activities designed

specifically for persons with severe visual impairments or total blindness. Starting from a state of limited visual information, eight themes and various sensory activities are presented in a connected series. The first program, called “Up Close and Personal with Two Pensive Bodhisattva Statues,” provides the opportunity for visitors to jointly experience these two National Treasures of Korea and share their thoughts and impressions about the famous statues. So far, most of the multiple sensory programs have been consisted in parallel to experience various objects and themes. Instead, the OGAM provides a separate space with progressive and integrated experiences for visually impaired visitors, following subthemes organized along a series of stages that build on one larger theme. An audio guide system assists the personalized activity through elaborately designed learning experience scenarios.



To Sense through Touching



To Sense through Fragrance



To Sense through Hearing



To Sense through Sharing

The audio guide of OGAM operates semi-autonomously, playing back the recorded narration for each station to match the pace at which the individual participant moves forward. The participants just need to touch their own mobile device screen to confirm the designated tags on the wall as they move along the course. The audio guide is delicately equipped with sensory activities and walking guidance performed for each section based on the scenarios that help participants to move from place to place. The volume and speed of audio commentary were adjusted through repeated simulations so that several participants could experience it one after another.

The braille decoding rate for visually impaired persons is very low, and the information that can be obtained by tactile sensation alone is very limited. In order to compensate for these constraints, audio guides have commonly been used to convey information unilaterally. These issues

prompted the OGAM to expand the depth and breadth of the participants' experiences by programming the audio sets to pose questions that accompany the user's tactile movements, thereby stimulating curiosity and imagination. In addition, various multisensory activity items were designed such as the scent inspired by Two Pensive Bodhisattva Statues (To sense through fragrance) and accompanying soundtracks in consideration of visually impaired persons (To sense through sound).

The stage where the participants encounter the two Bodhisattva statues, which are made of almost the same materials as the originals and are just about as large, is a moment (To sense all together) made complete by an integrated understanding of all sensory activities that have occurred previously.

The last stage is the point (To sense through sharing) at which the

participants summarize their personal understanding of the Pensive Bodhisattva Statues using a smart device. They are able to share their impressions with one another and empathize through the use of the latest digital tactile display in real time.

The OGAM began as an effort to provide an enjoyable museum experience for our visually impaired guests, but was completed as a sensory experience space that all people can enjoy. We all have slightly different ways of experiencing things, but eventually realize that we share much in common in the ways that we empathize and communicate with each other. We hope that the OGAM will be an inclusive learning space that is accessible to all, regardless of disability, age, or nationality.

*OGAM: Five Sense in Korean



The Sensory Learning Space, OGAM

SHALL WE PLAY TOGETHER IN THE WORLD OF ARTIFACTS?



Each year the National Museum of Korea signs up mentors in their twenties to lead primary, middle, and high school student groups and describe the exhibitions to them. Given the narrow age difference, the mentors are able to approach the students more closely. They employ fresh and spontaneous ways to explain the items on display, providing an enjoyable experience for the young museum visitors. Let's meet four of these youthful mentors, who come equipped with cheerful ideas and animated portrayals of the subject matter:

| Kim Suyeon

I am the only one of the mentors in this program who did not major in the relative subjects at university. I started out majoring in Business Administration, but as a kid I was very interested in culture, fine arts, and history, and I visited museums often. Then I saw the notice that the Museum was looking for mentors, felt strong urge to do it, and applied without much thought. And to my surprise, I was actually selected!

After being chosen to be one of the young mentors, I discovered many aspects of the curator's profession. After listening to them, I understood that I must become more interested in the items on display in order to inject genuine feeling into my explanations, and that I had to further my knowledge in related fields. It also made me realize I needed to adopt a sense of responsibility. So, I resolved to ensure my explanations would give the audience a deeper understanding of both the specific features and general information related to the artifacts in the exhibitions. After I started working as a guide, there would be times when the students had lots of questions. It felt rewarding, as their questions were a sign that their curiosity had been raised.

There are moments when the students express surprise while hearing my commentaries on the museum relics. They may remark that the items are so beautiful, or express amazement when they learn about the historical background or creation process. Such reactions are particularly common when viewing the celadon ewer in the shape of a Daoist transcendent. If you have the chance, I urge you to have a look.



Kim Suyeon

certain areas were clearly difficult to understand. On the other hand, the fact he had such curiosity made me feel good. Perhaps, this sense of satisfaction is why I am steadily growing to enjoy docent work and am always looking forward to the next time I will meet the students.

| Kim Dowa

I am majoring in Archaeology as Interdisciplinary Science in the Department of Cultural Properties Management at the Korea National University of Cultural Heritage, established by the Cultural Heritage Administration. Walking around the National Museum of Korea as a young mentor has been great fun and most gratifying. One day I was leading a group of eight middle schoolers, and one of them was cause for concern. The child seemed to have some intellectual challenges, and as I continued to deliver the commentary I had prepared for that day, he did not seem to be grasping any of it. Thinking everyone should understand and enjoy the artifacts on display, I sought the opinions of the other students: “What do you say we try focusing our attention on the experiential exhibits?”

Since they all agreed, I rearranged our schedule, and a video presentation and tactile exhibit became the main part of the visit. In the process. Everyone

| Lee Sojeong

I am majoring in History with a minor in Classical Chinese. Therefore, my fields of choice have been firmly established, and I mainly lead tours on either the documents, or the calligraphic works and paintings. However, pictures, writings, and documents lack the magnificent appearance that many of the other artifacts have. So the students do not pay much attention to them, which can lead to many disappointing moments. Therefore, I have worked to create my own style of explaining historical facts in a fun way, and I have tried many ways to make facilitate the understanding of difficult subject matter. You have to understand the special characteristics of individual relics if you want to arouse the listeners’ interest. Take for example, when the students see the stone engravings of the king’s calligraphy they may ask, “Why is the king’s writing preserved in stone rather than on paper?”

One day I had finished up the docent tour and was leading the group back to the assembly area. One of the students came up to me as said: “Teacher, I wish the people who died would come back to life; I have so many questions to ask them.” His cute remark made me laugh inside. I had tried my best to explain things to a young elementary school student but was concerned since



Lee Sojeong



Kim Dowa

was able to have an enjoyable guided tour. That particular day remains the most memorable of the tours I have led to date. I’m not one who has to strictly go by the book, and so I changed the schedule to suit the inclinations of the students. Sometimes, my decisions reflect my own motives. I want to show the students the exhibits that I personally like the most, allowing me to explain them with great enthusiasm. Think of it as my suggesting, “why don’t we enjoy the relics together.”

The exhibition hall I frequent the most is the Donated Collection Gallery. My favorite relic is the bronze helmet awarded to Son Gijeong (1912-2002) for winning the marathon at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. I throw a lot of questions at the students when I am explaining relics that I like. Sometimes, there are no answers. A case in point is the Gilt-bronze Pensive Bodhisattva statues, which have so many mysterious aspects. Yet, the students’ questions stimulate our interaction. I intend to continue conducting my tours in this manner.

| Bak Sejin

I’m an Art student majoring in Ceramics and Glass as well. So I go to the ceramics galleries often (laughs). At any rate, it’s field I like and know something about. And I have been studying it in greater depth in order

to be a guide. Go to the galleries for ceramics, and the National Treasure class pieces are displayed individually, as they represent the Museum’s superstars. The numerous difficulties in their creation are what gives them their superstar status. Take, for example, the prunus vase, which is broad at the shoulders and narrows steadily towards the base. This genre can indeed be described as truly difficult to make. The form may collapse during the throwing process and many of these pieces will crash during firing. The students listen attentively when I discuss the artifacts while explaining the production process. Their understanding is facilitated when my presentation includes details such as what makes the shape so marvelous and how the shape is created.

There was one elementary school student who was listening to my explanations with far more attention than his peers were. He was so extraordinarily interested in the relic that he excitedly fired off a stream of questions like: “Where was this thing discovered?” “Who preserved it?” and “How was it restored?” I was at a loss to satisfy him and did not even know where to start my answers. His insistent questions showed that my explanations were lacking, but the experience was truly gratifying nonetheless.



Bak Sejin

NMK HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2023

To Be a Museum Open for All

The National Museum of Korea, the nation's representative museum, is striving to build "smart exhibition halls that are barrier-free for users," creating viewing environments that exclude no one. During 2023, a total of four kiosks were installed next inside permanent exhibitions (two on the 1st floor and one each on the 2nd and 3rd floors), providing guidance services customized for specific disability types. Of special interest among these is Korea's first-ever prototype of an AI-based sign language service for deaf persons. Moreover, the exhibition information written in large lettering for persons with impaired vision, the tactile maps, braille direction signs, tactile exhibit items, and audio guide maps have all been well received by visitors.

Recently, more visitors have given favorable feedback on how the exhibitions are easy to understand and interesting. This is seen as resulting from an "exhibition terminology improvement project" conducted in cooperation with the Federation of Korean Language and Cultural Center, an organization specialized in Korean language matters. The project's findings are reflected in the style of language used in four special exhibitions, including *Pinnacle of Propriety: The Uigwe, Records of the State Rites of the Joseon dynasty* (Nov. 1, 2022-Mar. 19, 2023) and *Companions on the Eternal Journey—Earthenware Figurines and Vessels from Ancient Korea* (May 26-Oct. 9, 2023), as well as in the Ancient Greece and Rome Gallery inside the permanent exhibitions.

In 2023, the NMK continued the job of being a public venue that leaves nobody out, opening a sensory learning space called OGAM in September. This new facility was specially designed to accommodate the tactile experience and activity needs of persons with severe visual impairments or total blindness, offering them a progressive and integrated series of experiences. The audio guide system is intuitive, and visitors may take in the displays comfortably at their own pace. As such, the NMK has taken a step closer to its goal of truly being "a museum for all" in society, disabled and nondisabled alike.

The Museum, a Playground for the Young Generation

Early in 2023, the hashtags “#open run” (i.e., rush to get in) and “#sold out” appeared beside “#National Museum of Korea” on the social networking service (SNS). This phenomenon reflected the public frenzy to purchase tickets online for *When Six Centuries of Beauty in the Habsburg Empire* (Oct. 25, 2022-Mar. 15, 2023). After the online sale was over, lines would form from 8:00 or 9:00 AM to purchase tickets at the Museum, a most unusual sight indeed. People shared their personal stories on whether they managed to buy tickets and even tallied their “nth visit” to the exhibit. Thus, Koreans in their 20s and 30s considered the effort to see the exhibit as a kind of game and a challenge while taking their museum visiting habits into cyberspace and spreading it rapidly there.

This sort of popularity continued with *Masterpieces from the National Gallery, London* (Jun. 2-Oct. 9, 2023). Impressively, of the people purchasing tickets online, twenty-eight percent were in their 20s, twenty-nine percent in their 30s and twenty-five percent in their 40s.*

The influx of young adults, referred to in Korea as the “MZ Generation” (i.e., the Millennials and Gen Z), as well as the popularity of the special exhibitions are the result of the attention and hard work the NMK has devoted toward attracting younger audiences. Last year, the Museum teamed up with the TBWA KOREA Junior Board,** led by advertising guru Park Woonghyeon, to conduct a project called “Heart

Restoration Center.” Following the concept that the museum provides solace to those with a broken heart, the program aimed at expanding the emotional communication channel with members of the MZ Generation. Would-be visitors were given recommended routes for visiting every nook and cranny of museum along with 331 different kinds of emotional messages.

The 2023 Youth Generation Idea Competition was held in July, targeting people between the ages of 19 and 34. The contestants submitted their ideas for special activities and events designed to make the Museum a fun destination in 2030. One of the more than 200 suggestions was the NMK Live a “God-life” program, which ran in October and November 2023. Among the most popular activities were the “Lifetime Test,” which was inspired by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MNTI), and the NMK’s Four Cuts, that lets participants snap photos and directly show them off on social media.

*Based on personal data provided by purchasers at online sellers (Naver, Ticketlink).

**Community service program that offers opportunities for university students who aspire to become advertising people to get involved in actual advertising campaigns and show their creative capabilities.

The Power of Korea’s Cultural Heritage within K-Museum

Diverse news stories concerning the National Museum of Korea have been shared on social

networking services, and the NMK became a so-called “hot place” (popular place to be) last summer. The Pensive Bodhisattva (National Treasure) and the global character brand IPX (previously Line Friends) came together for Family Month (May), delighting museum goers with a ten-meter tall brown bear sitting like the Pensive Bodhisattva in the outdoor exhibition area.

In addition, the globally renowned K-Pop has triggered interest in K-Culture generally, and the number of foreign visitors to the National Museum of Korea was up 155% year-on-year in 2023. Meanwhile, the NMK has been busy organizing overseas exhibitions and introducing items from its collection to the global audience.

The Support Program for Korean Galleries at Overseas Museum was greatly expanded in 2022, and the decision was made in May 2023 to add six new museums to the program, improving their Korea Gallery, sponsoring special exhibitions there, and hiring specialized personnel. The Korea Gallery at the British Museum was renovated in 2023, and *Perfectly Imperfect: Korean Buncheong Ceramics* was opened at the Denver Art Museum (Dec. 3, 2023-December 7, 2025). Members of the American modern art scene have judged the uniquely Korean style of ceramics presented at this special exhibition to be rather unrefined and folksy yet exuding spontaneous and modernist aesthetics.

The NMK’s educational activities have also garnered attention as part of K-Culture. In 2023, a collaborative project was begun involving foreign educational institutions and

the California State University, San Bernadino campus. Educational materials developed by the NMK are to be used in courses for the teaching staff at participating institutions, the general public, and students at the Osher Life Learning Institute. For the first year, the Museum delivered Yut game kits with a Kim Hongdo genre painting theme for educational programs on Korea.

The Museum’s “Muse” line of cultural products was also enthusiastically received, with many items bought up in a frenzy during 2023. Miniature Pensive Bodhisattvas were introduced on Jinny’s Kitchen, a popular TV show on tvN, and it attracted so much attention from the MZ crowd that the celadon version was sold out in just a week. The popularity of Muse was confirmed when the pop-up shop inside the Lotte Department Store Main Store was visited by some 40,000 people in a single week in May.

Cultural Heritage DNA Firmly Rooted Nationwide

During the year, a long list of special exhibitions were opened with great success throughout the country, interweaving the NMK collection items with specific story lines: *Return of Cheonma* (May 4-Jul. 16) at the Gyeongju National Museum, *Love and Cherish* (Sept. 15-Dec. 10) at the Gwangju National Museum, *Capturing Treasured Moments in Paintings* (Aug. 1-Oct. 29) at the Jeonju National Museum, Hyeonpan, *Hanging Boards of Joseon: Our Ancestors’ Minds Engraved on Wood* (Nov. 7-Feb. 12, 2024) at the

Daegu National Museum, *Great Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje 3.0: Burning Incense* (Sept. 23-Feb. 12, 2024) at the Buyeo National Museum, *The Funeral of King Muryeong: Succession to the Throne of Baekje Kingdom 1500 Years Ago* (Sept. 19-Mar. 10, 2024) at the Gongju National Museum, *The Age of Gunpowder in Joseon II* (Dec. 5-Mar. 10, 2024) at the Jinju National Museum, *The Elegance of Masterful Artifacts* (May 2, 2023~) at the Cheongju National Museum, *Gaya Emigrants who Crossed the Sea* (Apr. 28- Jun. 25) at the Gimhae National Museum, *Surrounded by Solace: Stone Child Attendants from Jeju and Stone Arhats from Yeongwol* (Oct. 13-Feb. 18, 2024) at the Jeju National Museum, *Woljeongsa Temple on Sacred Odaesan Mountain* (Sept. 26-Dec. 25) at the Chuncheon National Museum, *Jar Coffins: Sanctuaries Made from Clay* (Jun. 27-Oct. 23) at the Naju National Museum, and *Gunsangundo, a Castle on the Sea* (Dec. 12-Apr. 28, 2024) at the Iksan National Museum. Both the overall historical background and the features of each local region were carefully considered in staging these events, which attracted wide audiences.

Meanwhile, the Jinju National Museum used research results on Joseon handheld firearms to produce the video presentation *The Age of Gunpowder in Joseon* for YouTube, accumulating 5.27 million views over three seasons and demonstrating an excellent way forward for presenting Museum contents. At the same time, the special exhibition series A Collector’s Invitation ran at the Daegu National Museum Apr. 11-Jul. 9 and the Cheongju National

Museum Jul. 25-Oct. 29, providing more people around the country with a chance to see pieces from the late Samsung Chairman Lee Kun-Hee’s massive personal collection, which was donated to the NMK in 2021.

Aiming To Stand Tall in 2024

Museum visitors have zeroed in on the Ancient Greece and Rome Gallery, which was newly opened in June as part of the NMK’s permanent exhibitions. The Gallery has 126 items on display for viewers’ pleasure.

The National Museum of Korea is looking forward to a robust start in the new year with the recent opening of two exciting special exhibitions: *Wise and Unbiased, Royal Philosophy in Paintings and Calligraphy of the Joseon dynasty* (Dec. 8-March 10, 2024) and *Tree & Serpent, Early Buddhist Art in India* (Dec. 22-Apr. 14, 2024). The Donated Collection Gallery opens as part of the NMK’s permanent exhibitions in 2024, providing a single venue for introducing the noble spirit of the donors who wished to share their treasured items with society.

NMK Visitors Top 4 Million in 2023

The NMK had a record 4 million-plus visitors last year, 13 percent above the previous annual high, set in 2014. A special gift was presented to Sam Nicoles from Washington D.C., the 4,000,000th person to pass through the door.

Six Centuries of Beauty in the Habsburg Empire drew 320,000 people, of whom 170,000 came during 2023. Meanwhile, a total of 360,000 people visited the NMK to see *Masterpieces from the National Gallery, London*, the first domestic showing of items from that institution. Moreover, the Donated Collection Gallery was renovated to serve as both exhibition hall and lounge, and the Ancient Greece and Rome Gallery was newly installed inside the World Art gallery, helping to attract repeat visitors.

More than 170,000 foreigners visited the NMK in 2023, indicating a growing interest in the Museum and traditional Korean culture by people from overseas. The NMK’s continued organization of overseas exhibitions and ongoing support for Korea Galleries at museums outside Korea has elevated global recognition of things Korean, while tourism PR videos featuring the popular boy band BTS have also had an effect.

Meanwhile, various PR campaigns and special events have been run to pique the interest of youngsters. For example, a jumbo-sized brown bear posing in a Pensive Bodhisattva posture was set up outside the Museum to celebrate Family Month in May, and the NMK “Living One’s Best Life” program Oct. 25-Nov. 18.

The NMK’s viewing environment has steadily improved since 2022 to give people throughout society a chance to enjoy their visits to the full. These efforts include various customized exhibition guide services for disabled persons and the new Ogam cultural experience space to assist blind persons.

2023 Symposium at NMK Children’s Museum

The Children’s Museum Symposium on November 21 to seek the direction for establishing education programs that promote the understanding of and provide proper spaces for children with developmental disorders. This was the first stage in an effort to establish facilities where such kids can visit without barriers. While the overall number of Korea’s young people has been decreasing in recent years, those with developmental disabilities has been increasing, and children now make up the largest segment of the disabled population in the country.

Presentations were given at the symposium on four topics: “Children with Developmental Disabilities and the Children’s Museum,” “Establishment of Spaces Friendly to Autistic Children,” “Education for Children with Developmental Disabilities,” and “Education at the Children’s Museum for Children with Developmental Disabilities.” Joining in the discussions were National Assembly Member Kim Yeji, who is involved in activities for ensuring nondiscriminatory educational environments for students with disabilities, and Dream Whale Playground Parent Cooperative Director Im Shinhwa, who works with parents of children with disabilities and children without disabilities.

More Items from the Late Lee Kun-Hee Collection Catalogued, Available on NMK Homepage

The family of the late Samsung Chairman Lee Kun-Hee donated his vast and diverse personal collection of cultural heritage items, ranging from prehistoric to modern times. Four additional volumes of this collection catalogue were recently published.

Vol. 10 features a jade investiture book inscribed in 1851 with the bestowal of an honorific title on Queen Sinjeong (1808-1890). This, the earliest extant set of jade tablets produced in relation to her honorific titles, was thought to have been lost during the French invasion of Ganghwa-do in 1866 but resurfaced with the donation of the Chairman Lee collection. Half of the Buddhist statuary in Vol. 11, including the Gilt-bronze Standing Bodhisattva Triad (National Treasure), are from the Three Kingdoms and Unified Silla periods, providing important resources for research on ancient Buddhist sculpture.

Vol. 12 presents wood and lacquer crafts and handicrafts of other materials used in everyday life. Most were made from the 18th century onward, while the sheer variety and number of furniture items for the home is noteworthy.

Vol. 13 records Korean stone sculptures from Unified Silla to the modern period. The 710 items from Joseon are particularly valuable for researchers covering the period.

The cataloguing of the donated items from the late Chairman’s collection began in 2022 and is scheduled to end in 2025 with a total of 17 volumes. The NMK continues its basic research on these items, laying the groundwork for in-depth studies and helping to spread the word on the value of Korea’s cultural heritage and the social significance of donating such treasures. PDF files of the donated items are available on the NMK webpage.

The First Battle at Jinjuseong Fortress Movie Remade in 3D after 20 Years

The Jinju National Museum, the only museum in Korea devoted exclusively to the Imjin War (1592-98) released *The First Battle at Jinju Fortress* in its 3D movie theater on November 22, the 431st anniversary of the epic Korean victory over Japanese forces. The remake uses graphics developed for the original 2003 version along with a reinterpretation and new scenarios to enhance the realism and add to the tragic beauty of the story. Great effort was made to reflect research findings on Joseon period firearms and assist public understanding of the Museum’s brand and exhibits. The portrayal of the soldiers’ weapons and style of fighting was also designed to elevate the sense of realism and show the tactical and strategic sides of the battle.

The Jinju National Museum has produced three 3D video presentations since 2003. In 2020, *The Age of Gunpowder in Joseon* was released on YouTube, and realistic contents program called *Seungja-Chongtong: Flame of Victory* came out. Going forward, the Museum will continue to offer Imjin War history materials that are suitable for both the general public and specialist viewers.

EXUDE BLUISH-GREEN CELADON ENERGY AS THE YEAR OF THE BLUE DRAGON DAWNS IN 2024

You may find these items offline at the National Museum Shop and online at www.muds.or.kr.

Celadon Products Ready for 2024



2024 National Museum of Korea Calendar
Size 261 x 213 mm
Material paper
Price KRW 15,000

This calendar features twelve famous Goryeo celadon masterpieces to enjoy in 2024. Try feeling the blue energy of a new celadon with each passing month.



Celadon Ballpoint Pen Set (of three)
Size 15 x 145 mm
Materials (oil-based ink pen) PS, ABS, polyacetal and PVC (for the attached figures)
Price KRW 14,000

This set of ballpoint pens with oil-based ink feature eye-catching celadon figures. These writing instruments feel nice in the hand; the perfect item for people who have made a New Year’s resolution to keep a diary.

Celadon Energy on the Dining Table



Celadon Bowl Set (of two)
Size 130 x 30 mm, 120 x 60 mm
Materials ceramic
Price KRW 45,000

This set includes two floral-shaped bowls, one footed and the other unfooted. They feature a subdued celadon tone and are well suited for a wide range of food items. At the same time, they add a sense of elegance to the dining room setting.



Goryeo Celadon Drinking Cup Set (of 3)
Size 53 x 53 x 53 mm
Materials ceramic
Price KRW 35,000

This set of drinking cups is inspired by the sensibilities of the Goryeo people, who loved and longed for nature. Each cup is decorated with a pattern from a Goryeo celadon masterpiece, allowing you to fully appreciate the special allure of these famous works.

Celadon Items as Constant Companions



Celadon Keyrings (3 styles)
Size about 65 x 115 mm
Materials polyester
Price KRW 20,000 each

Celadon relics have been reimagined as soft and cute stuffed keyrings. The small keyring lets you stay close to the celadon tradition wherever you happen to go during your day. They come in three types: (1) peony-shaped bottle with chrysanthemum pattern, (2) prunis vase with cloud & crane pattern, and (3) ewer with landscape scene.



Celadon Incense Burner-shaped Earrings
Size 13 x 15 mm
Materials fresh-water pearl, jade, silver-plated brass
Price KRW 54,000

The earrings were inspired by the Celadon Incense Burner with Openwork Auspicious-character Design Lid. The incense burner frame is made of metal, while natural fresh-water pearls and jade have been used to project the celadon color tone. These lovely ornaments will look great with any outfit.

Interior Accessories to Enhance the Everyday Ambience



Goryeo Celadon Art Objects in the Study
Size 85 x 45 x 127 mm
Material ceramic
Price KRW 45,000

The styling of these art objects was inspired by the Goryeo celadons seen in Joseon period still-life screen paintings of shelves full of books and other scholar’s accoutrements. They also offer utility, doubling as a diffuser holder. The unique shapes are sure to lighten up the room.



Wind Chime Mobile with Celadon Clapper (4 styles)
Size 40 x 40 x 200 mm
Materials PMMA, bronze
Price KRW 28,000

This wind chime mobile features designs taken from celadon ceramics. Peonies, trumpet lilies, and clouds have been reinterpreted in charming ways. When moved by the breeze, the bells produce a wondrous soft tone.