

NMK

National Museum of Korea

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE VOL. 71 **SPRING 2025**



**Avalokiteshvara Moves
Hearts and Gives Comforts
Across Time and Space**



Traces of the present, creating the history of humanity

When you enter the newly renovated entrance to the Prehistory and Ancient History Hall, the first thing that catches your eye is a large wall over four meters high. This wall, as tall as a two-story building, is not an ordinary wall but a huge screen which displays an introductory video of about 3 minutes and 30 seconds, outlining the history of humankind, priming the audience for the main exhibition.

The video begins with some beautiful and dynamic line art illustrations that capture visitors' attention. Next the history of humankind is depicted in a rapid sequence, such as the appearance of early humans, the use of fire and tools, cooperative hunting, and survival. The video allows visitors to look back at the role humanity has played in the Earth's 4.6-billion-year history and understand that the traces of life left by humanity have formed history as we know it. After watching the video, visitors will begin their tour of the exhibition with a sense of excitement and a question: Will the traces of this very moment be recorded as part of human history someday?

contents

02	Highlights
04	Special Exhibition Traces of Life and the Makings of History
10	Exhibition The Cultural History of Korean Incense: From Desire to Taste
14	Keyword Landscapes, Aesthetic Pleasure from Natural Landscapes
20	Artist <i>Long Long Time Flower</i> , Flower Drawings that Never Wilt
22	Focus Lunar Phases: Korean Moon Jars
26	Iconic Heritage Gold Crown and Gold Waist Belt from Cheonmachong Tomb Maitreya Buddha Triad of Jangchanggok Valley, Namsan Mountain
28	History Part 1: At Last, Settling in Yongsan
30	Conservation Creating a Revolutionary Digital Conservation Science System
34	Archive Must-See Exhibitions at the National Museums: Spring Highlights
36	News



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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, artist, period or produced date, material, dimensions. Items from other institutions are classified by their collection names.

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Highlights



Among the gold crowns of Silla, the Cheonmachong Crown is considered to be the most sumptuously decorated and the finest in terms of design. It is one of the famous National Treasures at the **Gyeongju National Museum**.

26



14

One can imagine the color and scent of the flowers, the stillness of the mountains, and the chilliness of early spring. Landscape paintings have this effect on people. They allow viewers to aesthetically appreciate the depicted scene, though they may never have been there.

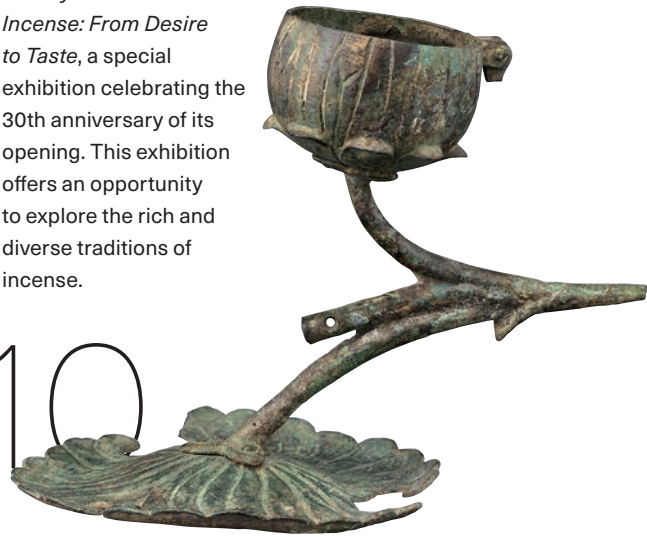
In the reopened **Prehistory and Ancient History Hall**, from the Paleolithic room to the Goguryeo room, the new exhibition covers a vast history and features a large number of exhibits accordingly.

04



The **Daegu National Museum** is proud to present *The Cultural History of Korean Incense: From Desire to Taste*, a special exhibition celebrating the 30th anniversary of its opening. This exhibition offers an opportunity to explore the rich and diverse traditions of incense.

10



20

"As a contemporary artist, it felt very rewarding to be able to transmit the values found in Shin Saimdang's work to a modern audience."



22

The special exhibition of Korean art at the **Denver Art Museum**, *Lunar Phases: Korean Moon Jars*, has been welcoming visitors since March 2, 2025. This exhibition highlights the way moon jars embrace both tradition and modernity.

The National Museum of Korea is preparing to open the Museum Conservation Science Center in October, 2025. Accordingly, since last year it has been phasing a project to establish a digital conservation science system.



30

Traces of Life and the Makings of History

Reopening of the Prehistory and Ancient History Hall,
National Museum of Korea

By **Kim Taeyoung**
Associate Curator of the Archaeology and History Division, National Museum of Korea



After a long wait, the National Museum of Korea (NMK) re-opened the Prehistory and Ancient History Hall in February this year. Closed for 228 days since July last year, the renewed space is finally ready to greet visitors with a new look. Based on the reorganization of five exhibition rooms—Paleolithic period; Neolithic period; Bronze Age period; Gojoseon, Buyeo, and Samhan periods; and Goguryeo Kingdom—the new exhibition covers a vast history and features a large number of exhibits accordingly.

One of the major differences is that illustrations and video materials have been used to great effect to show the many varied changes in people’s lives from prehistoric times to the Goguryeo Kingdom. This is a move that highlights the theme running through the renewal of the exhibition rooms, namely that the lives of people of the distant past are still tied to the lives of people today.

Introductory Video On Human Time
Visitors entering the exhibition hall will

come across a giant wall in the entryway. Reminiscent of a Monolith, the great black cuboid in Stanley Kubrick’s film *A Space Odyssey*, this wall is a receptacle of human time, which is only a fraction of the total time in the 4.6-billion-year history of the earth. Here, an introductory video shows that while humankind has not been around for long all the little traces people have left have piled up on top of each other to make history, and that history is still in progress at this very moment.

From here visitors can choose which way to go: right to see the prehistoric exhibition covering the Paleolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age periods, or left to see the ancient history exhibition covering the Gojoseon, Buyeo, and Samhan periods as well as Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla Kingdoms.

Prehistory as a Time of Human Adaptation

The prehistoric exhibition begins in the Paleolithic room. Constituting the longest period in human history, the Paleolithic Age was a tough time marked by the human struggle for survival through alternating glacial and interglacial periods. Central to life at the time were chipped stone tools. Planning of the Paleolithic exhibition was based on showing the difference between any old stone on the roadside and stone tools. Graphics and diverse videos shedding light on life in prehistoric times have been employed in order to make the subject easier to approach and understand.

The same efforts are evident in the Neolithic room. This is where visitors are given a glimpse into the way human beings lived while trying to adapt to changes in their environment. The Neolithic people adapted to a warmer climate and began to live settled lives, making tools and gradually coming to enjoy stability. As they watch a projection video of the soil layer of Dongsam-dong shell midden in Busan, and examine the recreation of a Neolithic grave on Gadeokdo Island and other displays, visitors can see how people lived back in those times and forged out their lives while adjusting to a changing environment.

After the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods, human beings took a big step forward when they began to use metal. The Bronze Age room explores the various social changes that occurred when people began to use bronze, the first metal. The Bronze Age comes to life through a range of exhibits, including the Bronze Ritual Artifact with farming design that

indicates the real beginning of agriculture, dolmen-related artifacts that represent the appearance of leaders in society, and items that reflect the growth of villages and communities.

The prehistoric exhibition, covering the Paleolithic Age to the Bronze Age, also features 3D works made in collaboration with contemporary artists which recreate major scenes from each period as a way to enhance visitors' understanding.

The Romance and Dynamism of Ancient Times

The ancient history exhibition begins with the Gojoseon, Buyeo, and Samhan room. In the ancient period, changes that began in prehistoric times led to the emergence of nations big and small, which fiercely competed with each other. Starting with an introduction to Gojoseon, the first Korean state, the exhibition focuses on a range of finely made bronze items. It then goes on to explore the cultures of nations on and around the Korean Peninsula, including Buyeo, Okjeo, Dongye, and Nangnang as well as the development of Mahan, Jinhan, and Byeonhan states



Bronze Artifact Assemblage Attributed to Deoksan

3rd–2nd century BCE
Comprised of seven pieces:
a pair of eight-headed bronze bells; a pair of double-headed bronze bells; a pair of single-headed bells; and a combined double-headed bell
National Treasure
Bequest of Lee Kun-Hee



Bronze Seal of Ye Chieftain

3rd century CE
Treasure
Bequest of Lee Kun-Hee



Display of Dongsam-dong shell midden in Busan, the representative site of the Neolithic period



The Bronze Age room, which shows the social changes leading to the formation of villages and communities



The Gojoseon room, featuring intricate, finely made bronze items



Nangnang artifacts including the grave goods from the wooden coffin of Seogam-ri Tomb No.9, Pyongyang



Lamellar Amor
Goguryeo Kingdom,
5th–6th century CE
Excavated from
Yeoncheon, Gyeonggi-do



Iron Sword with Bronze Hilt
2nd–3rd century CE
Excavated from
Osong in Cheongju,
Chungcheongbuk-do

in the southern part of the peninsula. Notably, there is a video presentation detailing the production and installation of the wooden log coffin from Daho-ri Tomb No. 1, which is one of the NMK’s major ancient history exhibits.

The closing part of the ancient history exhibition is the Goguryeo room. According to a survey indicating that this was the room visitors found most interesting, it was expanded to 1.7 times its original size to allow the display of more items. Around 2,000, a number Goguryeo artifacts were also found in South Korea, and related material that had been gathered over the years was reflected in the reorganized exhibition.

The NMK’s vast collection of items gathered during the Japanese occupation period were also put to use in the Goguryeo room. Notably, the Lamellar Amor of a Goguryeo general, discovered intact from a fort in Mudeung-ri, Yeoncheon, was included in the permanent display for the first time. In addition, reproduction of Goguryeo Tomb Murals, which have always been a favorite with visitors, are now in a specialized space of

their own and connected more strongly to the Digital Immersive Gallery. Greeting visitors at the front of the exhibition is a rubbing of the Stele of King Gwanggaeto the Great, which was digitally restored in 2024.

Small but Powerful Changes

The Prehistory and Ancient History Hall not only has a new look but also a friendlier system for explanation panels, which are now written in the manner of storytelling. The contents are expressed as simply as possible to make them accessible for people of all ages. Those in charge of writing the text from each division constantly talked about making things easier to understand and giving more detailed explanation. To achieve the best results, they read each other’s writing and exchanged opinions. Thanks to these efforts, the explanations accompanying the exhibits are much easier to understand than before. Hopefully, such moves will help you do away with the perception that archaeological exhibitions are hard to understand and boring.

A great deal of consideration went into ensuring that nobody is isolated when it comes to enjoying the museum, and throughout the exhibition hall Braille panels and tactile activity stations have been installed. Also, for the first time in the Permanent Exhibition Hall, four learning stations for children were created, two each in the prehistory exhibition and the ancient history exhibition. Here children, as well as adults, can learn about various cultural artifacts through first-hand experience and gain new insight into how to enjoy the exhibition.

The people of the past that we meet in the exhibition hall—what are the stories they are telling us today? The renewed exhibition represents the traces of the intense, dynamic lives of humans in the distant past. If we can sense that the traces of people’s lives have been built up over time to reach us in the present, seeing the new Prehistory and Ancient History Hall will mean even more to us in the future.

The Cultural History of Korean Incense: From Desire to Taste

By **Han Gilchung**
Assistant Curator of the Daegu National Museum

December 7, 2024 to March 3, 2025

Special Exhibition Gallery at
the Daegu National Museum

The Daegu National Museum, opened on Dec. 7, 1994, marked its 30th anniversary in 2024. To mark the occasion, the museum hosts the special exhibition *The Cultural History of Korean Incense: From Desire to Taste*, exploring the theme of incense as a necessity of daily life for Korean people of the past and as the finest offering they could make to the Buddha. The exhibition tells the cultural history of incense from the Three Kingdoms period to the Joseon Dynasty, and is notably the Daegu National Museum's first exhibition focusing on people's everyday lives. While taking a look at the incense traditions that were deeply entrenched in the lives of past Koreans, it also shows that incense similarly plays a healing role for people today. The exhibition is a wonderful opportunity to understand incense from

a lifestyle perspective, learn about the ways it is used and the various ingredients that go into making it, and at the same time examine some of the major cultural heritage items of Gyeongsang-do.

In the museum's central hall, where the special exhibition begins, a familiar scent fills the air and an LED media tower as tall as 7.5 meters plays videos that shed light on Korea's incense culture. Like time travelers moving between past and present, visitors enter the darkness of the exhibition space where they first encounter a typographic display flashing answers to the question "What does scent mean to me?", gathered from a survey of 150 people. This entry piece was planned to inspire each and every visitor to think about what scent means to them as they examine the items on display.

PART 1. In Search of the Origin of Incense

Very few incense-related cultural artifacts survive from the Three Kingdoms and Unified Silla periods. Therefore, any extant items that shed light on the origin of Korean practices related to incense are of great importance. *Samguksagi* (History of the Three Kingdoms) states that incense was introduced to the Silla Kingdom, and the Stone Statue of Offering Incense is an indirect testament to the flourishing incense culture of the Unified Silla period. Featured in this part are three major types of scent used around the world—agarwood, musk, and ambergris—as well as items actually used for fragrances in ancient Korea. From these items, we can infer how precious these materials that gave off scent were considered throughout history.

PART 2. From Ritual to Taste

From religious purposes to use in everyday life and expression of personal tastes, incense was used in varied ways. From ancient times, the burning of precious materials has been related to religious sanctity. Indeed, incense is considered the messenger of the Buddha and a medium for invoking the spirits. The importance of incense in Buddhism is highlighted in the *Five Hundred Arhats Paintings* and all kinds of sutras and ritual texts. One space is devoted to the *Nectar Ritual Painting of Haeinsa Temple*, a state designated Treasure, exhibited with the Bronze Incense Burner with Silver-inlaid Design of Haeinsa Temple, offering a fascinating look at the connection between the two items. Helping visitors to understand how incense was used differently according

Bronze Incense Burner with Silver-inlaid Design of Haeinsa Temple

Before 1700 in the Joseon Dynasty
H. 23.0 cm, D. 22.8 cm (on the left)
H. 42.0 cm, D. 35.0 cm (in the center)
H. 35.5 cm, D. 31.7 cm (on the right)
Haeinsa Temple Museum



Visitors in the Part 3 looking
at the incense burners
discovered in the sea of Korea



A visitor in front of the
“Room of Incense Burners”
inspecting artifacts from the
Jikji Museum of Buddhist Arts



**Celadon Incense
Burner Stand**
Goryeo Dynasty
H. 12.1 cm, D. 13.6 cm

to religion, ritual offering implements excavated from the Beopcheonsa Temple site in Wonju are placed on the recreation of a Goryeo Dynasty Buddhist altar next to a space where a Confucian ritual table is laid out.

Stemming from religion, the use of incense gradually entered everyday life. Major types of incense used in Korea include *dongguk buyonghyang*, *uihyang*, and *hosinhyang*—the details for making them recorded in the ancient medical encyclopedia *Donguibogam* and *Gyuhap chongseo*, a compendium of advice for women—which people used when reading or enjoying other leisure activities. Incense was also used as medicine and a preservative and was imbued with magical meaning. *Dongguk buyonghyang*, in particular, was widely used in royal

ceremonies, which suggests how deeply engrained incense was in the lives of Korean ancestors. Incense entered the realm of personal tastes as the culture of Confucian scholars developed and also came to be applied to dress in the form of pendants filled with scent that women wore as an ornament on their *hanbok*.

PART 3. Heart Follows Where the Scent Leads

This part of the exhibition features incense and incense burners discovered on land and in the sea of Korea. Over the ages, incense was traded across Korean waters, as evidenced by the Sinan Shipwreck, a merchant vessel laden with incense and related implements that was discovered in sea off Sinan, Jeollanam-do, and by the incense burial ritual (*maehyang*) that

developed in Korea in connection with Buddhism. Designed to represent the blue ocean, the exhibition space has been thoughtfully laid out in accordance with the visitors’ flow of movement.

Past the ocean space is an exploration of the search for precious materials for incense on Korean land, followed by a display of efforts made in the past to find alternatives to scents that did not exist in this country. The gallery features an ancient incense burner that was buried in the ground at a time of crisis, and the “Room of Incense Burners” exhibits a collection of incense burners from the Yeongnam region, with real incense wafting through the air as videos are screened for the pleasure of visitors.

PART 4. Acme of the Incense Culture: Great Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje

This part of the exhibition is wholly dedicated to one of the finest cultural

treasures of Korea, the Great Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje. This incense burner, considered the acme of Korea’s incense culture, is introduced in a room of its own along with materials from the Neungsan-ri Temple site in Buyeo, where it was unearthed. This display allows visitors to focus their attention on the incense burner and see it from a new perspective.

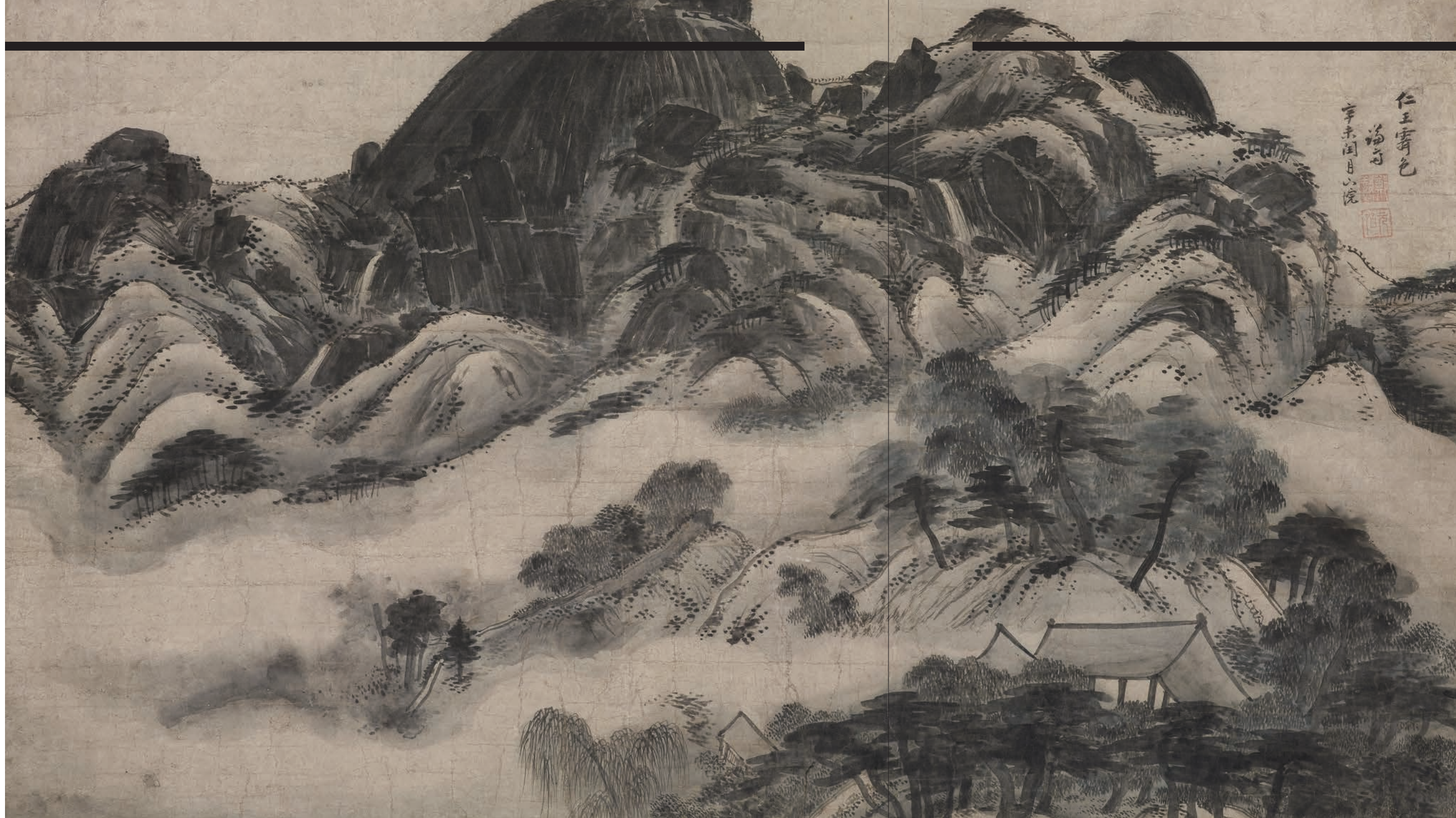
At the close of the exhibition, visitors return to the present and realize as they watch related videos that the incense traditions of the past isn’t much different from the way we enjoy scents today. Visually and through the sense of smell, this special exhibition provides a scent-filled space where people can rest both in mind and body.



**Bronze Incense Burner
with Silver-inlaid Design
of Tongdosa Temple**
Joseon Dynasty, 1674
H. 49.0 cm, D. 48.0 cm
Treasure
Tongdosa Temple Museum



Part 2 of the exhibition,
showing how incense was a
part of the everyday lives of
Confucian scholars



Keyword

Landscapes

Aesthetic Pleasure from Natural Landscapes

By **Lee Sukyung** Director of the Chuncheon National Museum

Fig.1
Clearing after Rain on Mount Inwang
Jeong Seon 1676–1759
Joseon Dynasty, 1751
79.2 x 138.2 cm
National Treasure
Bequest of Lee Kun-Hee

What does nature mean to people? Ninety-two percent of Koreans live in cities, which means many people have few opportunities to enjoy nature. Of course, cities have roadside trees and parks, but there is so much else to see that nature does not hold city dwellers’ attention for long. Nevertheless, people continue to seek out famed scenic spots to enjoy the beauty of nature and sometimes find comfort in it.

For people of the past, nature provided a great deal to look at and think about. In East Asian countries which have four distinct seasons, people had a greater interest in the changing of the seasons and liked to express the beauty of nature in pictures and writing. Moreover, their love of landscapes was imbued with ethical meaning, and in Korea and China, this kind of thinking promoted the

development of landscape paintings. Landscapes were not originally painted in the form we know them today. At first, mountains, trees, and rocks appeared in the background of pictures of people. On handcraft items, mountains and trees were employed as decorative motifs. However, pictures of nature continued to be given greater meaning over time, and from the tenth century to the early twentieth century landscapes were the most important type of painting in China. Likewise, landscapes were highly regarded in Korea.

Ideal Depiction of Nature, Harmonious and Orderly

In traditional East Asian painting, the outlines of objects are first drawn on paper or silk with a paintbrush wet with ink. Depicting light and shade by adjusting the darkness of the ink, the shapes are given depth and volume. At times, vegetable or mineral pigments are used to color the painting. Because of the nature of paper and silk, however, paintings from a thousand years ago were naturally difficult to preserve. Therefore, aspects of early landscape painting are found in tomb murals or the designs on handcraft items. Indeed, a Korean landscape from the early seventh century remains intact on an ancient brick tile that was once laid on the ground at a Buddhist temple, like a paving stone of today [Fig.3](#). The top surface of the tile, 28 cm long, is covered with a landscape design featuring the sky, mountains, rocks, and streams. Such serenely balanced mountain scenes with layers of high mountain peaks are characteristic of East Asian landscapes.

On the other hand, a twelfth-century kundika exhibits a more relaxed landscape, a waterside scene, featuring a little island where a willow tree grows, that spreads across the rounded front of the bottle [Fig.2](#). This is not a grand landscape depicted from a distance but the closeup of a lyric, everyday scene. The outlines of the design are shiny and black, the result of inlaying silver wire 0.5 mm thick in shallow

grooves on the surface of the kundika. Now tarnished black, the outlines look like it's been painted with ink. The practice of painting landscapes to decorate rounded vessels such as jars and bottles continued on blue-and-white porcelain. The eighteenth-century vase widens gradually toward the bottom. Accordingly, the hill painted on the surface in cobalt blue grows broader toward the base. It is surrounded by a river and at the top is a pavilion and flag Fig.6. On the other side of the vase is another river scene with a boat floating on the water under the moon. A similar landscape design is found on another eighteenth-century jar Fig.5. In the center of this wide-shouldered jar is the scene of a lakeside hill with a pavilion and flag at the top painted in cobalt blue, a depiction of a moonlit autumn night around Yueyang Pavilion at Dongting Lake in Hunan Province, China. This landscape was frequently painted in Korea after it was introduced to the country through Chinese paintings with the common title of *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*. Though the lake is a place that exists in real life, Koreans at the time, who had never actually been there, considered it the ideal landscape.

In this manner, East Asian landscape paintings carried on the traditions of preceding times, considering the themes and topics of the past to be important. For example, the scene of an empty pavilion by the waterside, which is commonly found in nineteenth-century paintings of the Joseon Dynasty, is the trademark of the Chinese literati painter Ni Zan 1301–1374. The nineteenth-century white porcelain square bottle features such a landscape on one of its four sides Fig.4. Nearby is a person out walking with a cane, and below is another person crossing a bridge riding on a donkey. Figures of this type occasionally appear in landscape paintings. Though the relationship between the two people appearing on the bottle cannot be inferred, East Asian landscape paintings often feature a man sitting in his home deep in the mountains waiting for a friend

who is making his way there to meet him. In this small painting, dating to the mid-nineteenth century, a man dressed in green is sitting in his home, which is surrounded by plum blossoms, waiting for his friend, who is dressed in red Fig.8. Though the season is certainly spring, with white plum blossoms in their full glory, the mountains are still covered with snow. While the plum blossoms are expressed as white dots, no color has been added to the mountains—instead the snow-capped mountains are depicted by shading the surrounding areas with ink. This is how snow was expressed in ink and wash landscapes.

Linking Nature with Human Experience

Looking at this painting, one comes to think that it would be nice to stay in the mountains when the plum blossoms are in full bloom. Landscape paintings have this effect on people. They allow viewers to



Fig.2
Bronze Kundika with
Silver Inlaid Landscape
Design
Goryeo Dynasty, 12th century
H. 37.5 cm
National Treasure



Fig.3
Earthenware Tile with
Landscape Design
Baekje Kingdom, 7th century
27.9 × 27.0 cm
Treasure



Fig.4
White Porcelain Square
Bottle with Landscape
Design in Underglaze
Cobalt Blue
Joseon Dynasty, 19th century
H. 18.1 cm



Fig.5
White Porcelain Jar with
Landscape Design in
Underglaze Cobalt Blue
Joseon Dynasty, 18th century
H. 37.5 cm, D. 31.0 cm
Bequest of Park Byoung-rae



Fig.6
White Porcelain Vase with
Autumn Landscape Design
in Underglaze Cobalt Blue
Joseon Dynasty, 18th century
H. 32.5 cm, D. 25.8 cm
Treasure
Bequest of Lee Kun-Hee

aesthetically appreciate the depicted scene, though they may never have been there. Our ancestors are said to have favored landscape paintings because they were able to “amuse oneself while lying down,” a concept that is still valid today. This effect would have been even stronger when artists painted places they had actually visited.

Featuring a waterfall flowing down between the cliffs, this painting is a real-life depiction of the 37-meter-high Bakyoon Falls, which the artist had visited Fig.10. The falls are located in Gaeseong, and Oh Suchae 1692–1759, the highest government official of the region at the time, invited the artist to visit one summer to paint the scene. The artist expressed the damp, moss-covered cliffs in summer using black and green pigment and very wet brush. Oh Suchae left an inscription in the upper right-hand corner of the painting: “The waterfall came crashing down as if to split the earth, and the thundering sound completely washed away the dust of the mundane world.” East Asian paintings include an inscription of this kind either by the artist or an admirer of the work, which helps viewers to understand the work.

Painting landscapes from real scenery, though already a time-honored tradition, grew much more active during the eighteenth century in China, Korea, and Japan. This was a peaceful time in East Asia with no wars when people began to travel more often. In Korea, Geumgangsan Mountain was a famous scenic spot that many people longed to visit. The artist who painted the mountain most often was Jeong Seon 1676–1759. The unusual composition of his works intensified the sense of enjoyment while roaming the landscape. The painting shows travelers at Danballyeong Ridge, the entryway to Geumgangsan Mountain, looking toward it in the distance Fig.7. Danballyeong Ridge is boldly placed on the diagonal, covered with short horizontal strokes to give the mountain a large and weighty presence. The long white rocky peaks on

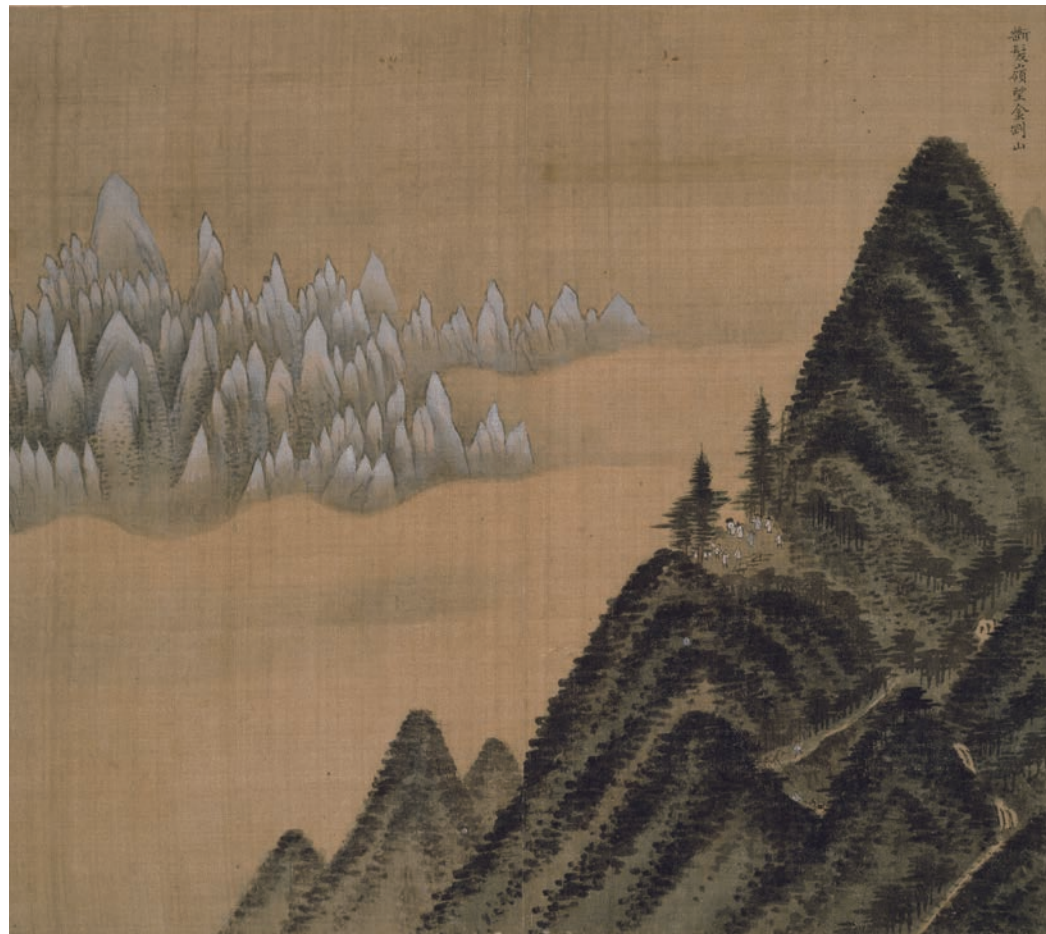


Fig.7
Geumgangsan Mountain
Viewed from Danballyeong
Ridge from the *Album of*
Geumgangsan Mountain
Jeong Seon 1676–1759
Joseon Dynasty, 1711
36.1 × 37.6 cm
Treasure

Fig.8
Thatched House
Surrounded by Plum
Blossoms
Jeon Gi 1825–1854
Joseon Dynasty,
mid-19th century
29.4 × 33.3 cm
Bequest of Lee Hong-kun

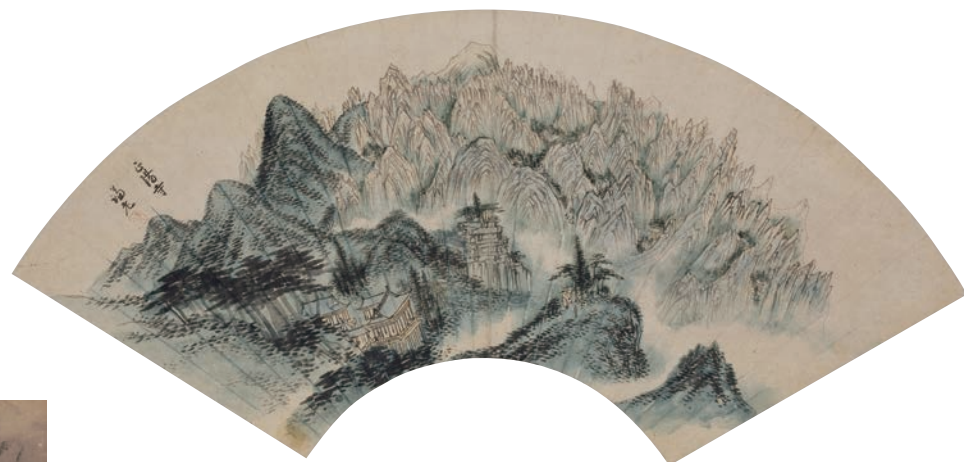


Fig.9
Jeongyangsa Temple
Jeong Seon 1676–1759
Joseon Dynasty,
mid-18th century
22.7 × 61.5 cm



Fig.10
Bakyen Fall from the
Album of a Journey to
Songdo
Kang Sehwang 1713–1791
Joseon Dynasty, ca. 1757
32.8 × 53.2 cm
Bequest of Lee Hong-kun

Fig.11
Spring Dawn of
Baegaksan Mountain
An Jungsik 1861–1919
Joseon Dynasty
129.3 × 49.9 cm



the left side are Geumgangsan Mountain. Only the tops of the peaks are clearly painted, indicating that the mountains are surrounded by clouds and mist. The contrast of black and white, horizontal and vertical lines emphasizes the differing nature of the two spaces. The area between the spaces is boldly left empty, amplifying the sense that Geumgangsan Mountain is a sacred place that cannot be easily approached.

Jeong Seon also painted Geumgangsan Mountain's characteristic sharp, rocky peaks in condensed form across a fan-shaped canvas Fig.9. Jeongyangsa Temple was considered the best place from which to view Geumgangsan Mountain, and the mountain on which the temple stands is placed diagonally in this spectacular landscape. Here too, the mist separates the two spaces. In East Asian landscape painting, clouds and mist had the effect of both separating spaces and enlarging them. The effects that Jeong Seon achieved with cloud and mist can also be seen in the masterpiece of his later years *Clearing after Rain on Mount Inwang* Fig.1. Inwangsan Mountain, located in the western part of

downtown Seoul, is a weighty presence in the top half of the canvas. The empty parts in the lower half are clouds and mist, which function to expand the space and give the viewer the illusion that the clouds and mist are right in front of their eyes. However, this does not mean the artist made use of one-point perspective based on where the viewer stands, as commonly seen in Western landscapes. As in other East Asian landscapes, in this painting different viewpoints exist — from above and from below. The landscape is also depicted from various directions. Having lived near Inwangsan Mountain all his life, the artist knew every corner of it, and in deft, rapid brushstrokes he captured the mountain that was so deeply embedded in his heart and mind.

In contrast, the painting of Baegaksan Mountain Fig.11, situated north of Inwangsan Mountain, features neater brushstrokes and has a calmer atmosphere overall. The guardian mountain of Hanyang (present-day Seoul), Baegaksan Mountain overlooks Gyeongbokgung Palace, the official palace of the Joseon Dynasty. However, the palace itself and the surrounding area seem to be quiet and still. In 1915, when this painting was done, Gyeongbokgung Palace did not look the way it does in the picture. With Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910, many palace buildings were destroyed and a temporary Western-style building was erected in their place. Gyeongbokgung Palace had already lost its authority as the seat of the nation. Though the landscape once existed, it is different to what it was then and artist's title for the painting, *Spring Dawn of Baegaksan Mountain*, hints at the reason why. An Jungsik would have painted the scene harboring hopes for spring to return to this land.

The landscape paintings of Korea and other East Asian nations expressed and arranged natural elements in various ways as they developed over the ages and played an important role as vessels for recording human experience and capturing people's thoughts.

Long Long Time Flower, Flower Drawings that Never Wilt

By the Editorial Team | Interview with Nanan Kang Artist

You’ve collaborated with the National Museum Foundation of Korea.

It was an incredible honor to be part of a project last year that aimed to offer a modern take on the famous *Painting of Grass and Insects* attributed to Shin Saimdang following our initial collaboration in 2023. The *Painting of Grass and Insects* was the work that resonated with me most profoundly from the list I was given. The ten-panel folding screen consists of two panels featuring inscriptions and eight painted panels, four of which served as the basis for the creation of the *Long Long Time Flower Edition*. The first release, in spring 2023, included *Poppy and Striped Skink* as well as *Cockscomb and Dung Beetle*, which was followed in 2024 with the release of

Manihot Hibiscus and Scarlet Skimmer and *Daylily and Cicada*.

When did you begin drawing inspiration from Korean flowers and nature for your work?

After leaving my job to become a full-time artist, the first thing I drew was a flower and a lush forest on a window with a white marker. It was more of a natural impulse than something I did consciously. I wanted to capture how the concrete jungles that make up the modern architectural landscape were gradually erasing flowers and nature out of our daily lives. I sought to use flowers and nature as a conduit between the world outside the window and our own that allow us to flow into the world seamlessly.

Do you feel like the *Long Long Time Flower* series has expanded the depth of your artwork?

I’m particularly interested in how flowers and nature infiltrate our lives and coexist with us, exerting a positive influence by breaking down rigid walls and boundaries of our lives. I place a lot of importance on connecting with the public, which is why I encourage people to visit my exhibition in person if they want to purchase a flower. I want my work to be something people can bring into their homes and make their own, such as by reshaping the flowers to better fit their living spaces and even placing them in vases as if they were real flowers. I try to give the public the freedom to interact with my work however they see fit, hoping that this personal engagement will enrich their artistic experience and give the work greater significance.

How do you balance your respect for tradition with your own artistic individuality?

While working on the *Painting of Grass and Insects Edition*, I enjoyed the freedom to reinterpret tradition, but I also recognized that deviating too much from the original, *Painting of Grass and Insects*, or altering it in a way that might

undermine its value would make it harder to convey my message to the public.

I thought it would be great if tradition wasn’t just for those actively seeking it, but something that could be woven into our everyday lives and naturally appreciated for what it has to offer. I spent a lot of time considering how to make tradition and modern life coexist in a seamless way.

This might explain why both the first and second releases were so successful.

Many people instantly took to social media to express their excitement and appreciation for my work. Not only I, as an artist, but also an unspecified number of the people witnessed how tradition could merge with modern life and coexist harmoniously. The *Painting of Grass and*

Insects Edition carries a broad range of meanings, from congratulations and gratitude to comfort, rest, and more. As a contemporary artist, it felt very rewarding to be able to transmit the values found in Shin Saimdang’s work to a modern audience.

Are you interested in working with other collections at the National Museum of Korea?

I dream of having my work displayed next to cultural artifacts such as celadons, white porcelains, or *buncheon* wares one day. If such a project enables me to serve as a bridge between timeless traditions and modern life, helping strengthen the roots of both tradition and my own identity, I would always see it as a privilege.



Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 *The Time to Be in Full Bloom*, National Agriculture Museum of Korea
- 2023 *Teatime*, 2GIL29 Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 2022 *Sitcom The Corn: E01. Corn Sweet Corn*, SEOJUNG ART, Traveling exhibition in Seoul and Busan, Korea
- 2021 *Long Long Time Flower 2021*, Seoul Auction, Seoul, Korea
- 2019 *The Pictorial Life*, Lotte Gallery, Seoul, Korea





Focus

Lunar Phases: Korean Moon Jars

March 2 to June 8, 2025
Special Exhibition of Korean Art at
the Denver Art Museum

By **Ryu Seungjin** Associate Curator of the Exhibition Division, National Museum of Korea

Since 2023, the Denver Art Museum (DAM) in the United States and the National Museum of Korea (NMK) have been carrying out various projects together under the NMK’s Overseas Korean Galleries Support Program. These include special exhibitions, projects involving Korean contemporary artists, and hiring of personnel to take charge of the museum’s Korean art gallery. The first in the two museums’ planned exhibitions was *Perfectly Imperfect: Korean Buncheong*

Ceramics, held in 2023. This year, the second special exhibition of Korean art at the DAM, *Lunar Phases: Korean Moon Jars*, has been welcoming visitors since March 2. The first overseas exhibition of Korean cultural heritage to be held in 2025 under the NMK’s Overseas Korean Galleries Support Program, the exhibition holds special meaning for several reasons. Moon jars represent a distinctive type of white porcelain vessel that was produced in the late seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries, during the late Joseon Dynasty. The jars are round and white like the moon, but a slightly waning moon, and the color is not pure white but milky white or the color of snow—characteristics that make the moon jars so unique. These two characteristics of moon jars bring to mind the image of Joseon’s upright Confucian scholars, who placed great importance on propriety and moderation, and at the same time convey the scholars’ simple way of being content with life. Across space and time, these moon jars have enchanted many people. In the early twentieth century, artists and art historian in Korea and abroad, such as Bernard Leach ^{1887–1979}, Kim Whanki ^{1913–1974}, and Choi Sunu ^{1916–1984}, fell in love with moon jars, painting them, collecting them, and giving them their poetic name. In later years, people’s love of moon jars continued as strong as ever. When the Olympic flame blazed out of a moon jar at the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games, and when RM, leader of the K-pop band BTS, posted on social media a photo of himself hugging the Moon Jar by the artist Kwon Dae Sup, the moon jar became a Korean cultural icon connecting past and present. This exhibition at the DAM highlights the way moon jars embrace both tradition and modernity. It features six traditional works, including three from the NMK collection, and six modern works, as well as nine contemporary works in various media—painting, photography, video, and installations—that take the moon jar as their main motif [Figs.1 through 3](#). Up until the early 2000s, many exhibitions of Korean cultural heritage abroad focused on showing the nation’s history from the Prehistoric Age to the Joseon Dynasty ^{1392–1897}. However, *Lunar Phases: Korean Moon Jars* at the DAM reflects the trend of investigating a particular genre or type of artifact, following *Silla: Korea’s Golden Kingdom* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York ²⁰¹³; *Sacred Dedication: A Korean Buddhist Masterpiece* at the National Museum of Asian Art in



Fig.1
Moon Jar
Joseon Dynasty, 18th century
White Porcelain
H. 41.2 cm, D. 45.7 cm (max)
Gift of Park Byoung-rae
National Museum of Korea

Fig.2
Moon Jar
Joseon Dynasty, 18th century
White Porcelain
H. 45.5 cm, D. 43.2 cm (max)
Bequest of Lee Kun-Hee
National Museum of Korea



The special exhibition space, Gallagher Gallery, for the *Lunar Phases: Korean Moon Jars* at the Denver Art Museum

Photography © Denver Art Museum

Washington D.C. 2019, *Once Upon a Roof: Vanished Korean Architecture* at the same venue 2022, featuring ancient decorative ridge-end tiles called *chimi*; and *Perfectly Imperfect: Korean Buncheong Ceramics* held at the DAM 2023. Not confined to traditional art, these exhibitions also showcased diverse contemporary works and demonstrated the potential of Korean art that arises from both change and continuity.

The moon jars shown in *Lunar Phases: Korean Moon Jars* include not only works by famous modern and contemporary artists but also the works of young Korean-American artists, making it meaningful for widening their scope of activity. Moreover, the exhibition presents new directions for K-culture. If *Hallyu! The Korean Wave*, a special exhibition held in various cities including London, Boston, and San Francisco since 2022, has been hugely popular with its focus on popular culture, encompassing K-pop, film, and television dramas, this moon jar exhibition at the DAM seeks to expand the scope of K-culture by introducing both Korean traditional art and contemporary fine art to the American audience.

As a K-culture presentation that embraces both the tradition and the contemporary as well as fine art and popular culture, the moon jar exhibition is particularly significant in that it was planned by two Korean curators working in the United States. One of the Korean art curators at the DAM was hired under the NMK's Overseas Korean Galleries Support Program, and at the planning stage a curator from the NMK took part in the process on site. This moon jar exhibition, which is not mere a simple loan or exchange exhibition, represents a good example of how support for personnel can lay a foundation for stable management and development of Korean galleries as a means to introduce Korean history and culture in the United States. A meaningful exhibition in so many ways, *Lunar Phases: Korean Moon Jars* continues through June 8 this year.



Fig.3
Allegory of a Moon Jar
2022-5
Youngjune P. LEW
2022
198.12 × 167.64 cm
Denver Art Museum

Photography © Denver Art Museum



View of the exhibition gallery, where tradition meets modernity

Photography © Denver Art Museum

Iconic Heritage

The Gyeongju National Museum's Famous Golden Treasures:

Gold Crown and Gold Waist Belt from Cheonmachong Tomb

The Gold Crown and Gold Waist Belt from Cheonmachong Tomb (Heavenly Horse Tomb) are famous cultural exhibits of Silla, the kingdom of gold. Both were discovered in 1973 during excavation of the tomb, located in Gyeongju, when they were found to have been worn by the person interred. The Gold Crown comprises a gold headband decorated with three branch-shaped uprights and two antler-shaped uprights. The Gold Waist Belt, forming a set with the Gold Crown, is formed of 44 gold plaques with 13 pendants hanging from them. Both the Gold Crown and Gold Waist Belt from Cheonmachong Tomb are symbols of the sacred authority and dignity of the highest rulers of Silla during the sixth century.



Gold Crown and Gold Waist Belt
Silla Kingdom, 6th century
H. 32.5 cm (crown)
L. 125.0 cm (belt)
L. 22.5–73.5 cm (pendant)
National Treasure

Currently on display at the Silla History Exhibition Hall

Maitreya Buddha Triad
Silla Kingdom, 7th century
H. 160.0 cm (Maitreya Buddha)
Treasure

Currently on display at the Silla Art Exhibition Hall



Iconic Silla Buddhist Sculptures at the Gyeongju National Museum:
Maitreya Buddha Triad of Jangchanggok Valley, Namsan Mountain

This Buddha triad was discovered in 1924 inside a stone tomb chamber in Jangchanggok Valley on Namsan Mountain, Gyeongju. Maitreya Buddha, the central icon, is seated on a chair. With a large head in comparison to the body, it has the proportions and innocent facial expression of a child, which is a characteristic of Buddhist sculptures of the Silla period. The bodhisattvas on either side of the Buddha have been sculpted in almost exactly the same way as the Buddha, differing only in their ornamentation and the position of their hands. It is supposed that this triad is the “Samhwaryeong Maitreya” mentioned in the chapter titled “Stone Maitreya at Saenguisa Temple” from the *Samgungnyusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms).

Text source: Silla Art Exhibition Hall catalog

20 Celebrating the National Museum of Korea's 20 Years in Yongsan

The year 2025 marks both the 80th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule and the 80th anniversary of the National Museum of Korea's foundation, which is also celebrating 20 years since its relocation to Yongsan. In honor of these significant milestones, the magazine will feature a series of special columns tracing the museum's history from its early beginnings to its move to Yongsan, reflecting on its achievements over the past two decades.



1945 Establishment at Gyeongbokgung Palace : 1st Period

October 28, 2005 marked the start of a new era for the National Museum of Korea (NMK) with its relocation to Yongsan. This pivotal moment aligned with the 60th anniversary of the museum's founding in 1945, when it assumed control of the former Japanese Government-General of

Acquisition lists of the Japanese Government-General of Korea Museum
Source: *Sixty Years of the National Museum* catalog



PART 1:
At Last, Settling in Yongsan

By the Editorial Team



1955 Relocation to Deoksugung Palace Chapter

Korea Museum within Gyeongbokgung Palace. For more than half a century, the NMK was required to move nearly once every decade, making the search for a stable home a long-harbored dream. The museum's sixth major relocation involved the transfer of over 100,000 artifacts, and though each move required carefully packing every item to protect them from potential damage, the museum always found ways to adapt to its new environment and live up to its mission.

The 1960s and 1970s marked a turning point for Korea's cultural heritage as public interest in historical preservation grew. In response, large-scale archaeological surveys and excavations took place nationwide, with the National Museum playing a central role. These efforts led to the discovery of countless



1972 Return to Gyeongbokgung Palace : 2nd Period

cultural artifacts, driving the expansion of Regional National Museums, which served a vital role in preserving and showcasing new acquisitions. However, as collections multiplied, so did the demand for storage and exhibition space, along with the need

to enhance preservation conditions for artifacts, thus demanding a long-term solution. The decision to demolish the Japanese Government-General of Korea building, made public in 1993, reignited discussions on securing a new site for the NMK. Yongsan Family Park quickly emerged as a prime candidate due to its central location, expansive 300,000 square meter



1986 Gyeongbokgung Palace : 3rd Period

space, and ease of access. The Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, in collaboration with the NMK, assembled an advisory committee and launched a national project aimed at the museum's relocation and construction.

In 1993, the year the move to Yongsan was announced, the NMK was already attracting nearly 10,000 visitors a day, thanks to major exhibitions such as *Korean Prehistoric and Protohistoric Pottery* (Oct. 26–Dec. 19, 1993) and *The Culture of Korean Books* (Nov. 9–Dec. 9, 1993). Later that year, the extraordinary discovery of a Great Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje at Neungsan-ri in Buyeo led to a special exhibition dedicated to the find, and the subsequent opening of new Regional National Museums in Daegu (1994), Gimhae (1998), Jeju (2001), and Chuncheon (2002) further fueled public interest and enthusiasm for National Museums across the country.

Relocation History Before Settling in Yongsan

1945 Establishment at Gyeongbokgung Palace (1st Period)

1954 Relocation to Namsan Mountain Chapter

1955 Relocation to Deoksugung Palace Chapter

1972 Return to Gyeongbokgung Palace (2nd–4th Periods)

2005 Start of Yongsan Era



Permanent exhibitions leaflet (Deoksugung Palace Chapter)
Source: *Sixty Years of the National Museum* catalog

Amid these developments, plans for a new National Museum of Korea took a decisive step forward in 1995 with the launch of an international design contest, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of Korea's liberation. This initiative, meant to elevate the standing of Korean architecture on the global stage, followed extensive preliminary research on museum schematic design and investigation of overseas case studies. As many as 854 entries from 59 countries (234 domestic and 620 international) were submitted

The 24th issue of the *Museum News* that reported the opening of the National Museum of Korea within Gyeongbokgung Palace, 1972



despite the relatively short two-month submission period, and the winning entry was chosen following a thorough one-year evaluation and assessment period. Inspired by Korean traditional architecture and aesthetics, the winning design featured elegant curves that integrated the scenic backdrop of Namsan Mountain on one side and a large pond on the other.

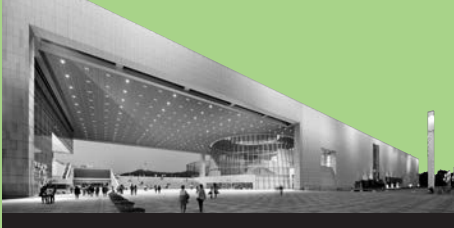


1996 Gyeongbokgung Palace : 4th Period

The groundbreaking ceremony was held on October 31, 1997, bringing together President Kim Young-sam and other prominent figures across various fields, and was marked by the following shared aspiration: *“Let us gather the will of the entire nation and wholeheartedly devote ourselves to making the National Museum of Korea the greatest cultural space of our time and a bastion of our national culture, one that embodies our*



1996 The demolition of the Japanese Government-General of Korea building



2005 Start of Yongsan Era

sense of national pride and self-respect.” However, the process of building a new museum was anything but smooth. The biggest challenges involved securing sufficient funding and manpower for the construction while also establishing clear protocols for the preservation and exhibition of cultural heritage. At the same time, evolving societal needs placed new demands on the museum, from expanding its educational role and improving accessibility for visitors with disabilities to integrating cutting-edge technology into its exhibitions. Complicating matters further, the relocation of the U.S. military helipad within the Yongsan site remained unresolved for over a decade, raising doubts about whether a once-restricted military zone could truly be transformed into a space for a public museum.

Then, in October 2004, the NMK officially closed its Gyeongbokgung Palace Chapter and announced its long-awaited move to Yongsan. To commemorate the occasion, the museum hosted a series of special events under the theme “Goodbye, Gyeongbokgung Palace!” offering a chance to reflect on 32 years of history at the site while sharing its vision for the future with the public. This pivotal moment not only marked the end of one era but also heralded the bold beginning of another for the NMK. (To be continued in the next part)



Conservation

Creating a Revolutionary Digital Conservation Science System

By **Shin Yongbi** Associate Curator of the Buyeo National Museum

Digital information technology is rapidly changing and growing. For National Museums, producing content using digital technology has become an essential part of their exhibitions, education, research, and conservation science. In the field of conservation science in particular, digital technology is being used in more diverse and advanced ways to evaluate and record the current state of cultural heritage items, which involve diagnosis of the condition of cultural artifacts and collection of scientific analysis data.

The National Museum of Korea (NMK) is preparing to open the Museum Conservation Science Center in October this year. Accordingly, since last year it has been phasing a project to establish a digital conservation science system that will enable speedy conservation treatment and expert evaluation of cultural artifacts. Having started with the development of a digital conservation science data platform in 2024, the NMK will now focus efforts on securing the necessary capabilities to construct the system over

the next five years. The first project of its kind in the world, the new system is expected to revolutionize the paradigm of conservation science for cultural heritage. Diverse applications will be possible, including virtual restoration of artifacts to their original state, scientific collection and analysis of data using artificial intelligence (AI), and remote diagnosis of cultural heritage collections in Korea and other countries.

Virtual Restoration System

Successful incorporation of AI into the virtual restoration system will allow rapid treatment of damaged artifacts for restoration to their original form. The Conservation Science Division at the NMK, established in 1976, has now been operating for 48 years. During that time, a great volume of data has been gathered on conservation treatment and restoration technology in regard to the type of damage suffered by artifacts according to their material. Using the

virtual restoration system, information on the existing database will be employed for restoration of items in the collection, particularly when dealing with large cultural artifacts. Currently, large artifacts are restored by hand and many size-related difficulties occur. However, virtual simulation technology will make more effective and accurate restoration possible.

A virtual restoration system has already been partially employed at the Iksan National Museum for treatment of the *chimi* (decorative ridge-end tiles)

excavated from the Mireuksa Temple site, and is now being used in the actual restoration of the *chimi* Figs.1 and 2. The remaining task is to employ AI to automate simulated restoration of broken artifacts, which is currently done by hand, and achieve faster and more accurate virtual restoration.

Digital Analysis and Evaluation System

Based on conservation science big data, National Museums in Korea plan to use AI to categorize some 2.2 million items

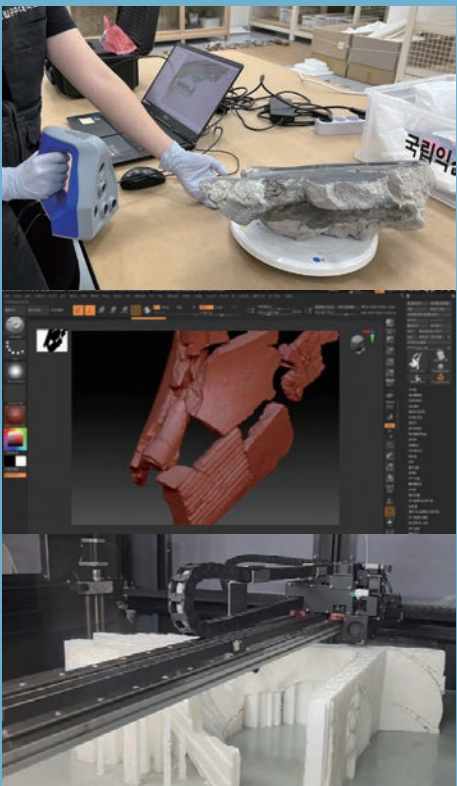
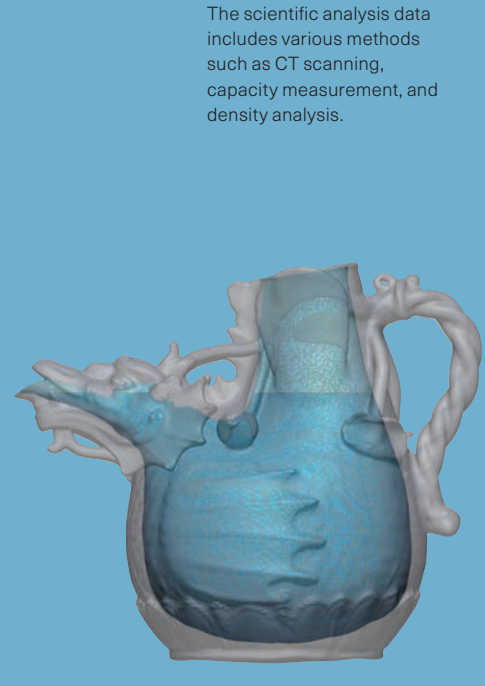
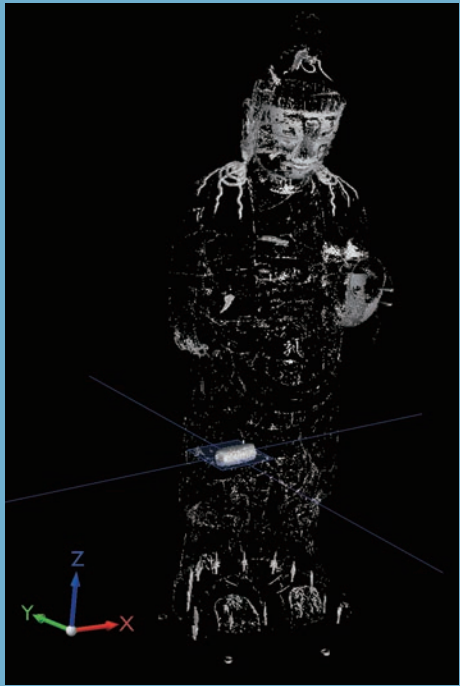
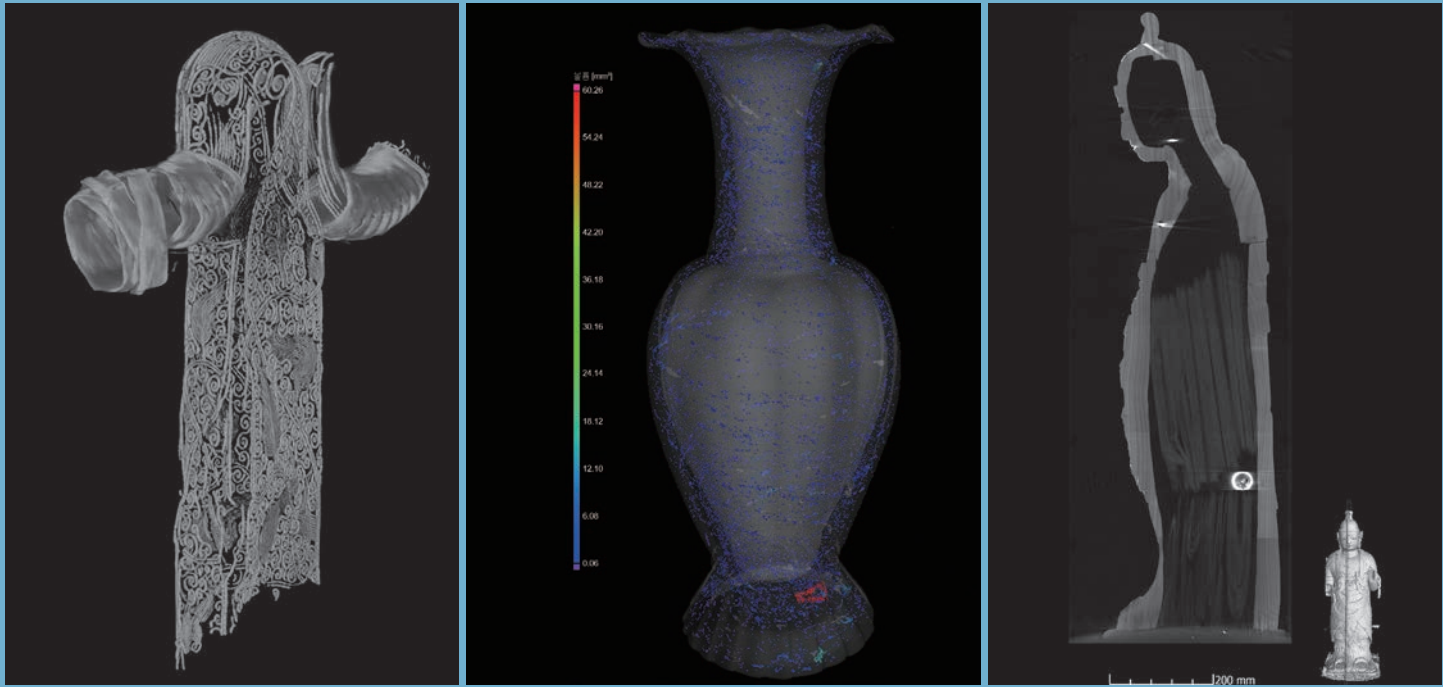


Fig.1
Virtual restoration of *chimi* from the Mireuksa Temple site in Iksan.
Source: Iksan National Museum

Fig.2
Conservation treatment of *chimi* from the Busosan Temple site in Buyeo using the virtual restoration system





The scientific analysis data includes various methods such as CT scanning, capacity measurement, and density analysis.

from their collections by period, material, style, and method of production, to collect scientific survey information. Currently, it has gathered scientific analysis data on over 9,500 items, including composition analysis, X-ray and CT inspection, and 3D scanning information. Using conservation science big data, in the future it will be possible to analyze items belonging not only to museums in Korea and other countries but also to groups and individuals, and also conduct objective evaluation of artifacts. As an actual

example, the NMK is currently analyzing the composition of metal type blocks in its collection and the scripts featured on them Fig.3. Going forward, the collection of scientific data on these countless metal type blocks and statistical analysis using AI will assist accurate categorization of Korean metal type by period.

Smart Remote Diagnostic Service
In concept, a remote diagnostic system is similar to telemedicine, which is already being applied in the medical field. The

National Museums need to introduce such infrastructure to support the conservation and management of the collections of Korea's national, public, and private museums and the collections of Korean galleries at museums overseas. Diagnosis and collaboration can be achieved through rapid, real-time transmission of high-volume scientific analysis information using Korea's high-speed information technology.

The NMK is currently providing partial support for the preservation

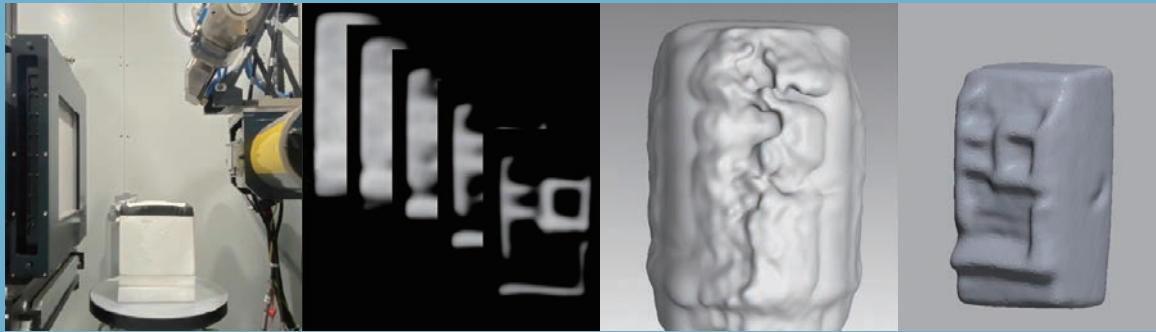


Fig.3
Analysis for comparison of metal type in the *Eulhae* script from the early Joseon period with its contemporary script in a printed version of a commentary on the *Shurangama Sutra*



Fig.4
A screen shot from the digital conservation science data platform

and environmental management of the collections of national, public, and private museums at home and abroad, but it is difficult to handle the growing demand. The Museum Conservation Science Center, equipped with network technology and advanced scientific equipment, will operate a remote diagnostic system when it opens in October this year. The museum's conservation science experts can provide remote consultation using this system, and thus help set the direction for conservation treatment of the collections

of a greater number of museums and for management of their conservation environments.

The digital conservation science data platform Fig.4, developed in 2024, serves as a window for online sharing of diverse information and collaboration among institutions. The data includes conservation treatment records on cultural artifacts based on their material, analysis data, information on conservation environments, records on the condition of artifacts, and conservation science

consultation information. In 2025, the NMK plans to accumulate big data on this platform through the continuous input of information related to conservation science. In the future, it is anticipated that national, public, and private museums will use this platform to efficiently manage scientific analysis data.

Must-See Exhibitions at the National Museums: Spring Highlights

National Museum of Korea Sculpted Celadon of the Goryeo Dynasty

Nov 26, 2024 – Mar 3, 2025
Special Exhibition Gallery 2
This exhibition shines the spotlight on sculpted celadon from the Goryeo Dynasty, exploring the historical background and cultural significance of these beautiful pieces while offering a glimpse into the world of the Goryeo people and their stories.



Gwangju National Museum Companions on the Eternal Journey: Earthenware Figurines and Vessels from Ancient Korea

Nov 12, 2024 – Mar 10, 2025
Special Exhibition Gallery
Following its 2023 debut at the National Museum of Korea in Seoul, this traveling exhibition explores ancient funerary rituals as revealed through earthenware from the Silla Kingdom and Gaya Confederacy.



Gyeongju National Museum Trivial Yet Precious: An Exhibition by Twelve Curators

Dec 10, 2024 – Mar 9, 2025
Special Exhibition Hall
This exhibition brings attention to cultural artifacts that had either never been taken out of storage or tended to go unnoticed despite being on display. Although modest in size, each piece carries its own significance, and has become all the more meaningful by the connections they share with the museum's curators.



Here is an overview of exhibitions held at the National Museum of Korea and its 13 affiliated museums over the first three months of 2025, focusing on one exhibition for each museum.

Jeonju National Museum Chae Yong-shin and Modernity

Dec 20, 2024 – Apr 27, 2025
Gallery of Jeonju and the Joseon Dynasty
This rotating permanent exhibition sheds light on the diverse artistic world of renowned portrait painter Chae Yong-shin, and also features five works that were newly acquired in 2023 for the first time.
This exhibition offers a glimpse into how Chae navigated Korea's modern era, establishing his studio and developing his own unique painting style in response to the rapidly changing twentieth century situation — the perfect opportunity to appreciate his experimental approach to painting.



Daegu National Museum The Cultural History of Korean Incense: From Desire to Taste

Dec 7, 2024 – Mar 3, 2025
Special Exhibition Gallery
Marking the 30th anniversary of the museum's opening, this special exhibition captures the cultural significance of incense throughout Korean history from the Three Kingdoms period to the Joseon Dynasty.



Buyeo National Museum Outdoor Exhibition of Stone Cultural Heritage

From October 25, 2024
Outdoor exhibition
This exhibition, held in the outdoor exhibition space newly renovated last year, offers the chance to quietly appreciate a variety of stone cultural heritage pieces, including Buddha statues as well as Buddhist pagodas and steles, making it an ideal spot to pause and relax.

Gongju National Museum
Fantastic Animal:
Baekje Dragon
Sep 10, 2024 – Feb 9, 2025
Special Exhibition Hall
This is a special exhibition on depictions of dragons from the Baekje Kingdom. Centered around the concepts of "imagination" and "reality," the exhibition explores how the people of Baekje thought of dragons and how they depicted these mythical creatures.



Jinju National Museum
The Life and Legacy of
Potters
Oct 1, 2024 – Feb 23, 2025
Special Exhibition Hall
Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the museum's opening, this special exhibition focuses on the lives of master potters, whose invaluable contributions to society have often gone unrecognized despite the importance of their work.



Cheongju National Museum
Exhibition of Winning Works
from the Children's Cultural
Heritage Painting Contest
Dec 24, 2024 – Mar 9, 2025
Elegance of Masterful Artifacts Gallery
Inspired by Korea's cultural heritage, the unique works showcased in this exhibition reflect the creativity and individuality of children.



Gimhae National Museum
HITTITE
Oct 8, 2024 – Feb 2, 2025
Special Exhibition Room
Marking the first anniversary of Gaya Tumuli's UNESCO World Heritage inscription, this exhibition holds special meaning for being the first to introduce the Korean public to the Hittite culture of Anatolia (present-day Türkiye).



Jeju National Museum
Dongjaseok: Child Statue
of Jejudo Island
Always available
Dongjaseok Garden
In this garden, statues of children for a tomb called Dongjaseok, donated by the late Samsung chairman Lee Kun-Hee are displayed alongside native plants from Jejudo Island, offering a different experience with each change of season.



Chuncheon National Museum
Utopia Seen Through Korean
Eyes: Geumgangsan Mountain
and the Eight Scenic Sites of
Gwandong
Always available
Brand Zone
This exhibition, held in the Brand Zone, showcases paintings of Geumgangsan Mountain and the eight scenic sites of the Gwandong area, exploring how Koreans have envisioned utopia and captured it through various artistic means.

Naju National Museum
Radiance: The Whispers of
Ancient Mirrors
Oct 8, 2024 – Feb 9, 2025
Special Exhibition Gallery
This exhibition presents the stories captured in ancient mirrors, exploring the daily lives and cultures of past societies and the cultural exchanges that took place across Northeast Asia.

Iksan National Museum
Decorative Ridge-End Tiles,
Chimi, Excavated from
the Mireuksa Temple Site:
Documenting Their Production,
Disuse, and Restoration
Oct 22, 2024 – May 25, 2025
Special Exhibition Hall
Celebrating the 5th anniversary of the museum's opening, this special exhibition showcases for the first time the newly restored *chimi* excavated from the former monks' living quarters in the temple's eastern courtyard and the pond area of the Mireuksa Temple site.



What to Expect from the National Museum of Korea in 2025



2025 is a special year for the National Museum of Korea (NMK) as it marks the 80th anniversary of Korea’s liberation from Japanese colonial rule, the 80th anniversary of the NMK’s founding, and the 20th anniversary of its relocation to Yongsan. As it enters this landmark year, the museum looks to reinvent itself through various exhibitions, research initiatives, educational programs, and international collaborations. Special exhibitions on Admiral Yi Sunshin and Son Kee Chung, as well as an exhibition showcasing artistic innovations from the early Joseon Dynasty, will shed new light on the enduring value of historical figures and cultural heritage. A commemorative exhibition will also reflect on two decades of growth and transformation since the NMK’s relocation to Yongsan. In addition, the museum plans to strengthen its commitment to research, conservation, and education. Set to open in October 2025, the new Museum Conservation Science Center will serve as a key hub for advancing research on cultural heritage conservation. Meanwhile, the expansion of the Children’s Museum and the launch of the Museum Academy will help lay the groundwork for training future generations and museum professionals. The NMK also plans to lead interdisciplinary research projects that explore new interpretations and possibilities for cultural heritage, in addition to reaffirming its commitment to showcasing cultural heritage from around the world and furthering research of Korean cultural contents to promote them to international audiences. The NMK aims to evolve into a cultural hub that connects the past, present, and future — an open space where diverse cultures can converge and interact freely.

New Book Release: *Letters from the National Museum of Korea*



The NMK has just released *Letters from the National Museum of Korea*, a compilation of stories about artifacts from its popular curation service “Morning Happiness Knocking at the Door.” The well-designed book features 100 cultural heritage pieces that have captured the imagination of over 100,000 subscribers, including the Moon Jar, Pensive Bodhisattva, and Great Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje. In addition to showcasing the museum’s most iconic pieces, the book also sheds light on lesser-known artifacts of interest, such as small clay figurines, white porcelain burial vessels, and lacquered wooden furniture, revealing the serene yet playful, and simple yet extravagant nature of Korean cultural heritage. This publication, the NMK’s first attempt at engaging with the public through books, features a unique layout of one artifact per page, designed to offer readers a more immersive experience. It is available for purchase at both online and offline bookstores.

Pensive Bodhisattva Miniature



The third edition of Pensive Bodhisattva Miniature, inspired by one of the iconic sculptures from the NMK collection and part of the MU:DS (museum goods), has been produced. This edition is available in five elegant colors, each boasting a subtle pearlescent finish meant to impart the piece a beautiful glow. This miniature, crafted with remarkable attention to detail, was designed to mirror the original artifact with striking accuracy. With its serene smile, the Pensive Bodhisattva Miniature is the perfect decorative piece for any space and is sure to bring a sense of calm to anyone who gazes upon it. It is available for purchase both directly at the NMK’s Museum Shop or online at www.muds.or.kr.

Size 65×84×155 mm, W.510g
Material Polyurethane resin
Price 65,000won (each)



Deepening appreciation with live curator commentary

Every Wednesday evening, the National Museum of Korea hosts a “Curator’s Talk” program between 18:00 and 19:30. It is an opportunity to hear experts talk about the exhibits, which makes the exhibitions more interesting and enjoyable. The program is free and open to the public, with no advanced reservations required. Seasoned museumgoers are known to plan their visits in advance using the program schedule. On February 26, the last session of “Curator’s Talk” for the special exhibition *Sculpted Celadons of the Goryeo Dynasty*, was hosted by Seo Yuri, associate curator of the Fine Arts Division. She guided participants through the celadons, each depicting an everyday object beautifully, and explained how Goryeo people’s love of nature and their ideals can be found in the celadons. She captivated participants with some wonderfully fascinating stories about each of the sculpted celadons. Although the special exhibition has ended, participants from this program are certain to be reminded of the enchanting stories about each sculpted celadon when they later see again the Celadon Dragon-carp-shaped Ewer at the National Museum of Korea, the Melon-shaped Water Dropper at the Amorepacific Museum of Art, and the Twin Lion-shaped Pillow at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

**Avalokiteshvara, Replete with Wishes for
Happiness Past and Present**

Among the many Buddhist icons, Avalokiteshvara, who listens to the sufferings of sentient beings and saves them, is a symbol of great compassion that has been portrayed in countless sculptures and paintings and thus enshrined in temples.

The Gilt-bronze Seated Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, gracing the cover of the spring issue of the *National Museum of Korea* magazine, takes the so-called “royal ease pose” (*yunwangjwa*), with the right leg raised and the left leg pendant. It has a large, high crown, big earrings, and ornaments covering the body, and is noted for its lavish expression not only on the front but also on the back. Portrayal of Avalokiteshvara in the royal ease pose was widely popular in China during the Song and Yuan periods and can be found in Korean Buddhist statues from the late Goryeo and early Joseon periods.

The relaxed posture, with the body leaning to one side, the rather florid crown and ornaments, and the exotic appearance of the face all reflect Tibetan and Mongolian influence. However, unlike Chinese Buddhist sculptures from the Yuan and Ming Dynasties which came under the same influence, Korean images of Avalokiteshvara in this relaxed pose play down the sensuality and excessive decoration to achieve a uniquely Korean style with more gentle modeling and somewhat simpler form.

**Gilt-bronze Seated
Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva**

Period Early Joseon or Late
Goryeo to Early
Joseon
Dimensions H. 38.6 cm

