



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KOREA

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE VOL.67 SPRING 2024

NATIONAL MUSEUM *of* KOREA

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Boating to the Peach Blossom Spring
An Jungsik (1861-1919)
1915
143.5x50.7cm
Bequest of Lee Hong-kun

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KOREA
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE VOL.67 SPRING 2024

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NOTE TO READERS
Throughout the magazine, East Asian names are listed in the order of family name followed by first name. The related information of image is given in the following order: title, period or produced date, artist, material, dimensions. Items from other institutions are classified by their collection names.



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CONTENTS

4	SPECIAL FEATURE The Spirit of Goguryeo Engraved on a Digital Stele	32	INTERVIEW I'm Here to Meet the Spirit of My Father A meeting with Park Nohwon, daughter of the great art collector Dr. Park Byeong-rae, the donor of 375 Joseon Dynasty ceramic objects
12	SPECIAL FEATURE An Exhibition Dedicated to the Value of Sharing The National Museum of Korea Reopens the Donated Collection after a Two-Year Wait	36	PUBLICATION
18	CURRENT The Year of the Dragon, a Mysterious Journey	40	INSIDE THE MUSEUM Main Plans of the National Museum of Korea in 2024
22	CURRENT What's New? Embracing Local History and Culture	42	NEWS - Korean National Museums, Opening the Era of Ten Million Visitors a Year - Korean Digital Art Charms Filipino Art Lovers - Reopening of the Seokjeon Memorial Room, Jeonju National Museum
26	CURATOR'S TALK Never Ending Story of the Royal Procession to Hwaseong Wise and Unbiased, Royal Philosophy in Paintings and Calligraphy of the Joseon Dynasty	43	GIFTS & PUBLICATIONS Arrival of museum gifts and souvenirs with the gentle breeze of spring
30	K-MUSEUM Perfectly Imperfect: Korean Buncheong Ceramics		

by Kim Jingyeong, Associate Curator of the Digital Museum Division, National Museum of Korea
by Ryu Jeonghan, Curator of The Archaeology and History Division, National Museum of Korea

The Spirit of Goguryeo Engraved on a Digital Stele

Before he died prematurely at the age of thirty-nine, the great king expanded the territory of his Kingdom to its largest extent and brought it the gift of peace. He was buried on a hill near Gukgangsang, and his grave was marked by a large stone stele bearing an inscription honoring his great achievements. Centuries passed, the seasons came and went, and the stele gradually became weathered by the elements and covered with moss. One day, many years later, the monument caught fire, strands of singed moss flew all around it, and then it was wrapped in sheets of white paper. Eventually, ancient characters began to appear one by one on the paper enveloping the monument, slowly revealing, line by line, in a majestic manner, the history and culture of the ancient Korean Kingdom of Goguryeo.

STANDING AGAIN ON THE VAST EXPANSE OF LAND THAT THE GREAT KING OPENED UP SIXTEEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Standing at the center of the crossroad of the Path to History in the National Museum of Korea, where history meets prehistory, is the Digital Stele of King Gwanggaeto the Great. It was just over sixteen hundred years ago that the people of Goguryeo erected a stone stele in a wide open field near their capital city, Gungnaeseong (present-day Ji'an in Jilin Province, Northeast China), and engraved a record of their history in 1,775 characters. As the archaeological importance of the stele was already understood in the nineteenth century, several historians made rubbings of the inscription and transmitted the historic text to the wider world.

We at the National Museum of Korea have recently transferred the memories contained in the inscription to the digital version of the Gwanggaeto Stele. In addition to the inscription, we have also included some important historical moments related with the stele, including its erection in 414, the creation of rubbings in the nineteenth century, and the restoration of the text using digital technology. The Digital Stele of King Gwanggaeto the Great is expected to connect the museum's exhibitions with the original historical artifacts, to connect yesterday with today, and to convey the history and culture of Goguryeo to all who are interested in this ancient Korean Kingdom.

The Digital Stele of King Gwanggaeto the Great was created based on an in-depth analysis of the photographs and drawings produced by surveyors in the early twentieth century, when Korea was under Japanese colonial rule, as well as the materials obtained by the Korean scholars who surveyed the original stele. The digital stele's inscription, which is composed of 1,775 characters, is based on the "digital restoration of the rubbing of the original stone" produced by the Archaeology and History Division of the National Museum of Korea, and is widely regarded as the closest and most faithful restoration of the original stele of King Gwanggaeto. Restored on the Media Tower measuring 8 meters in height, 2.6 meters in width and 1.9 meters in length, the Digital Stele of King Gwanggaeto the

Great is a remarkable reproduction of the original in terms of not only its size but also the texture of its surface, effectively providing visitors with a fascinating view of the original historic site of Goguryeo. It is not merely a museum exhibit but rather a fine work of art that faithfully reflects the results of the latest research in the fields of archaeology and history and the National Museum of Korea's extensive experience in the production of digital contents.

The Gwanggaeto Stele, which stands 6.4 meters tall and 2 meters wide, was erected in the year 414 by King Jangsu (r. 412-491) of Goguryeo to honor the great achievements of his father and predecessor, King Gwanggaeto the Great (r. 391-412). The stele is inscribed with a record of the foundation of the Kingdom, the enthronement of King Gwanggaeto, the expansion of Goguryeo's territory during his reign and under his influence, and regulations on the management of the king's tomb. Although the stele has sustained damages caused by weathering, erosion by moss and even fire, it still retains the inscription that vividly describes the great undertakings of King Gwanggaeto, the details of which are otherwise difficult to find in the history books.

The inscription of the stele displayed on the digital screen is worth reading carefully. We hope that the weight of each character engraved by the people of Goguryeo to honor their great king will be conveyed to the viewer.

Raw stone rubbings
of the Stele of King
Gwanggaeto the Great



READING THE THOUGHTS EXPRESSED IN THE 1,775 CHARACTERS ENGRAVED ON A STONE

The Digital Stele of King Gwanggaeto the Great is remarkably faithful to the original stone stele not only in terms of its size but also in terms of the text and the written style of the characters. In 2023, the National Museum of Korea obtained the rubbing of the inscription engraved on the original stele. Known as “the Cheongmyeong Version,” this rubbing accrued extra value after it was added to the private collection of Im Changsun (courtesy name: Cheongmyeong, 1914-1999), a renowned epigrapher and scholar of the Chinese classics. The rubbing takes the form of a concertina book consisting of four sections, each containing the inscription copied from each of the four sides of the stele. Each page of the book contains three characters arranged in four rows, while the book itself features a postscript written by Cai Nianyu, a scholar of late Qing period, which provides the exact date of its production. According to the postscript, it was one of the ten books produced in 1889 by a rubbing expert hired by an antique dealer named Park Gojae. The postscript also states that the price of each book was ten *geum* of silver, and that the postscript was written in February 1891.

The rediscovery of the Gwanggaeto Stele in the second half of the nineteenth century attracted widespread attention among scholars, epigraphers in particular, in Qing, and high demand for copies of the stele’s inscription. Initial copies of the inscription dating back to the early 1880s were mainly “outline-and-fill rubbings” made by copying the outlines of each character and filling the outside with ink. One famous example of this type of copy is the one obtained in 1883 by a Japanese collector named Sakou, the then director of the Tokyo National Museum. Today, copies of this type are largely regarded as “deciphered copies” rather than rubbings proper, because the process of outlining the characters was often affected by the copier’s subjective interpretation and preconceptions.

According to a Qing record, the earliest rubbings of the inscription on the Gwanggaeto Stele were made in 1887 and 1889. These “rubbings of

the original stone” are regarded as the most accurate copies of the original inscription because they were created by placing a sheet of paper directly on the surface of the part of the stele bearing the inscription, and then rubbing the paper using ink. One problem was that these rubbings inevitably replicated cracks and other defects on the surface of the stele, making it difficult to decipher the rubbed characters. That is probably why the demand for rubbings of this type was less than that for the earlier version, and it is also why a technique called “lime rubbings” emerged and was widely used in the 1890s. With this type of rubbing, the copiers first applied lime to the surface of the stele to tidy it, thereby filling in all the natural cracks on its surface as well as the artificial lines made before the inscription was engraved, and even the empty spaces remaining in the indistinct characters. This technique helped produce rubbings of clearly-defined characters, but it sometimes led the copiers to transform or even create new characters according to their own subjective assessment or referring to the existing earlier versions. That is why experts believe that the rubbings of the original stone should be treated as the most important materials for research on the inscription of the Gwanggaeto Stele.

At present, among the existing rubbings of the Gwanggaeto Stele, three are outline-and-fill rubbings, nineteen are the rubbings of the original stone, and ninety-seven are lime rubbings, with the rubbings of the original stone accounting for just sixteen percent of them. Fourteen of the nineteen rubbings of the original stone are kept in China and Taiwan, three are in Korea, and two are in Japan. It is generally accepted that among the rubbings of the original stone remaining in Korea, the Cheongmyeong Version is the finest in terms of the composition of the inscription and the quality of the rubbing. As for the other two, the one collected by the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies of Seoul National University contains only a part of the inscription on the third face of the stele, while the Hyejeong Version owned by a private collector

Digital Reconstruction
of Raw Stone Rubbings
of the Stele of King
Gwanggaeto the Great



contains only the inscription on the first two faces of the stele. Even the Cheongmyeong Version has some omissions, including two characters (the thirtieth and thirty-ninth on the 10th line) on the second face, 240 characters on the third face (the first on the first line to the thirty-fifth on the sixth line), and 120 characters on the fourth face (the third on the third line to the fortieth on the fifth line).

The National Museum of Korea has recently launched a project for the digital restoration of the rubbings of the original stone as part of the effort to achieve a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the Gwanggaeto Stele. The project started with the work of rearranging the characters in the Cheongmyeong Version based on high-definition scans of the stele’s inscription in this version, and then supplementing the omissions on the third face of the stele based on the rubbings of the original stone stored in the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University. Scholars generally agree that both the Cheongmyeong Version and the Kyujanggak Version originated from

*The inscription of
the Gwanggaeto Stele
is widely regarded
as one of the most
important resources
for studies
on the history and
culture of the ancient
Korean Kingdom of
Goguryeo.*

the same source. The omissions from the inscription on the second to fourth faces of the stele were recovered from the Mizutani Version kept at the National Museum of Japanese History, with which our museum has signed an academic exchange agreement. We remain highly confident about this project for the digital restoration of the Gwanggaeto Stele and its inscription because the sources we have used for the project are conjectured to have come from the same edition of the rubbings created by Li Yuncong in 1889.

The inscription of the Gwanggaeto Stele is widely regarded as one of the most important resources for studies on the history and culture of the ancient Korean Kingdom of Goguryeo. We sincerely hope that this exhibition of the National Museum of Korea, consisting of digitalized images of the rubbings of the original stone of the inscription, will help experts to overcome the geographical limitations facing their studies on related issues, while increasing ordinary museum goers’ general understanding of the history and culture of Goguryeo.

It was on January 24 of this year that the large veil that had covered the Digital Stele of King Gwanggaeto the Great for some time was finally removed. The group of people who had gathered for the event could not keep their eyes off the majestic Media Tower, a structure measuring 8 meters in height and 2.6 meters in width. We interviewed two staff members of the National Museum of Korea, Kim Taeyeong (Associate Curator of the Archaeology and History Division) and Kim Jingyeong (Associate Curator of the Digital Museum Division), who played a leading role in the project for the digital restoration of the Gwanggaeto Stele.

Restorers of the Greatness of Goguryeo

Kim Jingyeong,
Associate Curator of the Digital
Museum Division,
National Museum of Korea

Kim Taeyeong,
Associate Curator of the
Archaeology and History Division,
National Museum of Korea

Q — Why the Gwanggaeto Stele, when there are so many other priceless heritage items around us?

A — Kim Jingyeong • Just as we cannot talk about the history of ancient Korea without talking about the history of Goguryeo, so we cannot talk about the history of Goguryeo without mentioning the Gwanggaeto Stele. Unfortunately, there are not many archaeological remains of this great Kingdom in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula. Given this situation, we came to the conclusion that the Gwanggaeto Stele is the most insightful and potent artifact from Goguryeo, and

that it would help us to overcome these limitations.

Kim Taeyeong • Quite a lot of Korean people have become interested in the history of Goguryeo. Many of us are proud of the achievement of King Gwanggaeto the Great, who came to rule over the largest Korean territory in history. That led us to the idea of using the great stone stele erected to honor his achievements. We believed that it would help our museum to fulfill its role as a leading national cultural institution while satisfying the intellectual curiosity of the Korean public.

Q — Was there any passage of the stele's inscription that you felt was particularly supportive of your participation in the long-term project?

A — Kim Jingyeong • I found this one: "His grace reached the heaven and / His dignity spread across the Four Oceans, / Bringing wealth to his state and his people, / Bearing an abundance of the five grains." I think that this poetic passage is a perfect explanation of the undertaking of King Gwanggaeto and the background to the monumental stele. I also think that it would have been a great eulogy from his son King Jangsu to his father, who brought peace and prosperity to the Kingdom.





“There are many around us who are interested in the history of Goguryeo. They are proud of the achievements of King Gwanggaeto, who ruled over the largest territory in Korea’s history. That is how we came to organize this event focusing on the Gwanggaeto Stele.”

Kim Taeyeong

Kim Taeyeong • I was impressed by the posthumous honorary title composed of twelve Chinese characters, Gukgangsang Gwanggaetogyong Pyeongan Hotaewang (國罡上廣開土境平安好太王), that was awarded to the great king. The length of the title seems to reflect his great achievements on behalf of the people he ruled over.

Q — Please tell us something about the process of digital restoration of the Gwanggaeto Stele.

A — Kim Taeyeong • The first task given to us at the Archaeology and History Division was to rearrange the characters of the stele’s inscription and to identify the omitted characters based on high-definition scans of the rubbings of the original stone which our museum has recently obtained. These rubbings - called the Cheongmyeong Version and

now a part of our museum collection - constitute a rare and extremely valuable material, one of the very few remaining in Korea. Unfortunately, some parts of the inscriptions on the third and fourth faces of the stele are missing. We were able to complete the entire text of the inscription, however, thanks to the rubbings of the original stone collected by the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies of Seoul National University, and those collected by the National Museum of Japanese History.

Kim Jingyeong • The personnel of the Digital Museum Division were responsible for the work of restoring the original characters of the inscription using digital technology, recreating them almost exactly the same as the original ones - not only in terms of their size and form but in terms of the texture of the surface of the stele as well. Our restoration team surveyed the

original stele in China, and upon their return they conducted the time-consuming work of creating texture on the surface of the stele based on the restored rubbings of the original stone completed by the Archaeology and History Division. We also extensively studied the historical materials of the Gwanggaeto Stele, including the dry-plate photographs and illustrations produced during the early twentieth century by the Japanese colonial authority then ruling Korea. We also selected the passages that we felt would best explain the Gwanggaeto Stele, especially poetic ones that could touch the viewer’s heart, and translated them into a number of foreign languages. We then continued to improve the images through several test presentations and, finally, added to them a piece of music composed by Yang Bangean (Kunihiro Ryo in Japanese name).

Q — It sounds like a really huge task. You must have encountered many difficulties.

A — Kim Taeyeong • For me and our team, the work of coordinating the different interpretations of the inscription was more difficult than the work of restoring the characters. The interpretations of the scholars who participated in the project varied largely due to the fact that certain characters were either missing or defaced. We were quite distressed by the situation and finally decided to show them all the rubbings of the original stone available to us, leaving the work of deciphering and interpreting the text solely in their hands.

Kim Jingyeong • For us, the main problem was what kind of structure we would need to set up at the center of the cross-roads of the Path to History. It is the busiest part of our museum, attracting almost all our visitors. We had to be careful not to hinder the visitors’ mobility, while simultaneously having to keep in mind that the area is designed to use natural light for illumination. We kept on reviewing the digital technology that we were able to exploit to make the most of the given environment, finally resulting in the creation of the structure we have today. The work of building the structure started after all the visitors had left the exhibition halls and the lights had been switched off, and continued until dawn. The seemingly secretive construction work conducted behind a veil lasted from September 18, 2023 to January 21, 2024. For us, it could be a wonderful source for a drama.

Q — What do you want the viewers to feel when they see the Digital Stele of King Gwanggaeto the Great?

A — Kim Jingyeong • I remember a mother and her young boy arriving at the site in time for the opening of the digital stele. The mother was explaining the Gwanggaeto Stele to her son in an enthusiastic manner, which made me

“It was the moment that I became keenly aware of the powerful impression made on our visitors by the ancient Korean Kingdom of Goguryeo and its greatest ruler, King Gwanggaeto. I was also greatly impressed by the sight of many foreign visitors carefully reading the inscription of the stele erected to honor the king. The sight made me feel that I was responsible for the work of helping foreign visitors to better understand the history of our country. I hope that more people, both Korean and international museum goers, will be able to visit our museum and appreciate the digitalized version of the Gwanggaeto Stele, and thereby increase their knowledge of ancient Korean history.”

Kim Jingyeong

feel that the ancient Korean Kingdom of Goguryeo and the Gwanggaeto Stele had special meaning for Korean people, and that they had been waiting earnestly for the kind of event we had prepared. I also remember seeing many foreign visitors carefully reading the text of the inscription. I felt that I was responsible for the work of helping foreign visitors to better understand the history of our country. I hope that more people, both Korean and international museum goers, will be able to visit our museum and see the digitalized version of the Gwanggaeto Stele, and thereby increase their knowledge of ancient Korean history.

Q — Will the National Museum of Korea give its visitors further opportunities to learn about the history of Goguryeo?

A — Kim Taeyeong • There are only a few Goguryeo relics remaining in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula, including some military sites around the Imjingang and Hangang River, such as Horogoru Embankment in Yeoncheon, Gyeonggi-do. Archaeologists have discovered at these sites a variety of military artifacts, weaponry, and pottery, which have provided us with insights into and evidence of Goguryeo’s occupation of the middle reaches of the Hangang River for a period of about one hundred years. The relics found at the military sites reveal that Goguryeo dispatched units of ten to one hundred soldiers to guard the forts. I hope that one day our museum will be able to hold exhibitions of the military relics found at these sites. I am aware that our museum is planning to enlarge the Goguryeo Exhibition Hall and to hold an exhibition of Goguryeo murals depicting human figures and animals, including the mythical three-legged blackbird. So, I want to tell our readers not to lose interest in what’s going on at our museum and to wait for more exciting events to come.

SPECIAL FEATURE

by Lee Wonjin, Associate Curator of the World Arts Division, National Museum of Korea
by Kwon Youngwoo, Assistant Curator of the World Arts Division, National Museum of Korea

An Exhibition Dedicated to the Value of Sharing

Donated Collection Gallery in National Museum of Korea
Reopened from January 12, 2024

The Donated Collection Gallery of the National Museum of Korea was finally reopened on January 12 after two years of extensive renovations. Whereas the former exhibition space was designed to display the main collection, which were arranged according to the major donors, the newly renovated space is designed to show visitors how the donated items have become a quintessential part of the museum's collection, and how they gain additional value through their meeting with museum goers. As expressed by the subtitle “a space for discovering the value of sharing,” this reopening exhibition aims to encourage people of all ages to visit the museum and participate in a special moment of sharing the value of the priceless cultural heritages on display. The exhibition also features donated items which have not previously been exhibited, arranged according to diverse themes. Indeed, the organizers have dedicated considerable time and effort to creating a fascinating exhibition that harmonizes diverse elements, with the aim of inspiring visitors to the exhibition.



The Importance of Donation in the History of the National Museum of Korea

The creation of the new exhibition space for the donated collection of the National Museum of Korea was preceded by extensive discussions with the donors on the purpose and direction of the renovation project. This was followed by the process of collecting materials related with the donations and cataloguing the donors and their collection. The materials collected and catalogued at this time included the first documents made at the time of the donations, news reports about the donations carried in *The Museum News*, a monthly Korean newsletter of NMK, and records about the exhibition of the donated items and donors. The Museum

Wintry Days donated
by Sohn Chang Kun
(Donated Collection IV)



ran weekly study sessions for two years, making scrapbooks, researching the collected materials, and discussing pending issues.

Eventually, our members of the renovation team discovered that although the donated items were collected and donated in diverse ways, they were closely connected with each other. They also realized that the tradition of donating valuable cultural objects has been in a close relationship with the history of the National Museum of Korea.

The large number of cultural heritages acquired as donations is as diverse as the stories behind them, and includes national treasures, such as the “Buncheong Ware with Inlaid Lotus Scroll Design” (Treasure, bequest of Lee Hong-kun), the “Thousand Character Classic Handwritten by Yi Hangbok” (Treasure, gift of Lee Geunhyeong), the

Earthenware collection
donated by Choi Young-do and
its featured video
(Donated Collection III)

“Sutra Box with Inlaid Mother of Pearl” (Treasure, gift of the Friends of the National Museum of Korea), and the “15th Volume of the First Edition of the Yogacarabhumi-sastra” (National Treasure, gift of Song Sungmoon). Two of these many treasures, *Wintry Days* (National Treasure, gift of Sohn Chang Kun) and *Water-Moon Avalokiteshvara* (gift of Yoon Donghan) will be exhibited until May 6 to celebrate the reopening of the gallery.

A Demanding Journey Filled with Discoveries

In the following process, the renovation team carefully examined about 30,000 of the donated items in order to select those that would be exhibited to the public. This was not an easy task as the selec-

tors were required to select the artifacts that were best suited to the chosen theme, the size of the exhibition space, and the number of artifacts preset according to the donors. The selectors were also required to secure balance in the arrangement of the donors according to the plan to highlight the chosen themes. To that end, we conducted on-site inspections of the cultural heritages in the museum’s storage facility based on the basic research materials available to them.

Some 2,000 items selected for the exhibition were moved from the museum’s main storage to our department storage, where they were sorted according to the themes conceived for the exhibition and placed in display cabinets arranged along both sides of the central aisle, thus reflecting the layout



Celadon Ewer
with Lotus Scroll
Design in Underglaze
Black and White Slip
Goryeo, 12th-13th century
H. 33.8cm
Bequest of Lee Hong-kun

of the actual exhibition space. This temporary arrangement of the selected items helped the organizers to devise an effective plan for exhibiting the vast collection in the actual exhibition space.

New Exhibition Hall for Hidden Stories from the Past

The newly opened Donated Collection Gallery is divided into two parts, one of which is designed to deepen visitors’ understanding of the significance and value of the act of donation, while the other aims to present a variety of themes represented by the donated items.

The first part, “A Space for Sharing Generosity,” originally opened in 2022 as “Donated Collection I,” consists of three subspaces: the first displays the exhibits so as to highlight the act of “sharing”; the second is the archives of materials and information about the donations; and the third is devoted to various video presentations. The exhibition space featuring Greek helmet donated by Son Kee Chung tells the story of how Son, an Olympic marathoner, donated the helmet to the museum. Visitors can inspect the helmet in a dedicated space of its own and learn various stories about it.

The second part, “Sharing from Donation, Succeeding to an Exhibition,” is designed to allow visitors to experience a variety of cultural heritages donated to the National Museum of Korea. It was created to display over 1,500 works of donated art and craft works, including pottery, metalwork, wooden furniture, calligraphy and painting.

The division of the donated collection exhibition space into sections I, II, III and IV has resulted in the treatment of new, hitherto unconsidered themes such as the cultural heritage preserved by distinguished families, repatriated cultural heritage, and cultural heritages that have inspired creative artists. The donated cultural heritage has also led the museum’s curators to organize exhibitions that would not be possible in an ordinary exhibition space. For example, ceramic works, which account for the greater part of the donated collection, have been arranged with each other under the theme of “clay (earth),” the material from which they were made, showing how the aestheticism of Korean ceramic art developed according to the passage of time and was transmitted through the generations. The organizers believe that the exciting diversity of themes and layouts was possible largely because of the heterogeneity of the donated items.

The exhibition held in Donated Collection II on the theme of “Safeguarding and Donation of the Cultural Heritage,” is focused on a group of donors who devoted themselves to protecting the Korean

cultural heritage even amid the great turmoil occasioned by the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War. The items displayed here include ones that were once at risk of being smuggled out of the country or seriously damaged; others that were carefully protected as family heirlooms; and others that were restored by specialized organizations such as the Friends of National Museum of Korea. These exhibits are intended to convey to visitors the importance of donation as part of the effort to protect the nation’s cultural heritage for future generations.

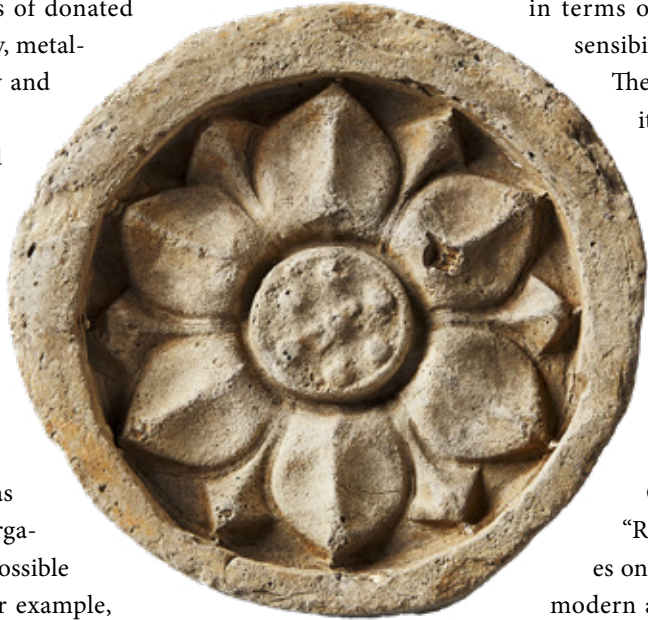
The heritage items displayed in Donated Collection III are arranged under the theme, “Diversity of Donated Cultural Heritage.” Displayed along each side of the central aisle of the museum’s exhibition section, these exhibits show a great diversity in terms of aesthetic form and the aesthetic sensibility of the artists who created them.

These exhibits, which include stationery items and exquisite household objects that contain our living cultures in the past, ceramic and metal craftworks, and even overseas cultural items that happened to arrive in Korea, are laid out to suggest a harmonious co-existence of culture that transcends time and space.

The exhibition in Donated Collection IV, held under the title “Rediscovery of Traditional Art,” focuses on the meeting between traditional and modern art. The donated artworks exhibited in this room include everyday items from the past appreciated by connoisseurs for their aesthetic beauty, and works created by modern artists who were attracted to the artworks of the past.

The final part of the exhibition will be devoted to a special theme connected with donation. The highlight of the small exhibition presented here will be *Wintry Days*, a masterpiece created by the great late-Joseon scholar-artist Kim Jeonghui (1786-1856), The latest owners of the painting was Sohn Se Ki and his son Sohn Chang Kun. Sohn Chang Kun established a relationship with the museum through the exhibitions and his noble decision in 2020 made *Wintry Days* an art for all of us.

Roof-end Tile with Lotus Design
Silla
D. 17.4cm
Gift of Yoo Chang-jong



Furniture collection
donated by Kim Chong Hak
and video featuring winter
scenes of Seoraksan Mountain
(Donated Collection IV)

The Value of Sharing for All

The Donated Collection Gallery of the National Museum of Korea has been reorganized to improve access for those who are culturally undeserved, thus taking another step toward its goal of creating a “museum for everyone.” As a part of this effort, the museum has installed a braille information panel at the entrance to the exhibition together with a QR code offering voice guides, and also provides video information complete with sign language and audio subtitles. The museum has also distributed easy-to-follow information leaflets in different parts of the visitors’ lounge, along with various hands-on exhibits, in order to allow not only ordinary visitors but those with physical and mental disabilities to enjoy the exhibition in a comfortable environment.

Throughout the exploration of the donated cultural heritage of the museum, there exist countless stories of sharing. Every story is valuable and precious. The circumstances and the reason behind the collectors’ donation may vary, but all share a common belief: cultural heritage should be placed where it can be protected and enjoyed by all.

The donations made by the donors’ passion and faith in cultural heritage gave the objects a second life. By welcoming the donations into the collection, the museum became a place where a diverse and broader range of stories could be shared. We honor the generosity of these donors and will strive for cultural heritage to be beloved and cherished by all.

Shelf with Three Tiers
Joseon, 19th century
H. 157.5cm
Gift of Kim Chong Hak





Fig. 1
Gold Buckle with
Dragon Motif
Nangnang, 1st century
L. 9.4cm

The Year of the Dragon, a Mysterious Journey

Finding Dragons at the Museum, In-depth exhibition, National Museum of Korea
December 20, 2023 – April 7, 2024

The year 2024 is the Gapjin Year or the Year of the Blue Dragon. To celebrate the year of the dragon, the National Museum of Korea launched the exhibition *Finding Dragons at the Museum* in its permanent exhibition halls on December 20, 2023, introducing visitors to a diverse collection of artifacts associated with dragons. The exhibition displays fifteen exhibits in the Prehistory and Ancient History Hall and the Medieval and Early Modern History Hall on the first floor, the Calligraphy and Painting Hall on the second floor, and the Sculpture and Crafts Hall on the third floor. Visitors who visit all nine exhibition halls will encounter the many different types of dragons expressed through these exhibits.

THE DRAGON, A MYTHICAL CREATURE

The dragon is the only mythical creature among the twelve animals of the Korean zodiac. The dragon consists of the head of a camel, deer antlers, the eyes of a rabbit, the ears of a bull, the neck of a snake, the belly of a frog, the scales of a carp, the claws of a hawk, and the feet of a tiger. The unrealistic appearance of this imaginary beast, which combines the parts of nine different animals, originated in China and was later introduced to Korea. One of Korea's oldest known archaeological relics related with this creature is the Gold Buckle with Dragon Motif, *Fig. 1* which was discovered in Seogam-ri Nangnang Tomb No. 9. The center of the buckle

is decorated with the design of a dragon, with six smaller dragons surrounding it. The dragons are expressed with gold granules of different sizes, each one having a pair of deer antlers, a snout expressed with gold thread rolled up into a spiral form, and a body comparable to that of a snake.

During the Three Kingdoms period, Koreans believed that dragons had a formidable, divine power, and often used a dragon motif to adorn tomb murals and the bricks used in the construction of Buddhist temples, as well as important ritual objects such as incense burners. In *Gangseodaemyo*, the Great Goguryeo Tomb in Gangseo, Nampo in North Korea, a blue dragon *Fig. 2* is depicted on the east wall of the burial chamber,

while the other three sacred creatures forming the Four Guardian Deities, including a white tiger, a vermilion bird, and a black tortoise, are depicted on the west, south, and north walls respectively. As the Four Guardian Deities were recorded as symbols of the four cardinal directions in *Huainanzi* 淮南子 and *The Records of the Grand Historian*, two of the Chinese classics of the Han Dynasty, it seems probable that the concept originated during the Warring States Period and was widely transmitted during the Han Dynasty. The image of the blue dragon depicted on the wall of a late sixth-century Goguryeo tomb is the oldest remaining evidence of the traditional worship of the Four Guardian Deities in Korea.



Fig. 2
Blue Dragon
 Copy of the Goguryeo original
 Ganseodaemyo Tomb
 1930
 218.0x319.0cm



Fig. 5
The Dragon
 Joseon, 19th century
 222.0x217.0cm

DRAGON SYMBOLISM

Since ancient times the dragon has been revered as a mythical creature believed to have magical power. In Korean Buddhism, the dragon was worshipped as a guardian deity and protector of the teachings of Buddha, while in pre-modern times it was a symbol of the king. For ordinary people, it was a divine creature that repelled evil and brought them good fortune.

Visitors to the exhibition will find an image of a dragon with a wide open mouth and a sinuous body on the upper part of the bronze temple bell **Fig.3** displayed in the Goryeo Room. According to an ancient Chinese record, a large sea dragon called “Pulao 蒲牢” bellowed loudly with fear whenever it came across a whale. The makers of bells later began to carve a dragon on the sound tube at the top of the temple bell as they believed it would help spread the bell’s sound, which represented the Buddha’s teachings, far and wide.

Visitors will also see dragons depicted on the blue dragon robe worn by King Taejo of the Joseon Dynasty and the red throne on which he is seated in *The Royal Portrait of King Taejo*. The golden five-clawed dragons embroidered on the royal badge on the chest and shoulders of the royal robe represent, together with the golden dragon painted on the throne, the majesty and authority of the king. The royal family of Joseon used “dragon jars” (*yongjun*) in various royal and state occasions, religious events, and banquets. The White Porcelain Jar with Cloud and Dragon Design in Underglaze Cobalt Blue **Fig.4** is decorated with a pair of dragons painted in cobalt blue. The two dragons are characterized by a wide open mouth, a wildly flying mane, and five claws, the features which represent their majestic spirit as they fly headlong into the wind.

Meanwhile, visitors to the Calligraphy and Painting Hall will have an opportunity to appreciate *The Dragon*, **Fig.5** a large (2 meters by 2 meters) ink wash painting depicting a dragon surrounded by numerous banks of dark clouds soaring above a wild

sea. Experts believe that this kind of painting was traditionally hung together with a painting of a tiger on the main gate of a royal palace or a government office of Joseon in the first lunar month of the year. In the pre-modern period the Korean people maintained the tradition of hanging paintings of dragons and tigers from the gates of their homes and offices on the first day of the lunar year in the belief that they would help repel evil forces and bring them good luck throughout the year.

HOW TO ENJOY THE EXHIBITION

Visitors to the *Finding Dragons at the Museum* exhibition will be given a QR leaflet containing a map and a list of exhibits to guide them to all the important exhibits displayed in the different halls of the museum in an easy and exciting way. The QR leaflet can also be obtained at the official website of the National Museum of Korea and the information kiosks at the exhibition.

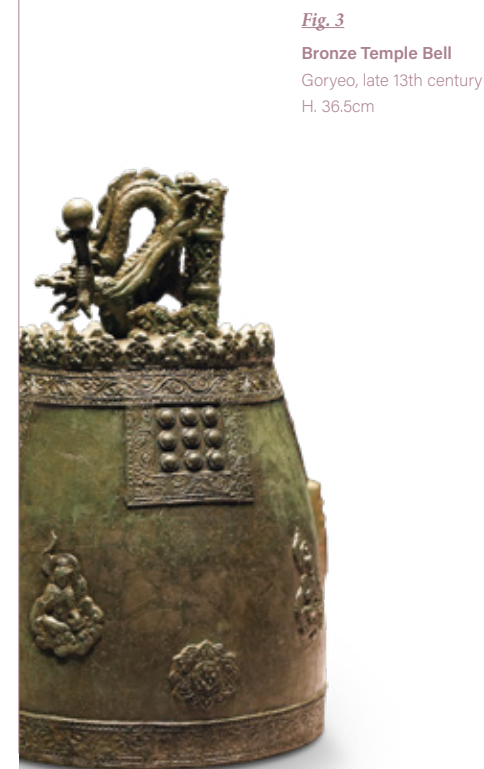


Fig. 3
Bronze Temple Bell
 Goryeo, late 13th century
 H. 36.5cm



Fig. 4
White Porcelain Jar with Cloud and Dragon Design in Underglaze Cobalt Blue
 Joseon, late 18th century
 H. 53.9cm



Fig. 6
Dragon-shaped Celadon Incense Burner
 Goryeo, 12th or 13th century
 H. 22.7cm

Each exhibit has an information card printed with a QR code that allows the viewer to access detailed information about it, including the hidden part of it, other comparable items, and CT-scanned images. “Xiao Shi Riding a Dragon Descending 蕭史騎龍” is taken from the *Paintings of Historical Episodes and Figures*, a book of ancient Chinese paintings donated to the National Museum of Korea by the renowned businessman and art collector Lee Kun-Hee. It is the first time that this work has been opened to the general public. Its QR code offers viewers a glimpse of a collection of illustrations from the ancient Chinese book, *Biographies of the Immortals* (Liexian Zhuan 列仙傳), which had a significant impact on the painting, revealing that its creator, Jin Jaegi, exploited the Chinese source. In addition, the QR code attached to the “Dragon-shaped Celadon Incense Burner” provides a CT image which shows that the burner is designed to release incense smoke from the dragon’s mouth via its winding body. **Fig.6**

The dragons displayed in the permanent exhibition halls of our museum display a variety of characteristic features, such as bulging eyes expressing valor, a friendly, almost human face, or a noble, dignified posture. To this day Korea has maintained the tradition of revering the dragon as an auspicious creature that protects the teachings of Buddha, as a symbol of the king, and as a divine creature that helps repel evil. That is why we hope that this exhibition, *Finding Dragons at the Museum*, held in the opening month of the Year of Blue Dragon, will enhance visitors’ appreciation of this fabulous mythical creature that has the power to repel all that is evil around us and bring us good fortune.

What's New? Embracing Local History and Culture



HISTORY AND CULTURE RUN DEEP AND WIDE

by Oh Yeonsuk, Associate Curator, Naju National Museum

In December 2023, a grand ceremony was held in the central hall of the Naju National Museum to celebrate the reopening of its permanent exhibition hall. The newly opened exhibition space consists of two sections, of which the first focuses on ancient burial culture, while the second is dedicated to the history and culture of the Naju area. Some 4,000 artifacts (including one National Treasure and three Treasures) unearthed in the southwestern region of Jeollanam-do, including the Yeongsangang River Basin, are currently displayed in the newly organized exhibition space.

The Ancient Tomb Culture section, which is located in the front part of the permanent exhibition space, introduces the ancient burial culture that emerged in and around the Yeongsangang River Basin. Widely regarded as the main attraction of the museum, this exhibition space contains a winding exhibition platform inspired by the curves of the Yeongsangang River, and displays about eighty large jar coffins arranged in a way that reflects the cultural changes that occurred over time, and a large video mapping display created by eleven beam projectors. The projection mapping is designed to harmonize

with the ancient jar coffins, creating a serene and majestic atmosphere. The exhibits include a variety of grave goods unearthed from ancient tombs scattered in and around the Yeongsangang River Basin. These artifacts are displayed according to diverse themes, such as pottery, iron tools, ornamental beads, and armor, creating a colorful visual display of specific cultural aspects of the area in ancient times.

The exhibition in the History and Culture section covers the general history of the southwestern part of Jeollanam-do, focusing on cultural and social aspects ranging from the Paleolithic period to the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897). The specific themes covered in the exhibition include prehistoric tools, livelihood, maritime exchanges, and religious activities. One major attraction is the Seoseongmunan Stone Lantern of Naju (Treasure), which is regarded as the epitome of Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) stone lanterns.

The directors of the Naju National Museum have recently launched a plan to open a multifunctional digital cultural center in 2025, and aim to develop the museum into a leading cultural institution in the area.

Reorganization of the Permanent Exhibition Hall, Naju National Museum
From December 15, 2023



AN INVITATION FROM IDEAL LAND

by Yi Nagyeong, Associate Curator of the Archaeology and History Division, National Museum of Korea
(formerly, Associate Curator of Chuncheon National Museum)

The Chuncheon National Museum recently completed the renovation of its “Brand Zone” at the permanent exhibition hall, and opened the new exhibition, Geumgangsan Mountain and the Eight Great Scenic Views of Gwandong, on December 5. The exhibition introduces a collection of 116 artifacts belonging to 67 categories, including nine artifacts donated by Lee Kun-Hee, the late chairman of Samsung and renowned art collector. These works depict majestic scenes of Geumgangsan Mountain and Gwandong Palgyeong, or the Eight Great Scenic Views of Gwandong, which have long been regarded by many Koreans as a Ideal land and a haven for those seeking to cultivate spiritual and physical discipline.

As an art collector, Lee’s interest in the natural beauty of Gangwon-do was said to be “deep and wide,” resulting in a large collection of calligraphic works and paintings by Joseon artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and folding screens mounted with folk paintings from the twentieth century. Thanks to his outstanding connoisseurship and generous donation, we contemporary art lovers can enjoy the aesthetic sensibility of premodern Korean artists and their works depicting scenic views of Geumgangsan Mountain and

the Gwandong area. Visitors to this particular exhibition will have an opportunity to appreciate, among other gems, some of the greatest landscape paintings of Geumgangsan Mountain and the Gwandong area produced in the eighteenth century.

The exhibition in Part 1, *Sacred Realm, Geumgangsan Mountain and the Eight Great Scenic Views of Gwandong*, focuses on the Neo-Confucian scholars of the Joseon Dynasty who traveled into the depths of Gangwon-do’s wilderness to find “The Way” represented by its landscapes, seeking a Ideal land in their inner world. Meanwhile, Part 2, *Ideal land of the New Era, Geumgangsan Mountain and the Eight Great Scenic Views of Gwandong*, introduces visitors to a collection of tourist maps, postcards, photography albums, and handicrafts produced in the early twentieth century when Korea was under Japanese colonial rule. These artifacts constitute tangible evidence that even the ideal scenic beauty of the mountain and its surroundings, which Koreans believed were eternal, could not defy the mighty currents of change.

We hope that the current exhibition will provide visitors with a clue that may lead them to their own Ideal land.

Commemorating the Gangwon 2024 Winter Youth Olympic Games Reorganization
of the Brand Zone, Chuncheon National Museum (Geumgangsan Mountain and the
Eight Great Scenic Views of Gwandong) From December 5, 2023



DREAMING OF A NEW HANBOK

by Min Bora, Associate Curator, Daegu National Museum

The Clothing Culture Hall of the Daegu National Museum was opened in 2010 and has since then undergone two major innovations, one in 2019 and the other in 2023. Since its establishment, the Daegu National Museum has been devoted to exhibiting, researching and collecting *Hanbok*, or Korean traditional clothing. The highlight of such devoted efforts must include the latest renovation of its exhibition, as it was a concentrated endeavor to increase the capability of the museum to take a new leap forward as a leading cultural institution in the Daegu region. The renovation of the exhibition entailed a more systematic use of the term “*hanbok*” and a redefinition of its meaning and scope. It also involved the effort to reflect the aesthetic preferences of today’s museum goers for whom the spatial experience of the museum is crucially important.

Part 1 of the exhibition, “*Hanbok: Past, Present and Future*,” provides visitors with an opportunity to take a comprehensive look at a variety of ornaments and accessories worn together with *hanbok*, as well as

the traditional attire worn by men and women for special ceremonial occasions. The exhibition also covers changes in *hanbok*, from traditional to modern garments, which are represented by the reinterpretations of the renowned *hanbok* designer Lee Younghee. Part 2, “*Hanbok, from Head to Toe*,” introduces various types of *hanbok* and the changes they went through over time, as well as accessories and ornaments such as belts and headgear, and the gat (a type of horsehair hat with a bamboo frame worn by men in the Joseon Dynasty) in particular. Part 3, “*Decorative Motifs, Beauty of Times*,” presents traditional fabrics and the various motifs used to decorate them. The highlight of this section is the “brocade fabric” of the premodern era, which is represented by the gold-brocaded jacket (*jeogori*) discovered in Yeongdeok-dong, Yongin. Finally, Part 4, “*Modam, the Carpet of the Joseon Dynasty*,” introduces the unique fabric called modam in Korean, which is made by weaving wool with other fibers, and is known to have been transmitted to Japan by the Joseon Dynasty diplomats (Tongsinsa).

With the imminent opening of its Clothing Culture Hall, the Daegu National Museum expects the latest reorganization of its exhibition to play an active role in the effort to further develop the museum as a leading cultural institution specializing in *hanbok* and related accessories and ornaments. The museum also hopes that it can continue contributing to the movement to re-invent *hanbok* as comfortable and attractive daily attire.



SPREADING THE VALUE OF GAYA CULTURE

by Song Hyeongyeong, Associate Curator, Gimhae National Museum

The Gimhae National Museum reopened its permanent exhibition hall on January 23 after an extensive refurbishment project that began in 2021 and the partial opening of the second floor in 2022. With the full-scale reopening of the hall (i.e. first floor) with the exhibition, “*Gaya, a World Heritage*,” visitors will enjoy a comfortable and pleasant environment as they move through the museum and witness the results of the latest research and archaeological discoveries. In addition to the barrier-free tour route, the museum is installed with display cabinets integrating a seismic isolation system designed to protect both the museum’s collection and visitors from earthquakes. The museum has also installed various media contents in and outside the exhibition hall to deliver a concise yet comprehensive overview of the history and culture of Gaya, which has been designated as a World Heritage by UNESCO.

The permanent exhibition, “*Gaya, a World Heritage*,” presents a collection of 4,267 artifacts that offer valuable clues about the way of life and the culture of the Gaya people. The exhibition on the first floor, “Road

to Gaya,” is designed to systematically deepen visitors’ understanding of the history of Gaya by introducing, in chronological order, the life and culture of the tribes who settled in the present-day Gimhae area prior to the emergence of the Gaya people, as well as the rise and fall of Gaya. The permanent exhibition on the second floor, “*Gaya and Gaya People*,” deals with Gaya cultures according to specific themes and in a way that highlights the life and value of the Gaya people.

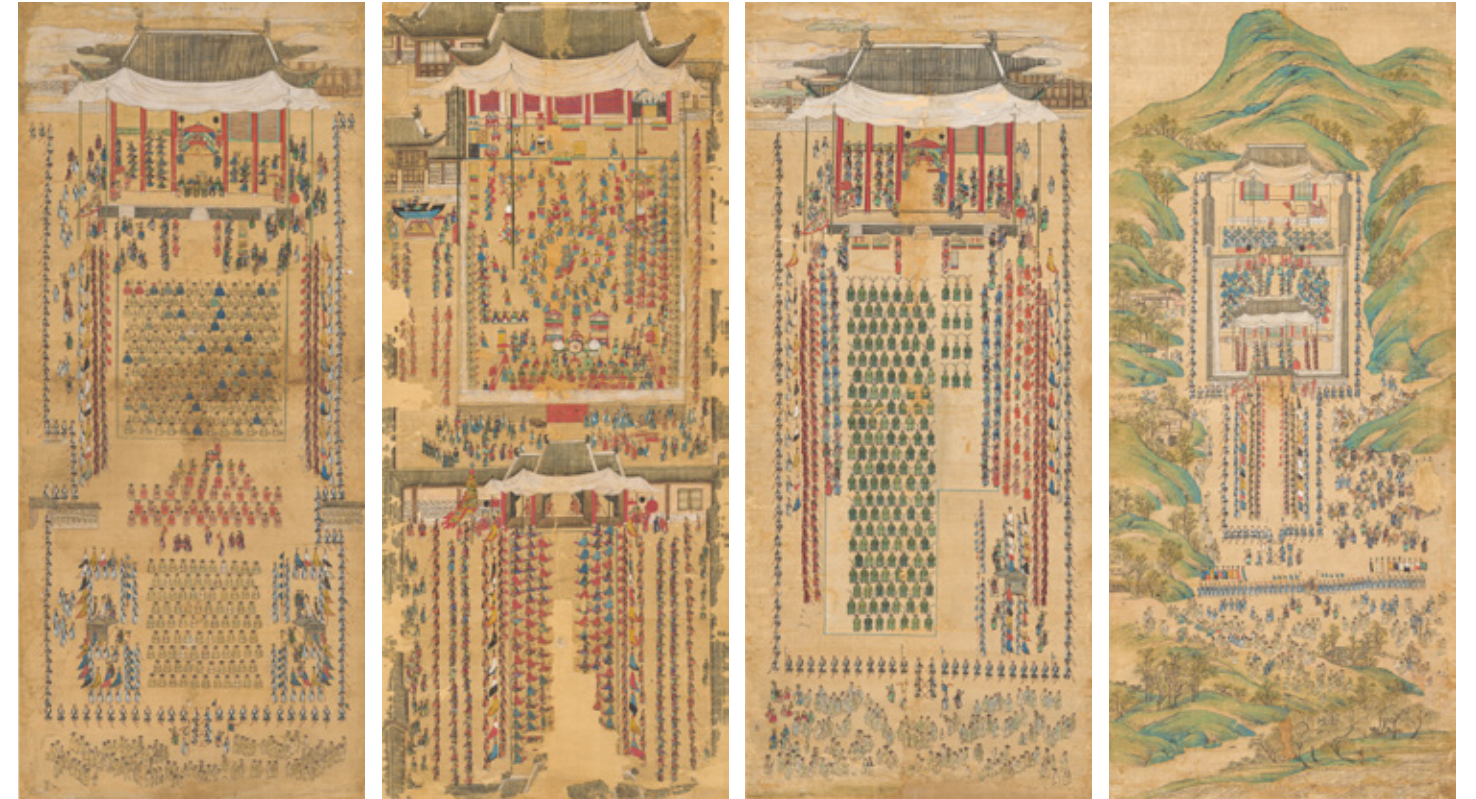
The culture of Gaya may be characterized by diversity, dynamic energy, and openness, because the people of Gaya played an active role in the maritime trading activities that linked many parts of Northeast Asia. The legacy of their dynamic maritime activities can teach us about the importance of harmony and co-prosperity. We at the Gimhae National Museum hope that the new exhibition presented here will help visitors to increase their understanding of the history and culture of Gaya, where the key factors were harmony and co-prosperity.





Never Ending Story of the Royal Procession to Hwaseong

Wise And Unbiased,
Royal Philosophy In Paintings And Calligraphy Of The Joseon Dynasty,
Special Exhibition, National Museum of Korea
December 8, 2023 - March 10, 2024



In March, the leap month of the lunar year 1795, King Jeongjo (r. 1776-1800), together with his mother, Royal Lady Hyegyeong, paid an official visit to the Hyeollyungwon Tomb, the burial site of his ill-fated father Crown Prince Sado, in Hwaseong. This historic royal visit to the area led to a series of events commemorating the occasion, such as a special state examination, banquets celebrating the queen mother's sixtieth birthday and the longevity of local elders, military drills, an archery contest, and a firework display. Many of these celebratory events and the scene of the king's return to the royal palace in Hanyang (present-day Seoul) were carefully depicted in the paintings now mounted on the eight-panel folding screen titled *Hwaseong Wonhaengdo*, or *Paintings of the Royal Procession to the city of Hwaseong in 1795*.

While it is not known whether the artists who produced these paintings attended the royal procession to make on-the-spot sketches of the historic event, the completed paintings retain vivid traces of the artists' effort to create realistic depictions of the scenes they needed to portray, highlighting the purpose of the events held during the royal procession.

The artists' attitudes towards the paintings are reflected even in the arrangement of buildings and human figures. For example, the paintings on panels one to five, which portray the celebratory events held at Temporary palace at Hwaseong Fortress, seem to be intended to highlight the vertical hierarchy of Joseon society while maintaining the style of composition traditionally used by the court painters of Joseon. In these paintings, a large building, with the principal figure sitting inside it, is located top center, with his ministers lined up in front of the building. The building has a majestic, imposing appearance, symbolizing the presence of the monarch or other principal members of the royal family related with it according to the tradition of not depicting them in paintings made to record state events held at the royal palace. Such a depiction of ministers lined up in front of the main palace building and commoners gathered in small groups below them is rarely seen in other court paintings, suggesting that these particular paintings were intended to reflect King Jeongjo's dream of an ideal state in which people live in harmony and order with their king at the center.

Events from King Jeongjo's Visit
to Hwaseong in 1795
Choi Deukhyeon(?-?), Kim
Deuksin (1754-1822) and etc.,
1795
Ink and color on silk

The painting on the sixth panel, which captures scenes of the archery contest and fireworks display held on the final day of the king's procession to Hwaseong, makes a striking contrast with the rest of the paintings in the use of composition. According to the records, King Jeongjo fired arrows at Deukjungjeong Pavilion in the afternoon of that day, and enjoyed the fireworks display held in the evening at nearby Nangnamheon Hall. The artist of this painting did not depict the main palace building in the top center of the panel, and also emptied the middle section, probably due to his intention to present both events in the same space. The lower part of the painting depicts groups of soldiers, some on horseback, surrounded by the many commoners gathered there, forming a large circle. Unlike the other paintings mounted on the same folding screen, this particular work shows no boundary between the two different groups of people, possibly because the artist aimed to recreate the exciting atmosphere of festive events that were enjoyed by every class of people - from the king's mother to lowly commoners.

In this painting, Nangnamheon Hall is located in the upper left section and is connected with the other buildings depicted above it in a T-shaped layout. These buildings, one of which is Deukjungjeong Pavilion, show how the original buildings of Hwaseong Palace were arranged. Placed directly in front of Deukjungjeong Pavilion is a temporary royal shelter which may have been installed for the queen mother, Royal Lady Hyegyenggung, as suggested by the nearby presence of the court ladies waiting to serve her. The king's mother also enjoyed the fireworks display, which was the last of the celebratory events held during King Jeongjo's visit to Hwaseong, but there is no extant record about

Archery Contest and Fireworks Display at Deukjungjeong Pavilion
Eight-panel Folding Screen of a Royal Procession to the city of Hwaseong in 1795

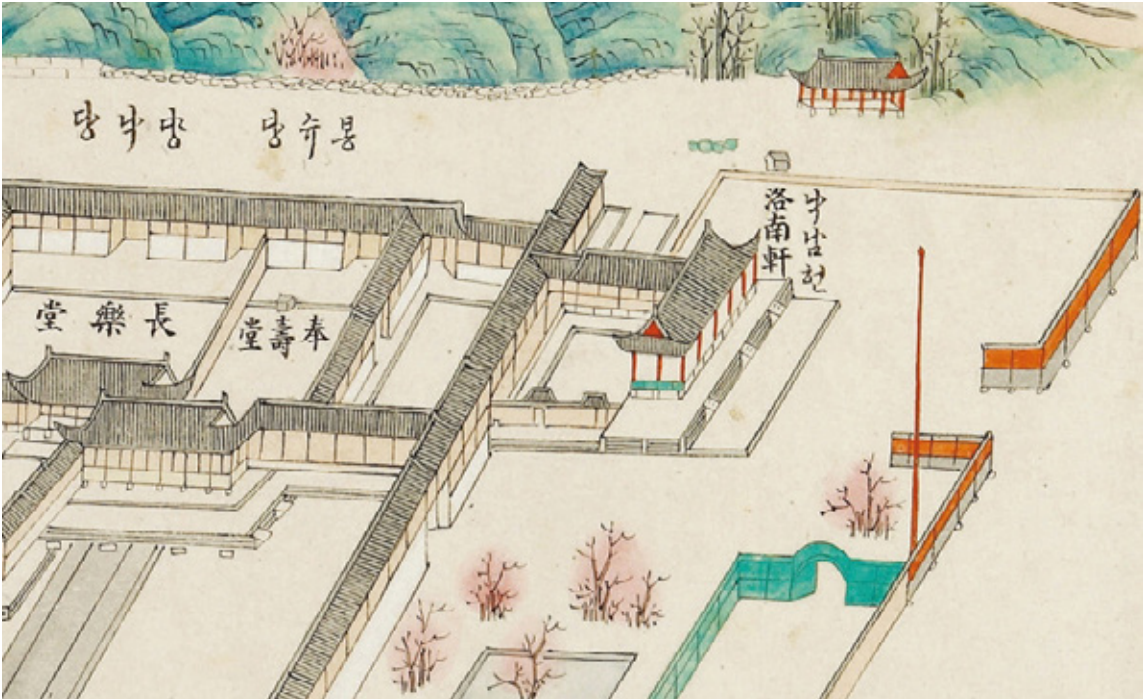


her location during the show. Remarkably, her shelter in this painting is located above Nangnamheon Hall, where King Jeongjo stayed, and the shelter is depicted larger than the Sun, Moon and Five Peaks screen and the red chair representing the king's seat in Nahgnamheon Hall, probably due to the artist's intention to exalt the queen mother's status.

The figures carrying bows and standing around the queen mother's shelter are the government officials who participated in the king's archery event held in the afternoon of the final day of the royal procession to Hwaseong. The officials are located in the same section as the court ladies waiting upon Royal Lady Hyegyenggung. Situated just below them are two lines of lantern bearers, one on each side, with a pair of large torches erected between the two. The archery contest started at four o'clock in the afternoon and, as it was getting dark, they prepared torches to help the king and his attendants continue with the event. Although the king was actually taking a rest at Nangnamheon Hall when the fireworks display started sometime after the archery event, the artists depicted both events in the same painting even though they took place at different times. The painting shows the archery target at the center of the painting and below it fireworks exploding from under the ground where the explosives were buried, thus displaying the Korean traditional style of fireworks display. While the two events took place at different times, it seems that the artist found no difficulty in placing the human figures and devices involved in the two events in the same space - largely because the events basically shared the same venue.

Another characteristic feature of this painting is that it contains details that are not directly related with its subject matter. There we can see, for example, a broken wall in the

Detail of "Temporary palace at Hwaseong Fortress" from the uigwe (royal protocol) of events from King Jeongjo's visit to Hwaseong in 1795



middle right section of the painting. Nangnamheon Hall and its front courtyard served not only as a venue for the banquet held to celebrate the longevity of the local elders, but also for the announcement of the state examination results, and for other events inviting the participation of common people. This indicates that the courtyard had to be expanded whenever necessary, resulting in the decision that it should not be completely enclosed by walls like other palace courtyards. As such, the wall enclosing this particular palace building needed to be open so that its courtyard could be expanded. That is why the open section of the wall was designed to be covered by a separate set of movable walls made of wooden slabs which could be removed and re-installed easily according to the circumstances. One can also see in "A View of Hwaseong Palace" (Hwaseong Haenggungdo) Nangnamheon Hall enclosed by roofed, wooden-slab walls, which shows that the painting of King Jeongjo's procession to Hwaseong was elaborated down to the smallest detail, providing interesting clues about how the palace was operated.

In the lower part of the painting one can see yet more palace buildings whose names and purposes remain unknown. Yet further down, the painting even shows a part of the fortress wall linked with a lofty gatehouse. One may argue that it is Jangnammun Gate, the northern entrance to the fortified city of

Hwaseong, as it is the one closest to Nangnamheon Hall. But the truth is that the gate was actually situated one kilometer away from the hall and could not be seen from there. As the artist decided to paint Jangnammun Gate in this particular work, he must have had a reason for doing so. Did he need to show the gate because it would be the one through which King Jeongjo had to pass when he left the city for Hanyang the following morning? Or did the artist want to use the gate as a symbol of the completion of the great enterprise of creating the new fortified city of Hwaseong? The painting even shows the "jar wall" designed to protect the fortress gate even though it had not yet been completed when the king visited Hwaseong in March, the leap month of the lunar year 1795. That is why some art historians believe that the gate symbolizes King Jeongjo's burning desire to see the completion of his dream city in the near future.

As suggested so far, all of the paintings of King Jeongjo's visit to Hwaseong in 1795 mounted on the eight-panel folding screen have stories to tell, not only of the subject matters thus captured but also of the artists' struggle to deliver them effectively. I hope that many more viewers will be given an opportunity to take a closer look at these paintings and detect more clues that could lead to fresh, new interpretations.



- 1 The showcase of the seven different techniques to decorate Buncheong ware
- 2 Installing scene of the last showcase
- 3 Buncheong shards and deformed vessels

Perfectly Imperfect: Korean Buncheong Ceramics

Special Exhibition at the Denver Art Museum, USA
December 3, 2023 – December 7, 2025



When I visited the lecture meeting titled “K-Pop Dance Academy” held one evening at a coffee shop on the top floor of an art gallery in Denver, USA, I didn’t notice any Koreans in the audience that had gathered for the event. In the dance session that followed the lecture, the participants were dancing in perfect unison under the choreographer’s guidance to the music of the song *Super Shy* by the K-pop girl group *NewJeans*. Although I was a Korean sharing the same nationality as the group, I struggled hard to follow the movements of the arms and the dance steps of these “foreign girls”. I was particularly fascinated by a girl who was far younger than me, as her warm-up routine suggested to me that she was not an ordinary dancer. I also saw in the eyes of the participants that they were serious and ready for perfection in choreography. I was amazed at their enthusiastic interest in Korean pop culture. I also wondered how the Korean cultural heritage that had been specially prepared for the local K-pop fans would be received. I was kept awake by a mixture of anticipation and anxiety about that night.

When we began to install the fixtures and furnishings for the exhibition at the Denver Art Museum, the crowd of people that showed up was much larger than I expected. The work of installing the pedestal and support for the showcase and displaying the objects is usually done by a skeleton staff to ensure the safety of valuable cultural relics. We, however, had to exchange ideas with more than ten staff members even for the simple work of furnishing a display case, because the Denver Art Museum had an independent team responsible for inspecting the exhibition space and producing and installing the exhibition furniture. What was remarkable was that the preparation process was carried out very smoothly in an efficient, cooperative manner despite the involvement of such a large group of people, because all of the participants were fully aware of their responsibilities.

I was also greatly impressed by the fact that the staff of the museum continued to freely exchange ideas about the objects whenever they completed the installation of a display case. They were particularly interested in the diverse techniques and designs used to decorate the *Buncheong* wares, praising their audacity and creativity. They seemed to be fascinated by, among other things, the showcase designed to exhibit the seven different techniques used to decorate Buncheong barrel-shaped bottle, calling it the “BTS showcase.” The seven barrel-shaped bottle (*janggun*) displayed in this ‘best’ showcase, which was placed against a serene, light purple wall, were designed to show the seven main decorative techniques applied to the surface of *Buncheong* ware, including inlaying (*sanggam*), stamping (*inhwa*), incision (*johwa*), sgraffito (*bakji*), underglaze iron painting (*cheolhwa*), brushing (*gwiyal*), and glaze dipping (*bunjang*).

Although the process of installing and displaying the objects went smoothly, what really troubled us - against all our expectations - was the last showcase, which was going to display *Buncheong* shards and vessels that were deformed during the firing process. The showcase was intended to show forty-eight items of fifteen different types of *Buncheong*, amounting to almost half of the objects that our museum sent for the exhibition in Denver. The preparation of the last showcase involved the process of cutting transparent plastic film into shapes designed to fit the base of each object item and then laying the cut shapes between the base of the object and the support used to display it, in order to keep both from directly touching each other. It was a rather arduous, time-consuming task as we needed to arrange all the pieces on a brown sheet of paper, draw the outline of the base of each item, and then cut the film according to the outline before laying the shaped piece of film between the base of each object and the top of its support. The final process of fixing the objects to their

support so that they would not be shaken or fall was also a difficult job that required a lot of time and elaborate effort. As this work was directly related with the safety of the valuable cultural heritages, we needed to be very careful. All the other participants were cooperative, patiently waiting until the fixing work was completed, and when we finally finished it they gave us a big hand, shouting out congratulations. For me, it was the most memorable moment in my experience of the Denver exhibition.

Unfortunately, I had to return to Korea on the day before the opening of the exhibition, so I didn’t get the opportunity to witness the atmosphere of the opening night and the response of the first visitors. I did, however, hear from a staff member of the Denver Art Museum some details about the exhibition opening. According to her, the museum held a special demonstration program for those visiting the exhibition on the opening day in which they were given an opportunity to make a *Buncheong* object by themselves under the guidance of *Buncheong* artist Jo Hyangjin. The participants were helped to choose the design they wanted to decorate their *Buncheong* vessel using a variety of traditional techniques. The special overseas exhibitions of Korean cultural heritage organized by the National Museum of Korea are intended to reflect the interest of local museum goers and the cultural trends of their country. The organizers of our museum conceived effective measures for delivering the aesthetic merits of Korean art and culture to local art lovers and attracting their attention. I hope that this particular special exhibition, *Perfectly Imperfect: Korean Buncheong Ceramics*, will guide foreign visitors to the many innate charms of the Korean art of *Buncheong* and help them to pick the object they are most attracted to. I also hope that they will pay closer attention to Korean culture, just like the enthusiastic K-pop fans I met one day in Denver, and visit this special exhibition.



I'm Here to Meet the Spirit of My Father

A meeting with Park Nohwon, daughter of the great art collector Dr. Park Byeong-rae, the donor of 375 Joseon Dynasty ceramic objects

The news of the reopening of the Donated Collection Gallery in the National Museum of Korea on January 12 of this year caused an elderly lady named Park Nohwon to hurry to the museum. Her journey to the museum was not an easy one because, being an aged woman suffering from infirmities, she had to rely on a wheelchair for mobility. Nevertheless, she found the journey an exciting one as it would give her an opportunity to meet her father's special legacy. There in the reopened exhibition hall she found her father's "darlings" displayed in an even more attractive manner. We met her while she was enjoying her reunion with her father or, more precisely, a collection of ceramic works treasured by her father.

A man who loved artworks from the past

The great art collector Dr. Park Byeong-rae (1903-1974) was a father who was able to offer his children an environment conducive to the accumulation of extraordinary childhood memories. His children were born and raised at a time when Korean society was pursuing what was new and modern in people's daily lives, yet their home was packed with rare antique objects, as if Dr. Park wished to swim against the current of the times. "But I liked our home," says Park Nohwon, who was not envious of their friends because she was proud of her father's enthusiasm for collecting precious vintage objects. It was the only activity that her father, a doctor and devout Catholic eager to help his patients, indulged in for his own pleasure.

"I still vividly remember my father examining small antique objects with great care. He tended to wake up all his children even in the middle of the night whenever he came home with a new item, trying to persuade us of its beauty and value. It was not easy for us to understand what he was talking about, but we had to listen to him, amazed by the state of great excitement our father was in (laughs). We had to fight hard to stay awake and listen."

It should never have been possible

for a young girl to understand that her father's hobby was in fact an expression of atonement for his ignorance of the cultural heritage of his country. Her father, Dr. Park Byeong-rae is now widely regarded as one of the greatest art connoisseurs of his time, but he once said that he had long been haunted by the embarrassing memory that he had been "a Korean who knew nothing about the value of even a single piece of Korean ceramics." And that is why he began to collect antiques one by one. And his children inevitably became busier on the days he brought a newly purchased item home, while his wife would be busy the next day.

"It was my mother's job to clean the antiques, which were often coated with dirt and grime. She would wrap each one tightly in a cotton cloth and put it in a bowl of lye, and repeated the same process several times until all the grime had been removed. She then kept on wiping the washed object until it revealed its original color and form, without ever uttering a word of complaint."

Remarkably, Dr. Park kept none of these antiques in a storeroom like other collectors usually did at the time. His antiques were used as decorative household objects, for practical purposes such as serving guests, or as his own sweet jar, or even as playthings for his children. His collection of Joseon Dynasty white porcelain gradually turned his home into an exhibi-

tion hall. As an art collector, Dr. Park Byeong-rae preserved the lifespan and value of his Joseon ceramic vessels by incorporating them into his and his family's daily life.

Choices that were always right and warm

Dr. Park Byeong-rae was a widely admired physician. In the eyes of his daughter, Park Nohwon, however, he was a father who always maintained a reserved manner when uttering words that might enhance his prestige as a doctor. While he was not interested in gaining fame and success as a doctor, he was prepared to do anything to ensure the safety and wellbeing of his patients. When he heard about the opening of St. Mary's Hospital (Seongmo Byeongwon) in 1936, he dropped everything to serve as its first director according to his belief that it was the best decision he could make to help the sick and the poor.

"At one time I was doubtful about his decision to serve and sacrifice himself for poor people in dire need. Looking back later, however, I found that it was natural for my father to come to such a conclusion. He was born into a family that had remained faithful to its Catholic principles through successive generations, so philanthropism had always formed the core of the family tradition."



Essays on Ceramics (1974)
A book that compiles anecdotes about Dr. Park Byeong-rae's collection of ceramics



Park Nohwon and her daughter
Dr. Park Byeong-rae's noble spirit
has been passed down from
generation to generation

What guided the devoted medical practitioner Dr. Park Byeong-rae in his daily life was his unconditional love for people who most needed help. It was in the same spirit that he donated a large collection of Joseon Dynasty white porcelain to the museum. Although he was one of the leading connoisseurs and biggest collectors of his time, he decided to donate his treasures to ensure their safety and to promote future research.

“Our home was crowded and noisy almost every evening. My father had numerous visitors, most of whom were from museums. The visitors included Chung Yangmo, then a curator of the National Museum of Korea who would later become its director. He seemed to talk with my father about the artifacts of his own private collection.”

I think that it was around that time that my father decided to donate his treasures to the National Museum of Korea due not only to their friendship but the deep trust established between the two of them.

Dr. Park made the donation in 1974, when he reached the age of seventy. Upon donating 375 objects to the National Museum of Korea, Dr. Park said that he was as happy as if he were “marrying his daughter to a man from a gentle, dignified

family.” The donor’s joyful statement still rings in the ears of his daughter, who is now over ninety years old. For her, the ceramics her father donated to the museum are as precious as his last words. The donation led the museum to plan a special exhibition to commemorate Dr. Park Byeong-rae’s honorable contribution but, sadly, he died a few days before the exhibition.

The Donor’s Continuing Legacy

Further donations of the artworks collected by Dr. Park were made even after his death. For the donor’s family, who shared their home with a large collection of antique ceramic works, the decision to donate their treasures was quite natural.

“Some people asked us why we hadn’t sold such a huge amount of valuable artifacts given that it would provide a large fortune for our family. To me the question seemed strange because for us these artworks are a part of our family. We can’t sell our family to make money.”

Park Nohwon said that what she obtained from her father was not only knowledge of the old artifacts he collected but also how they should be treated. She remembers that her father treasured every item of his collection and loved meeting

people who appreciated its value. The donor might have danced for joy if he were invited here today to the Donated Collection Gallery in the National Museum of Korea, because not only his children - who had to fight off sleep as they struggled to pay closer attention to his words - and their own children, but also art lovers from many different parts of the world will come to view the treasures he donated and listen to his stories.

“Just the simple act of looking at my father’s legacy gives me the energy I need to keep going. It has become the driving force of my life. Nothing could be a more glorious halo for his descendants. It’s okay by me if all the visitors are ignorant of the name of my father, the donor of all these exquisite artworks. All I want is that these wonderful donations attract more people in the days ahead.”

Memories are destined to fade away regardless of their subject. Some memories, however, tend to become clearer with the passage of time. The legacy of the great art collector Dr. Park Byeong-rae, his love for the artworks of the past, may belong to the latter. The task of protecting and nurturing that love has fallen to us as visitors to the Donated Collection Gallery at the National Museum of Korea.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KOREA



EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

1 Companions on the Eternal Journey: Earthenware Figurines and Vessels from Ancient Korea

This is the catalogue of the special exhibition, *Companions on the Eternal Journey*, held from May 26 to October 9, 2023. The people of Silla and Gaya established the tradition of burying the dead together with pottery figurines of humans and animals, as well as pottery in the form of various other natural and artificial objects, and other pottery objects mounted with figurines that reflected their belief in life after death. The first half of the catalogue introduces a wide range of pottery figurines including a dragon, a bird, a horse, a cart and a boat, and the five figurative vessels unearthed from Marisan Tomb No. 45 in Haman. The second half of the catalogue focuses on the Hwangnam-dong Archeological Site in Gyeongju, from which the largest ever number of Silla earthen figurines was unearthed, and the figurines newly discovered at the Jjoksaem Site, also in Gyeongju. The catalogue also introduces the reader to a collection of about one hundred recently restored earthenware vessels mounted with figurines.

220×280mm | 328p | ₩32,000 | ISBN 979-11-93060-00-1

2 Wise and Unbiased, Royal Philosophy in the Paintings and Calligraphy of the Joseon Dynasty

This catalogue was published for the special exhibition, *Wise and Unbiased, Royal Philosophy in the Paintings and Calligraphy of the Joseon Dynasty*, which was held from December 8, 2023 to March 10, 2024 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the coronation of King Yeongjo. The catalogue contains an essay about the king's use of calligraphy and painting to represent his wishes for the success of his nonpartisanship policy, together with the photo plates of fifty-six artifacts displayed in the exhibition and four articles written by experts on the exhibits. The catalogue also contains a wealth of specialized information about the exhibits, including their names in Chinese and Korean, and references. An English edition of the catalogue is also planned for publication.

225×280mm | 264p | ₩30,000 | ISBN 979-11-93056-04-2

3 National Museum of Korea: The Permanent Exhibition

This book is a revised version of the English catalogue published by the National Museum of Korea in 2017. It reflects the results of the efforts to renovate the Museum's permanent exhibition halls over the last five years. It contains introductions to the main artifacts in its collection, which have been arranged according to specific themes and the rooms, and includes two new sections, the "Room of Quiet Contemplation," which exhibits two pieces of pensive bodhisattva, both listed as National Treasures, and "World Art," which focuses on artistic achievements from around the world. The book also includes a chronology of the museum," providing the reader with a comprehensive overview of the museum's dynamic history, including its past, present, and future.

210×260mm | 372p | ₩50,000 | ISBN 978-89-93518-34-4

ACADEMIC JOURNALS

4 Journal of Korean Art and Archaeology, Vol. 18

The National Museum of Korea publishes its annual English-language periodical, *Journal of Korean Art and Archaeology*, as part of the wider effort to introduce to the global academic community some of the latest and most important achievements made in Korea in the fields of archaeology, history, and art history. This year's volume of the journal (Vol. 18) contains five theses, "Uigwe, the Archival Culture of Joseon Dynasty," "History of Uigwe Studies in the Field of Korean History," "The Process of Uigwe Production as Described in the Regulations on Uigwe Production," "Basic Facts about the Outer Gyujanggak Uigwe Collection and Its Achievements," and "Organization and Responsibilities of the Directorate for Registration of the Merits of Bunmu Meritorious Subjects in the Early Phase of King Yeongjo's Reign." The journal also contains an essay about the collection of the National Museum of Korea titled "Restoration of the Reed Mat Attached with a Chinese Document in the Collection of the National Museum of Korea."

210×280mm | Annual | 130p | Not for Sale | ISSN 2577-9842

REPORTS AND REFERENCE BOOKS

5 Outer Gyujanggak Academic Book Series 7

On December 31, 2023, the National Museum of Korea published *Study of the Oegyujanggak Uigwe, Royal Protocols of the Joseon Dynasty: Rituals of Remembrance and Restoration in the Late Joseon Dynasty*, its latest achievement in the study of the Outer Gyujanggak Uigwe Collection. For this academic series, in-depth studies were made of fourteen books of Uigwe detailing the ceremonies conducted for the conferment of posthumous honorary titles, the restoration of status, the enshrinement of mortuary tablets, and the entombment of members of the royal family during the reigns of King Hyeonjong, King Sukjong and King Yeongjo in the late Joseon Dynasty. These studies have resulted in the production of eight theses that aim to analyze all the processes of the rituals concerned, from the stage of counseling and preparation to their results and influences. These theses are now highly regarded for their extensive use of specific primary sources, contributing to a deeper understanding of the ceremonies and rituals observed by the Joseon Dynasty.

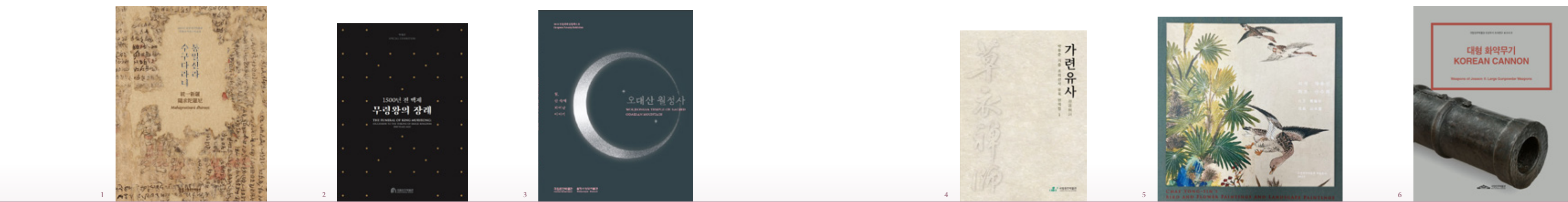
195×263mm | 436p | Not for Sale | ISBN 978-89-93773-23-1

6 Korean Ceramics of the National Museum of Korea Volume 2: Sculptural Celadon of the Goryeo Dynasty II, Ewer, Water Dropper, Seal, Pillow, Ink Jar, Basin, Bowl, Brush Stand, Others

The National Museum of Korea published the second book of the Korean Pottery Catalogue Series on December 8, 2023, for which ceramic works in the collection of the National Museum of Korea were studied in detail. Thirty-six figurative vessels in twenty-four categories were selected from among the sculptural celadon of the Goryeo Dynasty in the museum's collection, including ewer, water dropper, seal, pillow, ink jar, basin, bowl, and brush stand. In addition to the general introductions, the book presents the results of scientific analyses together with detailed explanations, photographs, drawings with measurements, and CT scanning. The combination of traditional research techniques with modern scientific methods exploiting the latest analytical devices resulted in the discovery of the techniques that made the figurative works of Goryeo celadon so uniquely different.

225×280mm | 255p | Not for Sale | ISBN 978-89-8164-262-4 | ISBN 978-89-8164-255-6 (Set)

REGIONAL NATIONAL MUSEUMS



EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

1 Gyeongju National Museum | Mahapratishara Dharani of Unified Silla Kingdom

This book is a catalogue and academic source book published for the special exhibition, Incantation of the Wish-Fulfillment Amulet, held at the Gyeongju National Museum from October 24, 2023 to January 28, 2024. The catalogue contains the results of the basic research and scientific analysis of the gilt-bronze sutra container used to store the Sanskrit-Chinese dharani in the collection of the National Museum of Korea. The analysis revealed that both the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the dharani were produced in Korea, and that they are the oldest extant versions of the Mahapratishara dharani in Korea.

220×285mm | 127P | Not for Sale | ISBN 979-11-91318-11-1

2 Gongju National Museum | The Funeral of King Muryeong of Baekje Kingdom 1,500 Years Ago

The special exhibition commemorating the death of King Muryeong (r. 501-523) of the Baekje Kingdom, held from September 19, 2023 to February 18, 2024, aimed to restore King Muryeong’s funeral and the following three-year period of mourning from the fifth month of 523 to the eighth month of 525, which was led by the deceased king’s son and successor, King Seong. The exhibition catalogue contains a wealth of interesting information, including photo plates of about 120 artifacts that were unearthed from King Muryeong’s tomb, as well as eight articles about the funerals of Baekje royals and two subjects written by Park Sunbal and Na Hui-ra.

190×260mm | 224P | ₩28,000 | ISBN 978-89-98234-70-6 (93600)

3 Chuncheon National Museum | Woljeongsa Temple in Sacred Odaesan Mountain 1,500 Years Ago

This catalogue of the special exhibition, *Woljeongsa Temple on Sacred Odaesan Mountain* (September 26 – December 25, 2023), was produced to help readers deepen their understanding of the history of Odaesan Mountain and Korean Buddhist culture in general, as well as the individual artworks presented in the exhibition. The catalogue contains an introduction to the exhibition written by the exhibition organizer, and essays written by fifteen experts on the tradition of Buddhist worship based around Odaesan Mountain and archival records from the Joseon Dynasty.

225×280mm | 236P | ₩30,000 | ISBN 978-89-98234-71-3

TRANSLATED MATERIALS

4 Gwangju National Museum | Profound Verses on Shakyamuni and the Lotus – Volume 1, Posthumous Works of Calligraphy Seon Master Choui, Donated by Park Dongchun

This book of posthumous calligraphic works by Seon Master Choui, donated by Park Dongchun, is a translation of *Profound Verses on Shakyamuni and the Lotus* (Garyeon Yusa), which was produced at the poetry meetings held at Daeheungsa Temple in Jeollanam-do in 1818 and 1819. As tangible evidence of the social gatherings involving local Buddhist monks and the pupils of Jeong Yak-yong, a great Neo-Confucian thinker of the late Joseon Dynasty, this collection of 300 poetic works is regarded as an important source material for studies of the tea drinking culture of the late Joseon Dynasty.

185×250mm | 324P | Not for Sale | ISBN 978-89-86824-68-1, 978-89-86824-67-4 (Set)

REPORTS

5 Jeonju National Museum | 2023 Jeonju National Museum Academic Book Series – Chae Yongshin’s Bird and Flower Paintings and Landscape Paintings

This book about the art of Chae Yongshin, an early modern artist who produced countless paintings to meet the demand of art lovers in the Jeollabuk-do area, contains detailed photo plates of both his flower and bird paintings and his landscape paintings, along with the related critical commentaries. The perusal and selection of his paintings for this book was greatly helped by the access we were granted to the collections of the National Museum of Korea, Amore Pacific Museum of Art, and Jeongeup City Museum. For the purposes of this book, the art of Chae Yongshin is divided into four categories: Longevity, Flower and Bird Paintings, Animal Paintings, and Landscape and Portrait Paintings. The book also contains six research papers focusing on the characteristics of Chae’s flower and bird paintings and landscapes, his seal, and his method of scroll mounting.

270×270mm | 276P | Not for Sale | ISBN 979-11-87804-10-9

6 Jinju National Museum | Report on the Study of Weapons of Joseon II – Large Gunpowder Weapons

This book is the second report on the research into the weaponry of the Joseon Dynasty - large gunpowder weapons in particular - conducted by the research team of Jinju National Museum. The report discusses ninety-six firearms represented by barrel guns such as the *Cheonja*, *Jija*, *Hyeonja* and *Hwangja*, together with 326 rocket launchers including the *Janggunjeon* and the *Bigyeok Jincheolloe*. The report also contains photographs of the weaponry introduced in the book, together with their specifications and inscriptions, and the results of scientific analyses.

227×285mm | 345P | Not for Sale | ISBN 979-11-972131-9-9

Museum For All

● The Korean National Museums’ core plan for 2024 is to enhance regional cultural heritage accessibility and prosperity. The National Museum of Korea has expanded its “Service for All” space, offering improved accessibility features like synesthesia maps and tactile exhibits for people with disabilities. It also hosts touring exhibitions, including Lee Kun-Hee’s collection and Ancient Korean Earthenware, at regional museums. Collaborations like “*Life and Art of Native Americans*” with the Denver Art Museum will reach museums across Korea, aiming to create inclusive cultural spaces for all.

Expansion

● The Cultural Heritage Conservation Science Center, which is scheduled to open in 2025 as a subordinate institution of the National Museum of Korea, will perform the scientific analysis, assessment, and smart remote diagnosis of the national museum collections based on digital technology, with the aim of becoming a leading player in the effort to protect and preserve Korea’s cultural heritage. The scope of its support activities will gradually be expanded to include university museums and the Korean cultural galleries of overseas museums. The National Museum of Korea will also oversee the opening and re-opening of its regional affiliates with specialized exhibition spaces. These include the Chungju National Museum, which is scheduled to open in 2026 as a space dedicated to the history and culture of the area covering north Chungcheong and south Gangwon, and the Jinju National Museum, which will reopen at a new site within a new building designed through an international competition. It is hoped that the new museum will continue to remain a cultural landmark of the city of Jinju and its vicinity. Each of these new institutions is expected to strengthen its special connection with its respective local area, contributing to the effort to promote opportunities for local people to enjoy their historical and cultural heritage.

Sharing

● The National Museum of Korea and its regional affiliates are actively collaborating with external organizations, conducting research on colonial-period materials and cultural heritage sites. They aim to enhance academic research through increased exchanges with experts and regularly share their achievements with the public through reports and reference books on their website. The *Museum Missions* book series, focusing on museum collection management, will continue this year, including the publication of video works to contribute to the theorization and systematization of their mission.

K- Museum

● The National Museum of Korea is solidifying its global presence as a leading “K-Museum” dedicated to promoting “K-Culture” worldwide. Recently reopening its Donated Collection Gallery with a focus on cultural heritage donations, it features a digital display of the Gwanggaeto Stele, highlighting Goguryeo’s historical importance. Additionally, plans are underway to reintroduce the Prehistory and Ancient History section, providing visitors with a comprehensive journey through Korea’s rich past. In celebration of its reopening, the museum will host special exhibitions showcasing Goryeo celadon vessels and East Asian lacquerware, in collaboration with esteemed institutions from Japan and China. Meanwhile, its regional affiliates will continue to present exhibitions reflecting local cultural traditions. Acknowledging the expanding influence of K-Culture beyond pop culture, the museum is extending support to Korean galleries in prestigious overseas museums. Through these collaborations, it aims to facilitate high-quality exhibitions and foster exchanges with experts, enhancing the global recognition of K-Culture.

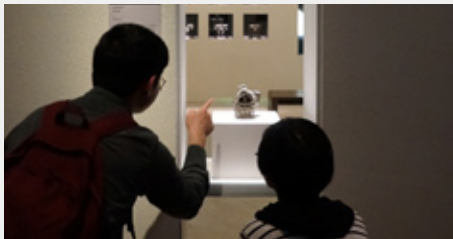
Future

● The National Museum of Korea is dedicated to the development of new and unique contents that can satisfy the demands of the new generation of museum goers, including youths and people in their 50s and 60s, who now constitute the major power in the consumption of culture. The museum recently launched a special systematic training program to educate its staff and partnered experts and help them to adapt to the changed environment. The museum expects that its new initiative will help lay the firm foundation required for the cultural services that will be provided to the general public in the future. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution unfolds before us, the National Museum of Korea is making a series of preparations for the arrival of the new era. The museum has begun to establish policies aimed at diversifying its collection, prepare events to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the museum’s Yongsan era in 2025, and lay firm foundations for the construction of the museum archives based on the systematic classification and arrangement of the artifacts in its collection. New cultural contents fused with new technologies, such as digital-based exhibitions and remote educational programs, have already become main attractions of the museum. The National Museum of Korea will continue to devote all its resources to creating a more effective fusion between traditional and modern knowledge and skills and accordingly create a richer Korean cultural heritage in the future.

The National Museum of Korea and its thirteen affiliates across Korea are dedicated to creating a “museum for all”. As the leading cultural institutions of Korea, attracting a combined total of more than ten million visitors last year, they are continuously expanding their services for the Korean public who go to museums and fulfilling their mission as centers of research and hosts of fascinating exhibitions. The following five key expressions represent the main plans of the National Museums of Korea.

1 KOREAN NATIONAL MUSEUMS, OPENING THE ERA OF TEN MILLION VISITORS A YEAR

Korean National Museums set an all-time attendance record in the fiscal year 2023



Last December, figures showed that a record-breaking 10,470,000 people visited the thirteen National Museums of Korea, the highest attendance figure in the history of the Korean National Museums. As for Affiliated National Museums excluding the National Museum of Korea, last year's figure came close to the previous record of 6.62 million visitors set in 2019, showing a complete recovery of the level recorded before the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to The Art Newspaper's Visitor Figures survey conducted in 2022 by *The Art Newspaper*, a British journal of the visual arts world, the National Museum of Korea in Seoul was visited by 3,411,381 people, making it the fifth most visited art museum in the world. The list was topped by the Musée du Louvre in Paris, which attracted 7,726,321 visitors, followed by the Vatican Museums (5,080,866) in the Vatican City; the British Museum (4,097,253) in London, England; and the Tate Modern (3,883,160), also in London.

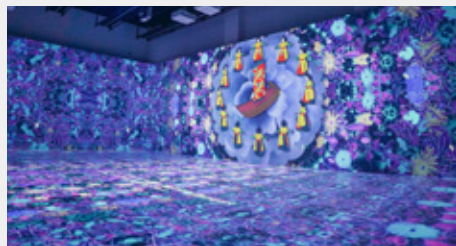
The main contributing factor to the increase in the numbers of visitors to the Korean national museums was a series of special exhibitions presented by Affiliated National Museums. Designed to focus on local cultures with exhibits specially selected from their collections, these events received an enthusiastic reception from local museum goers. The highest increase of over 30% was achieved by the Daegu National Museum and the Cheongju National Museum with *Invitation from a Certain Collector*, a special exhibition of artworks donated by Lee Kun-Hee, the late chairman of Samsung and devoted art collector. The growth in the number of visitors was also greatly helped by the recovery of the tourism industry in the post-Covid period, which

contributed to attracting numerous art lovers - Korean and international - to the local museums.

"The ten million people who visited the Korean national museums," declared Yoon Sungyong, director of the National Museum of Korea, "have reassured us that our museums meet the global standard both in reality and in name, and we will continue to support and cooperate with our affiliates to promote the vitality of our local cultures."

2 KOREAN DIGITAL ART CHARMS FILIPINO ART LOVERS

Special Exhibition Marking the 75th Anniversary of Korean-Filipino Relations



The National Museum of Korea is currently holding an exhibition titled *Endless Landscape: Digitally Reimagined Korean Art* (January 19 - June 29, 2024) at the Korean Cultural Center in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. The exhibition, organized to commemorate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and the Philippines, is regarded as the museum's first achievement in the Philippines through its Overseas Korean Galleries Support Program. The museum organized the digital art exhibition to address the lack of Korean art collections or spaces dedicated to Korean art in Filipino institutions.

This exhibition presents four immersive video works created by the National Museum of Korea and the Chuncheon National Museum. The four works, "Endless Mountains and Rivers," "Royal Processions," "Chongseok Rocks," and "Peonies," are reinterpretations of Korean traditional paintings made using the latest digital technology. This new technology enables an unconventional approach to conveying the stories embodied in cultural heritage in a richer and more plausible manner. The exhibition is expected to give Filipino art lovers an opportunity to take one step closer to Korea's rich cultural and artistic heritage.

3 REOPENING OF THE SEOKJEON MEMORIAL ROOM, JEONJU NATIONAL MUSEUM



Last December, after extensive renovation work, the Jeonju National Museum finally reopened the Seokjeon Memorial Room, which was created to commemorate the artistic achievements of Hwang Uk (art name: Seokjeon, 1898-1897), who was active in Jeonju and ultimately become one of the greatest calligraphers of his time. Originally opened in November 2002 with a collection of Seokjeon's calligraphic works that was donated to the museum by his son Hwang Byeonggeun, the room features a video introduction of Hwang Uk's life and art as well as a collection of his calligraphic works, stationery and implements he used to create these works, and other related items. The collection ranges from his early works produced in 1965, which are marked by delightfully neat and tidy scripts, to the works he created after he developed a new "fist brushing" technique in an effort to overcome hand tremors, and the left-handed works he produced in his last years. The exhibition also includes videos introducing the name plaques of a number of historic sites and buildings in the area, such as Omokdae Terrace, Hanbyeokdang Hall, Yowol-dae Terrace, Gyesanseowon Confucian Academy, and Gochangupseong Fortress, which were written by Hwang Uk, as well as a scene of the artist wielding his brush, and an interview with the donor, Hwang Byeonggeun. The exhibition is regarded as a marvelous introduction to the life and art of Hwang Uk, who overcame many hardships in his life and succeeded in developing his own wonderful world of calligraphy.

ARRIVAL OF MUSEUM GIFTS AND SOUVENIRS WITH THE GENTLE BREEZE OF SPRING

1 CHOCHUNGDO POUCHES (FLOWERS)

This pair of pouches decorated with beautiful spring flowers was inspired by the Chochungdo (Flower and Insects) paintings of Shin Saimdang, a renowned female artist of the mid-Joseon Dynasty. They will make the perfect gift for anyone celebrating the arrival of spring.

SIZE: 210x150mm MATERIAL: Cotton 100%
PRICE: 15,000 Won Each

2 CHOCHUNGDO COTTON BAGS (2 TYPES)

These handy bags are printed with attractive designs inspired by Chochungdo paintings and reinterpreted by the textile designer Yu Soyeong. Made with cotton in a comfortable size, these spring bags can be used in every season.

SIZE: 380x415mm MATERIAL: Cotton 100%
PRICE: 25,000 Won Each

3 MINHWA (FOLK PAINTING) DISHES (CHOCHUNGDO)

This set of three decorative tableware items was conceived from the Korean folk paintings of Chochungdo ("Flowers and Insects"). The delightfully simple images of spring flowers, butterfly, watermelon and dragonfly make them a wonderful spring gift.

SIZE: (Oval) 165x120x12mm, (Carved) 89x94x18mm,
(Incense Holder) 60x60x35mm MATERIAL: Pottery
PRICE: 90,000 Won

4 CHOCHUNGDO PARASOL

The Korean folk paintings of Chochungdo have long been a popular gift for close friends and relatives. The lovely combination of auspicious images with an essential summer item makes for a great gift idea.

SIZE: (Collapsed) 340mm, (Opened) radius of 480mm
MATERIAL: Polyester, UV protection
PRICE: 70,000 Won

5 CELADON TUMBLERS (PEONY DESIGN JARS)

An essential item of modern daily life combined with the elegance of ancient Goryeo celadon. The archaic beauty of the celadon jar decorated with spring flowers makes the tumbler an attractive spring gift.

SIZE: 68x175mm (350ml) MATERIAL: Stainless steel
and silicon PRICE: 25,000 Won

6 JEJU HANGARI GLASS MUG (CAMELLIA)

This glass mug features the cartoon character Mua, conceived from an image of the Dongjaseok (Immortal Boy) of Jeju carrying a camellia blossom. The boy decorating this attractive drinking cup looks ready to tell great stories about spring on the island.

SIZE: 85x85x95mm MATERIAL: Heat-resistant glass
PRICE: 20,000 Won

7 MEMO PADS (FLOWERS AND BUTTERFLY / 2 TYPES)

A pair of memo pads finished with a hardcover printed with the famous painting *Hwajeopdo* (Flowers and Butterfly) by Nam Gyeu. Nick-named Nam Nabi (Butterfly Nam), this nineteenth-century artist has been widely praised for his butterfly paintings. The appealing color tones of the flowers on the covers will ensure these products remain a cherished daily item.

SIZE: 90x170mm (60 sheets) MATERIAL: Paper
PRICE: 10,000 Won Each

8 JUNHWA KEY RINGS (2 TYPES)

The design of these exquisite key rings is inspired by *Junhwa* (Jar Flowers), the elaborately made artificial flowers that were placed in large jars to festoon royal events in the Joseon Dynasty. Jar flowers can be seen in the paintings (Banchado) of ceremonial parades held during special royal occasions.

SIZE: 50x108mm MATERIAL: Leather
PRICE: 40,000 Won Each