

# NMK

**National Museum of Korea**

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE VOL. 72 **SUMMER 2025**



**Bringing to Mind a Duck  
Gliding Leisurely in  
a Lotus Pond**



**The Echoes of Coexistence, the Sounds of Korean Buddhist Bells**

Located on the 3rd floor of the Permanent Exhibition Hall, the Room of the Senses offers a multi-sensory exhibition centered on the sounds of Korean Buddhist bell. This exhibition is based on the Sacred Bell of Great King Seongdeok, a National Treasure displayed at the Gyeongju National Museum, which is regarded as the epitome of Korean Buddhist bells.

In the center of the Room of the Senses, a 10-meter-by-10-meter square exhibition space, stands a cube-shaped structure measuring four meters in width and height. A large LED screen on the front explains the principles behind the sounds of Korean Buddhist bells, provides visual representations of sound waves, and presents media art that replicates the actual act of striking the bell. To enhance accessibility, information is also provided in Korean Sign Language and there is an audio description. This exhibition represents a new form of multi-sensory exhibition, utilizing visual, auditory, and tactile elements, embodying the National Museum of Korea's move towards becoming a “Museum for You.”

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**National Museum of Korea**

**PUBLISHER**  
Kim Jaehong  
Director General of the National Museum of Korea

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Kim Wongil

**EDITORIAL DIRECTION**  
Kim Miso / Myong Seongeun

Tel: (82 2) 2077-9575  
Fax: (82 2) 2077-9940  
Email: mymse@korea.kr

**DESIGN AND PRODUCTION**  
aNSWER

**PHOTO**  
Shin Gyu Chul Photo Studio

**TRANSLATION / REVISION**  
Cho Yoonjung / Kim Jiseok / Leo-Thomas Brylowski  
Kim Ahram / Hwang Chiyoung

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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.

National Museum of Korea  
137 Seobinggo-ro, Yongsan-gu,  
Seoul 04383, Korea

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home







With the foundation of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392, a fresh new energy began to appear in Korean art. The special exhibition, **Art of Early Joseon: Masterpieces from the 15th and 16th Century**, introduces the art of an era brimming with the hopes of a new nation.

04



Courtesy of the artist © Yoon Minseop

“The idea that my artwork, born in this modern age, now coexists with artifacts from before the Common Era exhibited at the National Museum of Korea makes it even more meaningful.”

20

A must-see exhibition space at the **Gongju National Museum**, the Ungjin Baekje Hall, features major artifacts excavated from the Tomb of King Muryeong of the Baekje Kingdom.

26



30

The exhibition titled *Sculpted Celadon of the Goryeo Dynasty* which ended last March was also a showcase of conservation efforts carried out over the past 20 years.



14



The keyword of this issue is “blossoms,” as people imbued flowers with diverse symbols and meanings and wove them into their everyday lives, more than simply reveling in their fragrance and admiring their beauty.



This special exhibition, split into four parts, begins with an exploration of the ocean, then explores Melanesia and Polynesia stories, and concludes by highlighting how island cultures and identities continue to be passed down and preserved to the present.

10

By presenting some major Korean cultural artifacts in Dresden, a cultural center of Europe, the special exhibition titled **100 Ideas of Happiness: Art Treasures from Korea** is garnering widespread attention.

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©Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Photographer Oliver Killig



# Art of Early Joseon: Masterpieces from the 15th and 16th Century

By **Kim Younghee**  
Associate Curator of the Fine Arts Division, National Museum of Korea

June 10 to August 31, 2025

Special Exhibition Gallery 1



With the foundation of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392, a fresh new energy began to appear in Korean art. Building on the material culture and technology of the preceding era, the new ideals and aesthetic aspirations of a Confucian state began to take shape. Amid these changes appeared completely new types of art that had never been seen before. The establishment of a centralized

government system allowed for control of ceramics production, leading to higher quality and giving birth to *buncheong* ware and pure white porcelain. The scholar-officials of Joseon (*sadaebu*) who revered Confucianism painted ink-wash landscapes richly imbued with their visions of an ideal world. The Confucian age had arrived, but Buddhism still offered solace amid the sufferings of real

life and Buddhist artworks embellished with gold continued to be produced. The art created by the state, scholar-officials, and common people of Joseon formed the foundations of what we now recognize as Korean art, a legacy that remains vibrant to this day. This special exhibition introduces the art of an era brimming with the hopes of a new nation.





A display of the Sarira Reliquaries Commissioned by Yi Seong-gye, which are designated as Treasure



An exhibition space where visitors can explore the transition of ceramics from *buncheong* ware to white porcelain



**Covered Bowl, White Porcelain**  
Joseon Dynasty,  
15th–16th century  
Treasure  
Horim Museum

### Prologue

The exhibition begins by highlighting the Sarira Reliquaries Commissioned by Yi Seong-gye, designated as Treasure, created just before the Joseon Dynasty was founded. Yi Seong-gye, a military commander during the late Goryeo period, seized power through the Wihwado Retreat. Subsequently, he ascended the throne following the abdication of the Goryeo King. The sarira reliquaries that he enshrined on Geumgangsan Mountain in 1391, with his family and close allies, embody the anguish and determination he felt on the eve of establishing a new nation in 1392. The prayer to Maitreya inscribed on the votive text accompanying the reliquaries likely reflect Yi Seong-gye's own hopes for

a new world. The sarira reliquaries that he commissioned—including pagoda-shaped gilt bronze containers and white porcelain bowls from Yanggu, Gangwon-do—represent the material culture of late Goryeo, which was transmitted to Joseon by those who founded it, setting the stage for the new art of a new era.

### White: Shaping the Dreams of Joseon

The first part of the exhibition features the ceramic ware of early Joseon, which evolved into pristine white porcelain following the era of jade-green celadon and the transitional period of *buncheong* ware. Ceramics from that time exhibited both harmony and freedom, bold expression and restraint, radical innovation and dignity. The leaders of the new nation

established order and laid the framework of the country based on Confucian ideals. The state assumed control of materials and craftsmen across the land and achieved great progress in ceramics technology. Celadon, which had fallen into decline in the late Goryeo Dynasty, transitioned to *buncheong* ware with stamped designs, taking Korean ceramics to a new height and ultimately giving rise to *baekja*—high-fired white porcelain. Ceramics manifested the Confucian idea of propriety and symbolized the authority of the dynasty. The white surfaces of porcelain lent themselves to designs painted with iron-brown or cobalt-blue pigment. The first 200 years following the foundation of Joseon marked the era of the greatest diversity in Korean ceramics.

This part of the exhibition explores the new spirit and new aesthetics that took shape in the pursuit of the color white.

### Ink: Visualizing Self-cultivation and Virtue

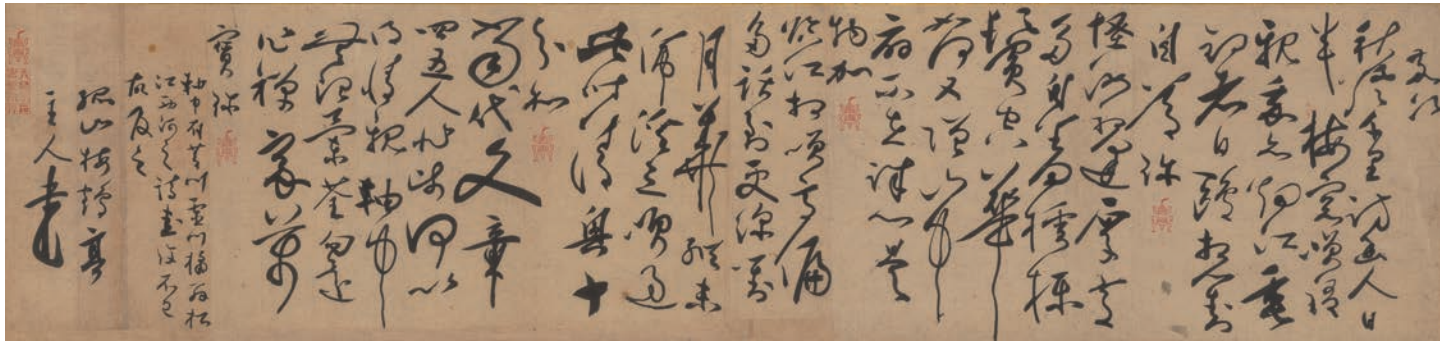
Like deep ink blooming across paper, the next part of the exhibition delves into paintings and calligraphy that embody the Confucian ideal world envisioned by scholar-officials and the underlying spirit of society rooted in the humanities. The foundation of Joseon, which adopted Confucianism as its ruling ideology, ushered in an era rooted in the humanities—one that emphasized ethics and cultivation of moral character. The scholar-officials, who comprised the ruling class, expressed their ideals in

### Jar, *Buncheong* Ware with Inlaid and Stamped Cloud and Dragon Design

Joseon Dynasty, 15th century  
National Treasure  
National Museum of Korea







**Bhaisajyaguru Triad**  
Joseon Dynasty, 1565  
Gold on silk  
Treasure  
National Museum of Korea

**Calligraphy in Cursive Script**  
Hwang Giro 1521–after 1575  
Joseon Dynasty, second half of 16th century  
Ink on paper  
Treasure  
Gift of Yun Gwangja (The late Yun Iksung)  
National Museum of Korea



**Jar, White Porcelain with Plum and Bamboo Design Painted in Underglaze Iron-brown**  
Joseon Dynasty  
National Treasure  
National Museum of Korea

poetry, calligraphy, and paintings. The influence of the works they left behind spread through Joseon society and formed the basis of governance by civil means. The medium they used to metaphorically express their inner worlds was ink—black in appearance yet said to contain five different colors—which gained deeper meaning in its encounter with nature. Ink-wash landscapes were not just pictures of scenery—they embodied the ideal world that these learned elites dreamed of and were windows that expanded their inner lives. Gatherings where they exchanged Confucian ideals were recorded in paintings, while their thoughts and emotions found expression in poetry and calligraphy. At the royal court, opulent decorative paintings of auspicious animals

and plants were created to convey wishes for a peaceful and enduring nation. Museum visitors will have the chance to sense the emotions and envision the landscapes captured in these writings and paintings.

**Gold: Embodying Eternal Prayers**  
The third part highlights Buddhist artworks from the early Joseon period that embody loyal hearts—like gold, which remains the same even over the passage of time. Although the emergence of Joseon marked the beginning of a Confucian era, Buddhism remained a powerful influence. Its economic and social standing may have been restricted in the public sphere, but beyond ideology and moral grounds, Buddhism persisted as a faith that offered

solace for the sufferings of life and the sadness of death. The people of early Joseon—from the royal family and ruling class to the lower classes—focused their attention on the creation of resplendent Buddhist art works and participation in Buddhist events. The Buddhist works commissioned by the court constituted the most exceptional art of their time, created by state artisans using the finest materials. In addition, both the court and temples continuously published Buddhist sutras, enabling faith and ritual to be sustained. At temples around the country, ordinary people took part in the creation of Buddhist art with a preference for easily available materials, and many ritual paintings in particular were created. This part of the exhibition introduces the

beauty of Buddhist art, which endured during an era of Confucianism, as well as the prayers and wishes embodied in them.

**Epilogue**  
The exhibition closes with an examination of the greatest cultural achievement of the early Joseon period—*Hunminjeongeum haerye*, the commentary accompanying the promulgation of the Korean script, *hangeul*, which continues to influence Korean culture to this day. *Hunminjeongeum* was the original name of *hangeul*, the new script created during the reign of King Sejong of the Joseon Dynasty. It heralded the beginning of a new era, when written language would be made accessible to all, facilitating the spread of culture. Even ceramic artisans

were able to use the new script to inscribe their names on the bottom of the vessels they created. The scholar-officials, who played a leading role in the invention of *hangeul*, devoted themselves to realizing the ideal Confucian world. At the same time Buddhist scriptures were translated from Chinese characters into *hangeul* and spread widely to all people. Like *hangeul*, which has been carried on into the present, the art of early Joseon reaches out across 500 years to the present—as it will continue to do so in the future.

**Eight Views of the Four Seasons**  
Attributed to An Gyeon  
Joseon Dynasty, mid-15th century  
Ink and light color on silk  
National Museum of Korea



Second part of the exhibition showcasing the ideals of scholar-officials (*sadaebu*) in poetry, calligraphy, and paintings



# Mana Moana —Arts of the Great Ocean, OCEANIA

By **Baik Seungmi** Associate Curator of the Exhibition Division, National Museum of Korea

April 30 to September 14, 2025

Special Exhibition Gallery 2

The National Museum of Korea, in collaboration with the musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, is holding a special exhibition titled *Mana Moana—Arts of the Great Ocean, OCEANIA*.

This is the first exhibition to introduce Pacific cultures to a Korean audience, shining a spotlight on Oceanian art and philosophy along with the valuable lessons they hold for today's world. Featuring 179 items dating from

the 18th to 20th centuries alongside eight works by contemporary Oceanian artists, the exhibition explores the multifaceted nature of Oceanian art, where both tradition and modernity coexist. By harmoniously weaving together past and present, the exhibition aims to convey that the cultural heritage of Oceania is not merely a work of the past, but a living tradition that continues to be meaningful to this very day. The title, *Mana Moana*,

is a symbolic expression of the central theme underlying the exhibition. In Polynesian languages, the word “mana” refers to the sacred power present in all living things, while “moana” signifies the vast and boundless ocean. Together, these terms embody the worldview that underlies all Oceanian art—one that reveres the unseen forces of the universe and the sacred nature of the ocean.

This special exhibition is split into

four parts, beginning with an exploration of the ocean and how people navigated and settled across it (Part 1), before delving into stories from Melanesia (Part 2) and Polynesia (Part 3) organized by different themes. Additionally, the final section (Part 4) highlights how island cultures and identities continue to be passed down and preserved to the present, concluding with a thoughtful message on the relevance of all this for us today.

## Part 1: The Domain of Water

Oceania is a realm of islands that

stretches across the vast Pacific Ocean. For the people of this region, the sea does not represent a boundary, but a space through which they understand and connect with the world—one that forms the very foundation of their lives. Part 1 of the exhibition sheds light on the seafaring history of the Oceanian peoples, for whom the sea has long served as a route for travel and settlement, and explores how this shaped their worldview. It looks at how, over thousands of years, Oceanians have developed sophisticated navigation techniques, canoe-building

skills, and creation myths which offer insights into their sacred understanding of the sea, captured in the word “moana.” Elements of the exhibition—including a canoe tilted as if out at sea or coming ashore, prow ornaments that seem to gaze out at the horizon, and displays of the many islands dispersed across the vast ocean—invite visitors to physically experience the unique geography and cultural identity of Oceania. This part of the exhibition serves as the starting point for understanding Oceanian art and philosophy.





**Canoe Figurehead, *nguzunguzu***  
New Georgia Island, Western Province, Solomon Islands  
19th century  
Wood, pigment, resin (*Parinarium*), mother-of-pearl  
musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac (72.1978.2.1)  
© musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, photo Claude Germain

## Part 2: Life in Flourishing Territories

The Melanesia subregion of Oceania is home to a rich natural environment and extraordinary cultural diversity. The communities of this region, who regard nature and ancestors as one, have used art as a means to represent social unity and spiritual order. Part 2 of the exhibition focuses on ancestral veneration, sacred spaces, as well as the ritual practices related to power and exchange that reflect the communal worldview of the Melanesian people. The “men’s house,” along with ceremonial sculptures, masks, and ornaments that reflect communal identity and social structure, highlights how art has served not merely an aesthetic purpose, but has been central to the political, social, and spiritual life of these communities. This space offers insight into the complex ways Oceanian art interlaces life, community, and the sacred.

## Part 3: Time Across Generations

The Polynesian subregion is home to a seafaring culture that stretches across wide ocean expanses, and which boasts a profound awareness of ancestral figures and mythic time. Polynesians have a distinctive concept of time, according to which the past, being known, lies before our eyes, while the future, still unknown, lies behind us. This stands in stark contrast to the Western notion of time as linear, offering instead a cyclical understanding in which time is experienced as the continuous passing down of memory through generations. Part 3 of the exhibition explores this understanding of time and existence as reflected in ancestral beliefs, and the notions of “mana” and “tapu.” Sculptures, ritual ornaments, and textiles representing the presence of ancestors act as a bridge between deities and humans, and between life and death. Moreover, the textile art passed down through women’s hands is presented as a cultural testament to the transmission of memory across generations. The exhibition reminds visitors that Oceanian art is an ever-flowing current of time that remains alive to this day.

## Part 4: Islands... And People

The essence that lies at the heart of Oceanian art is found in the decorative objects and crafts worn on the body and embedded in everyday life, which serve as nonverbal expressions of social status, identity, and the relationship between ancestors and nature. Part 4 of the exhibition explores the aesthetic and symbolic relationships between people, nature, and community through the lens of these adornments and artistic creations. Made from natural materials such as mother-of-pearl, feathers, and whale teeth, these finely crafted pieces not only showcase extraordinary skill and beauty but also reflect the wearer’s social context and community ties. Through these small works of art, visitors will gain insight into the way of life of the Oceanian



Part 3 of the exhibition, themed “Time Across Generations”

peoples and their understanding of the universe. This space also offers the chance to reexamine Oceanian philosophy through the lens of human experience.

Above all, this special exhibition aims to convey the message that “everything is interconnected.” Just as the ocean links island to island and people to people, Oceanian art serves as a bridge that connects past and present, humans and nature, and different cultures together. It encourages us to reflect on our own lifestyles and values, offering a moving experience and an opportunity for introspection. Visitors are invited not simply to observe exotic artifacts, but to embark on a journey in search of artistic insights and solutions to the problems humanity faces today. Oceanian art connects us to our ancestors and to one another, acting as a tool that unites people across diverse cultural backgrounds. Art is a language that holds the power to piece our fragmented world back together—and in this exhibition, it reaches out to us with a message in the voice of the Pacific.



**Mask *Mwai***  
Palimbei village, middle Sepik, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea  
latmul, early 20th century  
Wood, cowrie shells, plant fibers, pigment  
Collected by John Anthony Waldo Forge 1929–1991 (anthropologist)  
musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac (72.1965.12.55)  
© musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, photo Sandrine Expilly

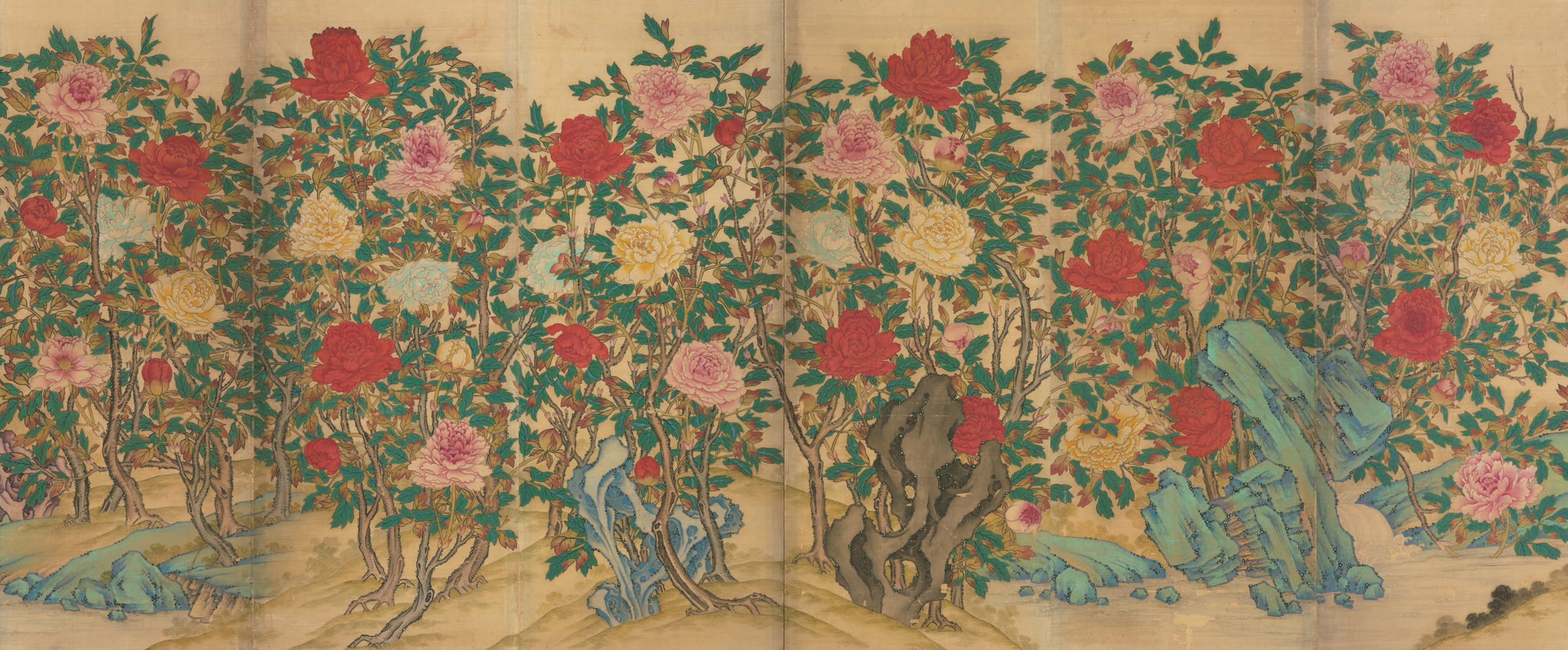
**Necklace, *tema***  
Vanikoro Island, Santa Cruz Islands, Solomon Islands  
Late 19th century or early 20th century  
Tridacna shell, tortoiseshell (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), glass beads, plant fibers  
Gift of Mrs. Robin  
musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac (71.1909.14.18)  
© musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, photo Sandrine Expilly



The entrance that feels like stepping onto a canoe into the special exhibition







## Keyword

# Blossoms

## Engraving Eternity When Flowers Bloom

By **Hwang Jihyun** Curator of the Fine Arts Division, National Museum of Korea

Having lived through the cold winter and passed through spring, they stand at the threshold of summer. Though a chill lingers in the air, at some point the flower buds begin to bloom, showing off their beauty and enticing people with their subtle scent. People are born of nature and are drawn to it, yearning to remain in its embrace. Flowers too are a part of nature. More than simply reveling in their fragrance and admiring their beauty, people imbued them with diverse symbols and meanings and wove them into their everyday lives.

**Flowers—Vessels of Life and Meaning**  
A part of nature, flowers became a part of people's everyday lives. The Gold Diadem Ornaments of the Queen **Fig.2** discovered in the Tomb of King Muryeong r. 501–523 of the Baekje Kingdom, depicts a vase filled with one lotus blossom. This lavish gold ornament reflects the nobility of the royal family while also suggesting that the flowers of the fields and forests had found their way into the spaces of human life.

The Korean people have an age-old tradition of growing and arranging flowers. Floriculture advanced during

the Goryeo Dynasty, especially among the royalty and nobility, who laid out their own gardens and cultivated various trees and blossoms. Flowers were brought indoors, enabling people to observe them and appreciate the changing seasons.

This tradition continued into the Joseon Dynasty. *Taking a Rest after Reading* **Fig.3** depicts a scholar sitting in his study gazing at the blossoms of a potted plant. The painting attests to the spread of floriculture among the literati, who took pleasure in cultivating, caring for, and admiring flowers. Personifying flowers

**Fig.1**  
**Peonies (close-up)**  
Unidentified artist  
Joseon Dynasty, 1820s  
Ten-fold screen  
Ink and color on silk  
166.8 × 45.4 cm (each panel)  
National Museum of Korea





**Fig.3**  
**Taking a Rest after Reading**  
Jeong Seon 1676–1759  
Joseon Dynasty, 1740–1741  
Ink and color on silk  
24.0 × 16.8 cm  
Treasure  
Kansong Art and Culture Foundation



**Fig.5**  
**Clothing Box with Lotus Scroll Design**  
Joseon Dynasty,  
16th–17th century  
Lacquer ware with mother-of-pearl inlay  
H. 12.7 cm, L. 44.5 cm, W. 68.5 cm  
National Museum of Korea



**Fig.2**  
**Gold Diadem Ornaments of the Queen**  
Baekje Kingdom, 6th century  
H. 22.6 cm  
National Treasure  
Excavated from the Tomb of King Muryeong  
Gongju National Museum



**Fig.4**  
**Red Lotus**  
Sim Sajeong 1707–1769  
Joseon Dynasty, 18th century  
Ink and light color on silk  
28.7 × 20.7 cm  
National Museum of Korea

and adopting them as symbols is rooted in their ecological characteristics. As a symbol of Buddhism, lotus blossoms were an important decorative motif for Buddhist sculptures, paintings, and craftworks. Their unique trait of bearing many seeds as soon as they bloom also made them a symbol of fertility and abundance. The Clothing Box with Lotus Scroll Design Fig.5 would be an expression of such wishes.

During the early Joseon period, however, flowers were approached with reserve as they were regarded primarily as treasured objects for appreciation. This attitude was rooted in Confucianism, the founding ideology of Joseon, which warned against losing sight of one's purpose by indulging in trivial objects or pastimes. However, when the literati

culture of China's Ming and Qing Dynasties began to influence Joseon, a more diverse flower-related culture developed, the virtues of the Confucian "noble man" being likened to flowers. Practical manuals were even published, explaining how to care for flowers and the tools required.

Zhou Dunyi 1017–1073, a famed neo-Confucian scholar and poet of the Song Dynasty, praised the lotus as the flower of the Confucian "noble man." In his prose-essay, *On the Love of the Lotus*, he says, "though it grows from the mud, it is unstained; it is hollow inside but straight on the outside; and the farther away it is the purer the fragrance." Confucian scholars would plant lotuses for appreciation, and write poems about them and paint them as a pastime Fig.4.

Plum blossoms and orchids, which bloom after enduring the cold of late winter and early spring, releasing a subtle fragrance, served as metaphors for the integrity of the Confucian scholar, who remains steadfast even under difficult circumstances.

Chrysanthemums, which blossom even in the midst of cold and frost, were similarly likened to the scholar's resilient spirit and were a popular subject in paintings and poetry of the Joseon literati Figs.6 and 7. In the late Joseon period, plum blossoms were often the subject of paintings titled *Thatched House Surrounded by Plum Blossoms*, which depict the mountain dwelling of a recluse surrounded by plum blossoms blooming in late winter.

#### Flowers—Praying for Wealth, Honor, and Abundance

Flowers that represented wealth, honor, and prosperity were also popular subjects for art, the prime example being the peony.

The peony was considered so precious that the Tang Dynasty sent it as a gift to Queen Seondeok r. 632–647 of the Silla Kingdom. Zhou Dunyi lauded the peony, with its lush and splendid petals, as the flower of wealth and honor, a sentiment which became widely spread. In a similar vein, the early Joseon scholar Kang Huian 1417–1464 wrote in his horticultural book *Yanghwa sorok* (*Short Treatise on Flower Cultivation*), "It is widely accepted that the peony is the flower of wealth, honor, and prosperity." Peony paintings grew more lavish and opulent when applied to folding screens Fig.1. As seen in *Hwarot* Fig.8, a bridal robe from the Joseon Dynasty, peony designs were used to ornament celebratory events but they were also found on the folding screens installed at royal funerals and memorial rites. Whether on occasions of joy or sorrow, peony designs conveyed wishes for abundance in both this world and the next.

In accordance with social changes, during the late Joseon period, the desire to ward off evil and pray for good fortune grew stronger than ever. It was a time when people devoted great attention to



**Fig.6**  
**Chrysanthemums**  
Shin Myeong-yeon 1809–1886  
Joseon Dynasty, 1864  
Ink and light color on silk  
33.1 × 20.0 cm  
National Museum of Korea



expressing their wishes in gloriously abundant paintings of peonies. The frequent depiction of peonies on ceramics, *najeonchilgi* (lacquerware decorated with mother-of-pearl), and other household craft items also attests to people's love of the flowers. The flowers are painted with greater realism on Bowl with Peony Design Fig.9, a characteristic of late Joseon blue-and-white porcelain, making them appear even more profuse and bountiful. Around the same time, designs symbolizing good fortune and longevity were popular on *najeonchilgi*. Peony designs on these lacquered works, in contrast to those on blue-and-white porcelain, were used alongside auspicious symbols, as seen in Two-tiered Cabinet with Longevity Symbols Design Fig.10, reflecting late Joseon society's heightened desires for wealth, honor, longevity, and abundance.

**Flowers—Embodying Authority and Dignity**

People hold ceremonies to commemorate special days that must be remembered, with such events taking place at all levels, from individuals to the state. Regardless of past or present, the presence of flowers made those days even more special. *Royal Banquet in the Year of Musin, 1848* Fig.11 depicts the formalities of a magnificent royal banquet held in 1848, the fourteenth year of the reign of King Heonjong of Joseon. Befitting a royal celebration, it shows a large number of guests, lavish decorations, and tables laden with food, while celebratory performances take place. A variety of flowers arranged here and there enhanced the mood of the banquet. But where did all those flowers come from? The flowers are not real, but artificial. In the royal court colorful silk flowers called *chaehwa* were used. Diverse materials—including metals such as brass, silver, and gold wire, and textiles such as silk and velvet thread—went into their creation by highly skilled artisans working in collaboration. As seen in the Illustrations from the *Uigwe* (Royal Protocol) of Events

from King Jeongjo's Visit to Hwaseong in 1795 Fig.12, the silk flowers used at royal banquets were varied in type. They were placed in vases, hung from columns or used to decorate tables of food, and even worn in the hair by guests. Moreover, they were an important feature of court dances and other performances held as part of the festivities.

The silk flowers were arranged according to strict rules. Those placed in vases or on tables near the seat of the most senior member of the royal family were the most sumptuous and ornate. They symbolized the nobility and dignity of the guest of honor. The floral hair ornaments worn by guests or the flowers gracing their tables varied according to each person's rank. Flowers thus served as markers of the strict hierarchy of Joseon, a class-based society.

*"The whole nation runs mad besotted with flowers,  
I alone behold a clean flower in a small vase.  
Though helpless as the wind and rain pass overnight,  
they cannot touch my refuge behind the beaded screen."*

This poem was written by the Joseon literati Mok Manjung 1727–1810. While it reflects people's fascination with flowers at the time, it also reveals how the Joseon literati saw them as symbols of an honest, elegant, and quiet life.

We love flowers just as much today as people did in the past. What kind of flower would be blooming in my heart? What meaning does it have for me as it blooms? Flowers in nature wither with time, but may the flowers in our hearts be eternal.



**Fig.7**  
**Plum Blossoms and Moon**  
Attributed Eo Mongryong 1566–1617  
Joseon Dynasty, second half of 16th century  
Ink on silk  
119.7 × 54.0 cm  
National Museum of Korea



**Fig.9**  
**Bowl with Peony Design**  
Joseon Dynasty, 19th century  
White porcelain painted in underglaze cobalt-blue  
H. 27.0 cm, D. 37.4 cm (mouth)  
National Museum of Korea

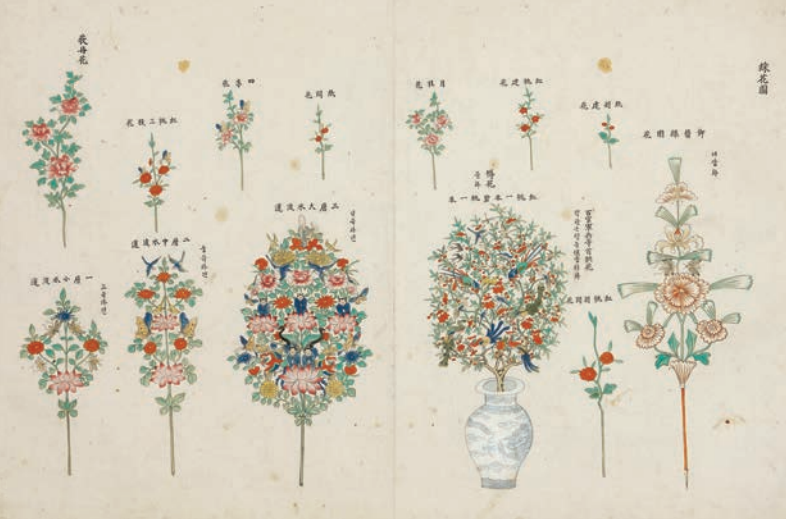
**Fig.10**  
**Two-tiered Cabinet with Longevity Symbols Design**  
Joseon Dynasty, late 19th century or early 20th century  
Red lacquered with mother-of-pearl inlay  
H. 130.5 cm, L. 83.0 cm, W. 42.5 cm  
Bequest of Lee Kun-Hee, 2021  
National Museum of Korea



**Fig.8**  
**Hwarot**  
Early 20th century  
Embroidered silk  
L. 124.0 cm, W. 198.0 cm  
Gift of Lee Sang-ryong, 2002  
National Museum of Korea



**Fig.11**  
**Royal Banquet in the Year of Musin, 1848 (close-up)**  
Unidentified artist  
Joseon Dynasty, 19th century  
Eight-fold screen  
Ink and color on silk  
136.1 × 47.6 cm (each panel)  
National Museum of Korea



**Fig.12**  
**Illustrations from the Uigwe (Royal Protocol) of Events from King Jeongjo's Visit to Hwaseong in 1795**  
Unidentified artist  
Joseon Dynasty, early 19th century  
Ink and color on paper  
62.2 × 47.3 cm (each page)  
National Museum of Korea





#### Solo Exhibitions

- 2025 *Correspondence*, SVA Andrew Chang Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 2016 *In Between*, Shinhan Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 2014 *Four Walls One Window-drawing into the air*, theALU Design Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 2012 *Life Drawing*, ISE Cultural Foundation Gallery, New York, USA

#### Artist

## Drawing in Space: How Imagination Turns into Reality

By the Editorial Team | Interview with Yoon Minseop Artist

**Could you tell us how you went about creating the artwork currently installed at the National Museum of Korea?**

I first met with the curators in charge of the Neolithic and Bronze Age rooms inside the newly renovated Prehistory and Ancient History Hall to discuss the overall atmosphere and the kinds of artifacts to be exhibited there. As a result, we agreed to create a figure spinning thread with a spindle whorl inside a dwelling for the Neolithic room, a forest scene with artifacts such as stone axes and arrowheads for the Bronze Age room, and a work incorporating rice stalks to be installed around Bronze Age pottery artifacts.

**What aspects did you pay special attention to while creating the three works?**

Since these works aim to reflect real

aspects of history, I worked closely with the curators to ensure the Neolithic woman's clothing and accessories in "Woman with Spindle Whorl Inside Neolithic Dwelling" were accurate for the period, and that her posture while spinning thread was also depicted correctly. I spent a lot of time thinking about how best to present the stone axes and arrowheads in "Bronze Age Forest," while my main concern for "Rice, Acorns, and Fire Pit" was how to integrate the pottery into the overall installation.

**Did any part of this project leave a lasting impression on you?**

Installing the artworks alongside actual artifacts presented several unexpected challenges. As we were putting together "Rice, Acorns, and Fire Pit," it seemed the acorn sculptures might have to be left out, but a member of the NMK's design team came up with the idea of placing it inside a broken piece of pottery. Then, during the installation of "Bronze Age Forest," as I looked at an arrow stuck in a wooden post, I imagined a flock of birds startled into flight next to it, leading to the creation of an additional piece.

Until recently, I always thought of myself as someone who worked alone. But these days, I've come to realize that works take on deeper meaning through the engagement of others, and are only completed once a connection is established with the audience. That's why the experience of working on this project, shaped by the input and support of many people from conception to installation, feels especially valuable to me. The idea that my artwork, born in this modern age, now coexists with artifacts from before the Common Era makes it even more meaningful.

**Do you often use your imagination to help you expand the breadth of your thinking?**

Whether I'm working on a project or not, my imagination is always running. Most

of my works begin with a story, which I then build upon by piecing related images together. It's as if there was an old projector constantly running in the back of my mind, casting one image after the other. Since I have to feed my imagination to keep it going, I'm always reading books, watching films, going to exhibitions, attending performances, and traveling whenever I have the chance. That's what allows me to fill empty spaces with people, build homes, and bring the world inside my mind to life.

**Do you have any plans to explore Korean traditional culture more profoundly in future works?**

When I returned from studying in the U.S. in 2014, Korean society was marked by a pervasive sense of instability. This sparked a longing in me for the ideals of *seonbi*, including Confucian scholars who spoke of holding firm convictions, leading to the creation of my work "The Night When Even the Moonlight Is Dark." In the process, I came to realize the beauty of the world and the nature depicted by our ancestors, as well as their remarkable taste for the arts. As of right now, I'm not sure exactly how my work will continue to engage with Korean traditional culture. That said, just seeing how much the boundaries of artistic expression have expanded feels deeply meaningful to me.



Courtesy of the artist © Yoon Minseop



Courtesy of the artist © Yoon Minseop





"Craftsmanship of Faith"  
highlighting the Buddhist art  
and metal crafts from the  
Goryeo Dynasty

©Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Photographer Oliver Killig



"Colors of Joy" featuring  
the beauty of hanbok

©Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Photographer Oliver Killig

## Focus

# 100 Ideas of Happiness: Art Treasures from Korea

By **Kim Hyukjoong** Associate Curator of the Exhibition Division, National Museum of Korea

March 15 to August 10, 2025

Special Exhibition of the Dresden State Art Collections, Germany



**Girin-shaped Incense  
Burner, Celadon**

Goryeo Dynasty  
H. 17.8 cm  
Bequest of Lee Kun-Hee  
National Museum of Korea

The National Museum of Korea (NMK), in collaboration with the Dresden State Art Collections (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, SKD), is hosting the special exhibition titled *100 Ideas of Happiness: Art Treasures from Korea*. Held at the Dresden Royal Palace, the exhibition is attracting visitors not only from across Germany but Europe as well. This exchange exhibition follows *The Dream of a King: Masterpieces from the Dresden State Art Collections*, which was held in 2017 at the NMK and the Gwangju National Museum. By presenting some major Korean cultural artifacts in Dresden, a cultural center of Europe, the exhibition is garnering widespread attention.

### Essence of Korean Culture in the Heart of Dresden

The venue, Dresden Royal Palace (Residenzschloss), is a historic site over four hundred years old. It stands as a symbol of the city that survived bombing in World War II and is still undergoing

restoration to this day.

The special exhibition is under way in two parts of the palace. First, various aspects of Korean culture are showcased by theme in nine rooms of the State Apartments on the second floor. "Colors of Joy" presents the beauty of *hanbok*—Korean traditional clothing—while "Abundance and Rest" explores the hopes and wishes of ancient Koreans through pottery from the Three Kingdoms period. "Craftsmanship of Faith" and "Vow of Compassion" highlight Buddhist art from the Goryeo and Joseon Dynasties, while the "The Beauty of Celadon" and "Moderation and Dignity" showcase the aesthetic and technical achievements of Korean ceramics, ranging from Goryeo celadon to Joseon *buncheong* ware and white porcelain. The story continues with "Majestic Authority" and "Courage and Spirit," which focus on royal and military attire and weaponry. Lastly, "A Happy Life" features folding screens that express wishes for well-being and prosperity. Furthermore, a special collection titled

"Silla: Korea's Golden Kingdom" is on display in the Sponsel Room of the New Green Vault, also on the first floor of the palace.

### Diversity of Korean Culture Set Inside Baroque Architecture

The exhibition features 349 pieces in 185 items, covering a wide range of historic periods. It is the first large-scale special exhibition of Korean culture in Germany in 25 years, following *Korea: The Old Kingdoms*, held in Essen and Munich in 1999. The current exhibition is particularly notable for its inclusion of the definitive works of each era, including sculpted pottery pieces from the Gaya Confederacy and Silla Kingdom, a Gilt-bronze Seated Amitabha Buddha and a *Girin*-shaped Incense Burner, Celadon, from the Goryeo Dynasty, as well as a Large White Porcelain Jar known as Moon Jar from the Joseon Dynasty.

In addition to items from the NMK, the exhibition includes artifacts from affiliated museums around the country—





**Norigae, Pendant with Three Ornaments**

Joseon Dynasty  
L. 42.5 cm  
Bequest of Lee Young-hee  
Daegu National Museum



**Boat-shaped Pottery**

Gaya Confederacy,  
5th–6th century  
H. 20.0 cm  
Bequest of Lee Kun-Hee  
National Museum of Korea

such as the Gyeongju, Daegu, Buyeo, and Gimhae National Museums—allowing for displays based on regional themes. It also features internationally recognized works, including those donated by the late Samsung Chairman Lee Kun-Hee; “Clothes of the Wind,” a range of *hanbok* donated by the late Lee Young-hee housed at the Daegu National Museum; and digital media artworks like *Pyeongsaengdo*, a folding screen depicting scenes from an ideal life, as well as a “Digital Magnifier,” which allows for examination of items in close detail. These exhibits convey the enduring vitality of Korean culture and its capacity for expansion.

#### Silla: Korea’s Golden Kingdom

The standout pieces of the exhibition are Gold Crown and Diadem Ornaments from Geumgwanchong Tomb and Gold Waist Belt from Geumgwanchong Tomb, both National Treasures of Korea. They have returned to Germany for the first time in over 60 years, first being displayed at the very popular 1962 exhibition *The*

*National Art Treasures of Korea* at the Frankfurt Museum of Applied Arts. The current exhibition also features *Gwanmo*, a peaked crown-cap, and Wing-shaped Crown Ornament, as well as earrings, bracelets, and gold vessels, giving a comprehensive overview of the gold artifacts excavated from Geumgwanchong Tomb (Gold Crown Tomb). There is also a video highlighting the recent re-excavation findings, which gives visitors some background understanding of the items on display.

#### Happiness: Keyword of Korean Culture

The Dresden State Art Collections also contributed ten items from its large collection of Korean cultural heritage—including Joseon Dynasty folding screens, armor, and weapons—partly from the GRASSI Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig (GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig), one of its affiliated institutions. Indeed, the exhibition’s title was inspired by the embroidered folding screen *Baeksubaekbokdo* (literally “a hundred

longevities and a hundred blessings”), expressing wishes for longevity and good fortune. In addition, the restored *Painting of the Luxurious Life of Guo Ziyi* 郭汾陽行樂圖, a folding screen that had been preserved as individual panels and thus difficult to display, is being shown to the public for the first time after restoration. The restoration was carried out with the support of the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation, which adds further significance to the exhibition.

#### Fruits of Cultural Exchange

Co-hosted by the NMK and the Dresden State Art Collections, *100 Ideas of Happiness: Art Treasures from Korea* exemplifies cultural exchange achieved through close cooperation. It will serve as a model for the NMK for strengthening ties with major museums around the world and creating a virtuous cycle of sustainable cultural exchange. It also marks a step forward in the NMK’s mission to become a “museum of coexistence and cultural diversity.”



“Moderation and Dignity”  
showing Joseon *buncheong*  
ware and white porcelain



“Silla: Korea’s Golden Kingdom”  
featuring the Gold Crown  
and Diadem Ornaments,  
and Gold Waist Belt from  
Geumgwanchong Tomb



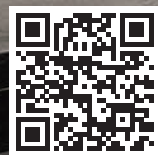
## Iconic Heritage

### A Standout Exhibition Hall at the Gongju National Museum

The Ungjin Baekje Hall features major artifacts excavated from the Tomb of King Muryeong (r. 501–523), the 25th ruler of the Baekje Kingdom. The tomb was discovered in 1971. It is the only royal tomb of the Three Kingdoms period whose occupant has been identified, making it academically important.

The artifacts showcased here include items used by King Muryeong and his queen as well as funerary goods. Among the major exhibits are *Jinmyosu* (Stone Animal Statue) believed to protect the tomb; Epitaph Plaque for King Muryeong, which clearly indicates who was buried in the tomb; Silver Cup with Bronze Stand, which embodies the spiritual world of the Baekje people; wooden coffins; and lavish ornaments from the crowns worn by the king and queen.

At the center of the exhibition hall is a display case whose dimensions match the size of the floor inside King Muryeong's tomb. Stone guardian statue, ritual vessels, and the wooden coffins of the king and queen are placed in their original positions within the passageway and burial chamber, allowing visitors to feel as if they are inside the actual tomb.





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

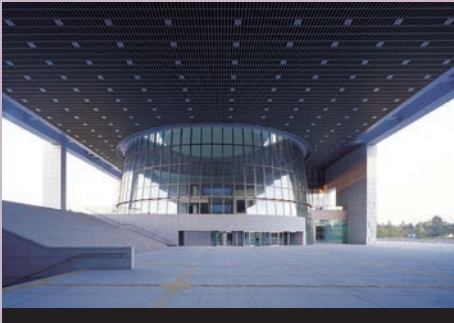
PART 2: Establishing a New Vision for the NMK with the Construction of a Museum in Yongsan

By the Editorial Team

In 1993, the National Museum of Korea (NMK) announced its plans to construct a new museum on the site of the Yongsan Family Park. This major move signaled a dramatic departure from past relocations, which had merely involved the refurbishing of existing buildings. Taking on a new and ambitious challenge, the NMK set out to build a proper museum entirely from the ground up. In this second part of our special column celebrating the 20th anniversary of the museum's relocation to Yongsan, we look back on the construction of the new museum that would come to serve as the majestic home of Korean culture.

The First Step Toward Building a New Museum that Reflects Korea's Unique Identity

Following the relocation of a former U.S. military base that had occupied a large area in central Yongsan, an ambitious plan

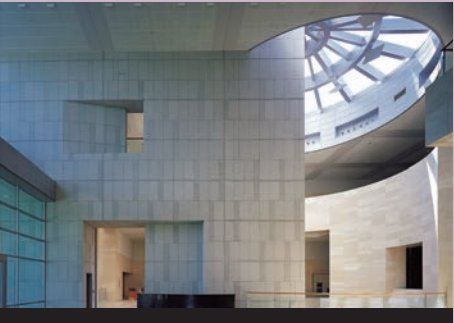


was unveiled to transform part of the area into a cultural complex. Building a new national museum at the southernmost edge of this green space, right in the heart of Seoul, marked the first step toward realizing that vision. To lead this effort, the NMK formed a special planning committee in 1993 and began devising a blueprint for the museum's construction.

Covering more than 138,000 square meters, the new museum was constructed in alignment with Korean traditional geomancy, with Namsan Mountain to its back and the Hangang River in front. Stretching from east to west, the building's elongated form was meant to convey a sense of safety and calm while giving it a commanding presence reminiscent of an ancient fortress. Measuring 404 meters in length, roughly equivalent to a 101-story skyscraper laid on its side, the building's fortress-like exterior symbolizes the enduring strength of Korean history. It also underlines Korea's meaningful reclamation of this site in Yongsan for the first time in over a century and conversion into a space for preserving and showcasing the nation's cultural heritage.

The museum's design sought to

reinterpret the essence of Korean nature and architecture through a modern lens. Each space tells its own story and was designed in phases with deep consideration for questions such as "What defines Korean beauty?" and "What does a Korean future look like?" The Open Plaza, inspired by the *daecheong maru* (main wooden hall) of a *hanok* (Korean traditional house), serves as a south-north passage through the center of the building, representing hope for Korean reunification and conveying the idea of an inclusive museum open to all. Other elements also highlight Korean traditional culture, such as a wall engraved with a passage from the *Hunminjeongeum*, the historic document that introduced the writing system created by King Sejong of the Joseon Dynasty on which Korea's modern alphabet, *hangeul*, is based. From the overall concept to the finest details, every aspect of the building's design was carefully chosen to express Korea's unique identity.



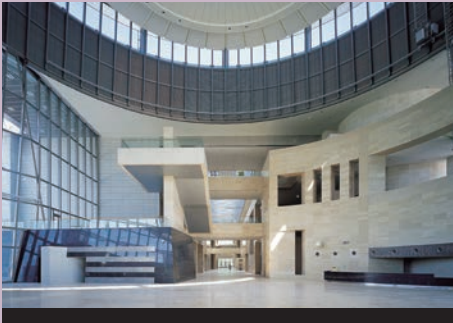
The Birth of the Beautiful Museum Garden

The outdoor garden of the new museum, with its harmonious mix of grass

- 1993 Announcement of plans to build a new museum for the relocation of the NMK
- 1995 Launch of an international architectural design contest
- 1996 Selection of the winning design
- 1997 Groundbreaking ceremony and start of construction
- 1999 Ridge beam-raising ceremony
- 2004 Completion of construction



and trees, was designed to capture the aesthetics of a Korean traditional landscape painting. One of its most striking features is the Mirror Pond, an artificial body of water in front of the Open Plaza whose surface reflects the museum to create a scene reminiscent of a painting. Originally intended to be a parking lot with trees and grass, this space was transformed into the garden we see today thanks to a proposal by the Minister of Culture, Sports, and Tourism to recreate the atmosphere of a Korean traditional landscape painting. This transformation required the building of an artificial hill, which in turn necessitated a large quantity of soil. Luckily, museum staff discovered some soil being excavated at a department store construction site in Myeong-dong at the time, which turned out to be clean,



high-quality soil made from weathered granite and ideal for landscaping.

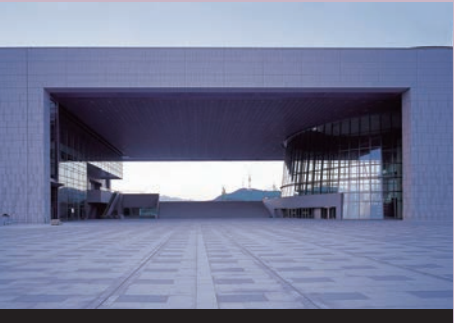
The garden was planted with trees donated from across the country, along with rare species specially prepared by the museum's landscaping team. Thanks to the team's foresight, the grounds now boast a cluster of large pine trees, as well as stunning maple trees to the north of the Mirror Pond Restaurant native to Seoraksan Mountain, where they had stood for centuries before being carefully relocated. What is now considered to be the most beautiful museum garden in Seoul was born out of the dedication and hands-on efforts of the museum staff.

Spatial Design Aesthetics Meant to Elevate Visitor Experience

The new museum was designed to lead visitors seamlessly from the Open Plaza outside into the Great Hall Entrance of the permanent exhibition space, through the central corridor known as the Path to History, and into the exhibition galleries. Skylights and window walls along the Path to History bring in natural daylight, while adjustments to artificial lighting ensure a gentle transition for visitors entering the museum from outside.

Inside, the museum features a diverse range of spaces, including permanent exhibition sections focused on archaeology, history, art, and donated cultural treasures. It also houses an international gallery which shines the spotlight on foreign cultures and special exhibition galleries built to global

standards. One notable feature of the interior design is the use of limestone, a material widely used in museums and high-end buildings around the world, which lends a warm ambiance that complements the exhibits and elevates the overall visitor experience. As for the flooring, each material was chosen with great care, with water-resistant materials used at entrances and other exposed areas most affected by the weather, wooden tiles selected for exhibition spaces from the second floor upward, and granite for the Prehistory and Ancient History Halls. The building was also designed to withstand earthquakes and is equipped with highly sensitive fire detection and air quality monitoring systems.



Construction of the new museum, which stands as a grand work of art in itself, began in 1997. A traditional ridge beam ceremony was held in 1999, and the project was completed in 2004. In anticipation of its historic reopening in its brand-new home, the NMK made the decision to close for an entire year to finalize all arrangements. (To be continued in the next part)



# Conservation Science Reflected in the Special Exhibition

## Sculpted Celadon of the Goryeo Dynasty

By **Lee Haesoon** Conservator of the Conservation Science Division, National Museum of Korea



**Creation of 3D digital mapping of Incense Burner, Celadon with Openwork Design**  
Surface color captured with high-resolution photography

Featuring over 270 items, the special exhibition *Sculpted Celadon of the Goryeo Dynasty* which ended last March, gave visitors the chance to appreciate the refined forms and serene beauty of the finest celadon wares. The exhibition was also a showcase of conservation efforts carried out over the past 20 years, a fact that would have gone unnoticed by most visitors. Naturally, before someone points it out, it would be hard to imagine that any of the celadon vessels on display were once missing a lid or handle, or had a cracked corner. At the National Museum of Korea (NMK), ceramics conservation treatment focuses not only on securing structural safety but also effective display—therefore efforts are made to restore the original shape and glaze color of celadon vessels as closely as possible and reveal their true essence. This way, visitors are not distracted by a broken edge or discolored part and can focus on the story each celadon piece holds.

The NMK’s conservation work on ceramics has evolved through continued research and investigation of restoration materials while exploring the historical context of cultural artifacts and applying new conservation technologies. In addition, for over ten years now the museum has been working with new methods such as digital analysis and data collection, and restoration using 3D printing.

### Hands-on Care for Cultural Heritage

Among the sculpted celadon items featured in the special exhibition, the Peahen-shaped Ewer, Celadon, was missing parts of the beak, wings, and lotus-design stems due to breakage. For its restoration, the missing parts were recreated in an attempt to find the most natural shape. The first step involved creating a preliminary form and then a silicone mold to fit over it. Then the mold was filled with a material boasting outstanding preservation and coloring effects to make the secondary



**Fig.1**  
**Conservation process of Peahen-shaped Ewer, Celadon**  
1 Celadon vessel with missing part  
2 Making silicone mold  
3 Restored shape  
4 Coloring of the restored part



**Fig.2**  
**Conservation of Gourd-shaped Ewer, Celadon with Incised Lotus Blossoms Design**  
1 Before conservation treatment  
2 After conservation treatment



form. Finally, by coloring the piece and completing the conservation treatment, the section to be used on the restoration model was created Fig.1.

In the case of the Gourd-shaped Ewer, Celadon with Incised Lotus Blossoms Design, most of the handle, made of three braided strands, was missing. Fortunately, the original shape could be inferred through examination of existing literature, and the handle was restored by simulating the techniques used when the vessel was originally made Fig.2.

The Lotus-shaped Incense Burner, Celadon, is an example of re-restoration, as the previous restoration had been conducted with unsuitable materials and the celadon glaze had discolored in parts. Removing the discolored parts was a delicate procedure that held the risk of further damage. As people were already familiar with the earlier restored form of the incense burner, no attempts to change the shape were made during the re-restoration. For the new treatment, materials resistant to discoloration were used to ensure more effective color matching Fig.3.

### Understanding Cultural Heritage With Digital Technology

The Conservation Science Division at the NMK has introduced computed tomography (CT) equipment, which enables the interior of cultural artifacts to be viewed, and since 2017 has been creating 3D digital models\* of important items. Being able to see an artifact more clearly means understanding it better. After questioning why certain ceramics were made the way they were, conservation treatment methods may be

\* By aligning external 3D scanning data of the artifact with internal CT data, it is possible to obtain a 3D dataset of both the inside and the outside of the form. At this stage the 3D form shows the shape and volume but no color. By applying information on the surface texture and color of the artifact, captured with high-resolution photography, a digital 3D model showing the actual object in a single view can be created.



**Incense Burner, Celadon with Openwork Design**  
Goryeo Dynasty, 12th century  
H. 15.3 cm  
National Treasure

altered according to the answers obtained. Moreover, in some cases restoration is conducted using digital technology to model missing parts, which can then be made with a 3D printer.

The Incense Burner, Celadon with Openwork Design, designated as National Treasure, comprises a censer and lid, and the supporting base. A 3D digital model of the vessel was made using 3D scanning and computed tomography (CT). While 3D scanning generally produces data with much higher precision than CT data, it cannot be used to capture the interior of objects. CT, on the other hand, can image the interior but is less precise than 3D scanning. Therefore, the final 3D digital model was made combining 3D scanning data of the exterior and CT data of the interior Fig.4.

In this case of the Incense Burner, Celadon with Openwork Design, research was also conducted using a replica. A section of the replica was deliberately broken to simulate the missing part. The shape of the part to be restored was digitally modeled and a 3D file was created. Next, the modeled part was produced physically with a 3D printer, attached to the vessel, and colored to complete the restoration process Fig.5.

With strong dedication and research capabilities focused on cultural heritage, the NMK is preparing to take a big step forward with the opening of its Conservation Science Center in 2025. Efforts are being taken to strengthen digital capabilities in order to gain a better understanding of cultural artifacts while also exploring the direction conservation science should take in the future.

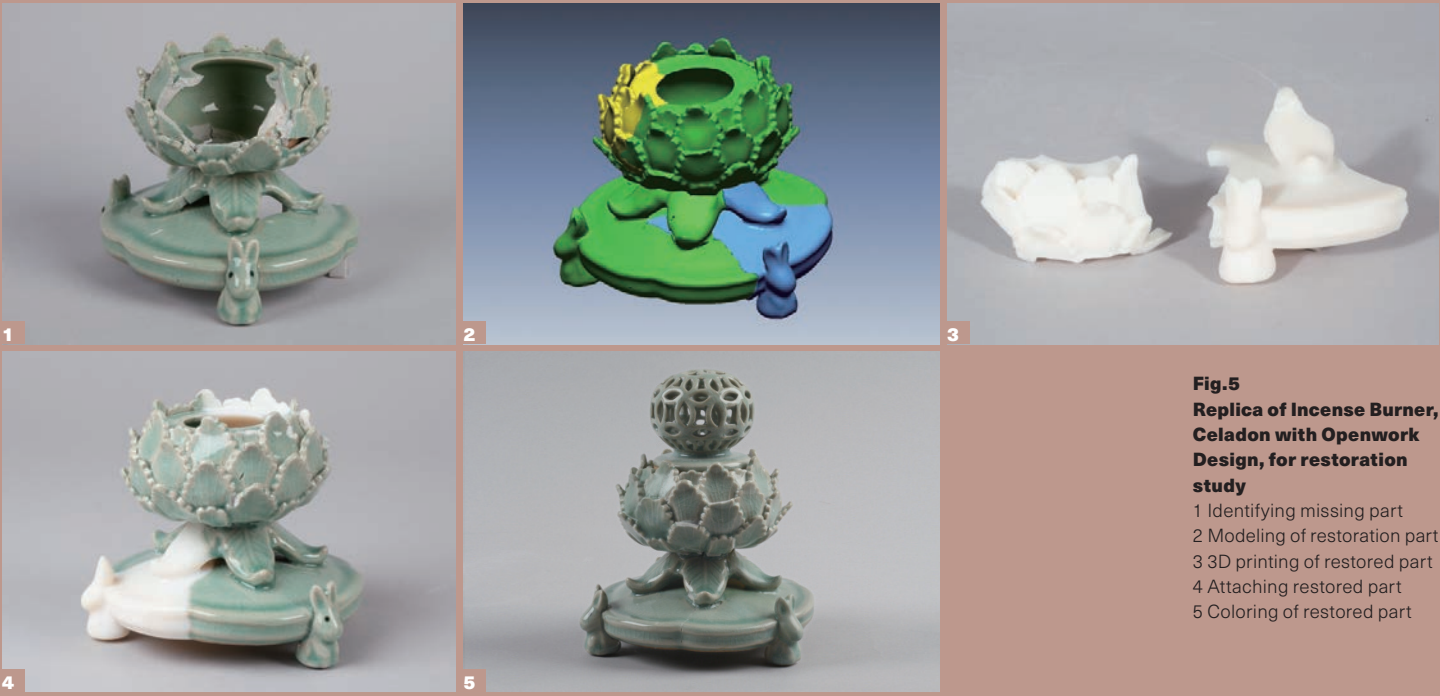


**Fig.3 Conservation of Lotus-shaped Incense Burner, Celadon**  
1 Before re-restoration  
2 Discoloration of existing restored part  
3 Removal of existing restored part  
4 After re-restoration

**Lotus-shaped Incense Burner, Celadon**  
Goryeo Dynasty, 12th century  
H. 15.3 cm



**Fig.4 Creation of 3D digital model of Incense Burner, Celadon with Openwork Design**  
1 Alignment of 3D scan and CT data  
2 Applying surface color to 3D form



**Fig.5 Replica of Incense Burner, Celadon with Openwork Design, for restoration study**  
1 Identifying missing part  
2 Modeling of restoration part  
3 3D printing of restored part  
4 Attaching restored part  
5 Coloring of restored part



# Must-See Exhibitions at the National Museums: Summer Highlights

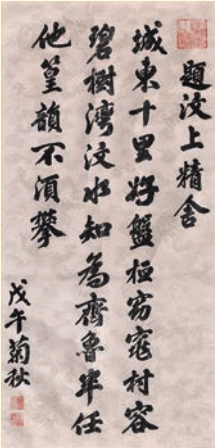
## National Museum of Korea Art of Early Joseon: Masterpieces from the 15th and 16th Century

**Jun 10 – Aug 31, 2025**  
**Special Exhibition Gallery 1**  
Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the NMK's relocation to Yongsan, this special exhibition delves into the artistic rebirth that followed the founding of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392. Centered on the theme "A New Beginning," it reveals how the newly established state, from its scholar-officials to the common people, gave rise to the artistic tradition that laid the foundation for what would come to define Korean art. Bringing together rare works from the early Joseon period, this exhibition offers a unique opportunity to catch a glimpse into the beginnings of a new era and artistic tradition.



## Gyeongju National Museum Sculpted Celadon of the Goryeo Dynasty

**May 3 – Aug 24, 2025**  
**Special Exhibition Hall**  
First held at the NMK in 2024, this traveling exhibition is now on display in Gyeongju, offering a rare opportunity to fully appreciate the beauty of sculpted celadon from the Goryeo Dynasty and gain insight into the enduring legacy of Goryeo ceramics across nearly a millennium.



## Gwangju National Museum Prehistoric Ages: People Making History in Pristine Nature

**Always available**  
**History Culture Gallery 1**  
This permanent exhibition offers a glimpse into the lives of the peoples who inhabited the Gwangju and Jeollanam-do regions in prehistoric times. Featuring a wide array of artifacts from primitive hand axes to finely crafted bronze mirrors and bells, it paints a vivid picture of how early peoples in these regions went about daily life, from hunting and gathering food to honoring their dead.



Here is an overview of exhibitions held at the National Museum of Korea and its 13 affiliated museums from April to June 2025, focusing on one exhibition for each museum.

## Jeonju National Museum Reopening of the Gallery of Calligraphy

**From Jun 27, 2025**  
**Gallery of Calligraphy**  
Taking place in the newly refurbished Gallery of Calligraphy, this exhibition invites visitors to appreciate the beauty of Korean traditional calligraphy along with the spirit embodied within it. This space offers a quiet setting to contemplate the passage of time flowing between each brushstroke and peer into the minds of those who inscribed these characters long ago.

## Daegu National Museum Bronze Artifacts from Bisan- dong, Daegu and Artifacts Excavated from the Tombs in Jisan-dong, Goryeong

**Jul 9, 2024 – Jun 29, 2025**  
**Special Exhibition Hall**  
This exhibition showcases artifacts donated by the late Samsung Chairman Lee Kun-Hee, including bronze artifacts excavated from Bisan-dong in Daegu, which are designated as National Treasure, and artifacts excavated from the tombs in Goryeong, designated as Treasure.



## Buyeo National Museum In Praise of Gifts: The Cobalt Hue in the Blue and White Porcelain

**Apr 8, 2025 – Jun 28, 2026**  
**Gallery 4 (Gallery of Gifts)**  
This exhibition shines the spotlight on the most outstanding yet never displayed pieces of blue-and-white porcelain donated to the museum. Visitors are invited to appreciate the hue, brightness, and bleeding effect of the cobalt pigment against the white porcelain surfaces and see how these artistic elements come together to bring each piece to life.



## Gongju National Museum Open-view Museum Storage

**Always available**  
**Chungcheong Storage Facility**  
This shared storage facility is jointly used by National Museums in Chungcheong-do. While museum storage spaces are typically closed to the public, this space has been designed to be open to visitors. With glass walls and elevated walkways, it provides the public with the unique chance to glimpse inside a working museum storage facility.

## Jinju National Museum A Millennium of Jinju: Unfolding Stories from Jinju-mok

**May 20 – Aug 24, 2025**  
**Special Exhibition Hall**  
Commemorating the 80th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule, this exhibition shines a light on the distinct regional identity of Jinju in Gyeongsangnam-do, examining the lives and beliefs of its people from the time of the Goryeo Dynasty to the present day.

## Cheongju National Museum Mirror: Reflections of the Ages

**Mar 21 – Jul 20, 2025**  
**Special Exhibition Gallery**  
This special exhibition brings together ancient mirrors from across Northeast Asia and invites visitors to explore them through the lenses of "Production," "Symbolism," and "Cultural Exchange." Visitors can gain insights into the lives of ancient people as reflected through mirrors, and explore how these objects were exchanged across Northeast Asia.

## Gimhae National Museum The Crystal Heritage of Gaya

**May 20 – Jul 31, 2025**  
**Special Exhibition Gallery**  
This special exhibition sheds light on the refined craftsmanship and delicate aesthetic sensibilities embodied in the crystal ornaments once produced in the Gaya Confederacy. Exploring the deep cultural and historical significance of crystal, which was once seen as more precious than gold, it offers a comprehensive look into a lesser-known facet of Gaya's beautiful legacy.



## Jeju National Museum Yeongju sipgyeong: Ten Scenic Places in Jeju and Two More Immersive Videos

**Always available**  
**Immersive Space**  
This exhibition presents three immersive short videos in rotation, including "Yeongju sipgyeong: Ten Scenic Places in Jeju." The latter showcases the island's ten most iconic sites as selected by Jeju native and Joseon-era scholar Yi Hanu 1818–1881, offering a vivid portrayal of the island's most beloved and admired landscapes by people of the past.

## Chuncheon National Museum Five Hundred Arhats of Changnyeongsa Temple Site

**Always available**  
**Brand Room**  
Featured in this exhibition are the five hundred arhat statues from the Changnyeongsa Temple Site—roughly sculpted yet expressive stone figures crafted by master artisans that convey the raw human emotions of joy, anger, sorrow, and delight. Their lifelike expressions, so easily recognized in ourselves or others around us, invite visitors on a healing and introspective journey.

## Naju National Museum National Treasure, Shinchon-ri Gilt-bronze Crown, A New Perspective

**Apr 29 – Jul 27, 2025**  
**Special Exhibition Gallery**  
This special exhibition is devoted to the Gilt-bronze Crown from Shinchon-ri, Naju, which is a National Treasure and was the first ever gilt-bronze crown discovered on the Korean Peninsula. It sheds light on the artifact's historical and cultural significance, and introduces areas for future research, including fresh perspectives and interpretations.

## Iksan National Museum Chinese Ceramics of Mireuksa Temple Site

**Jun 3 – Aug 31, 2025**  
**Mireuksa Temple Site Gallery**  
This thematic exhibition presents research findings on Chinese ceramics excavated from the Mireuksa Temple Site in Iksan. Tea played a central role during the Goryeo period, as can be seen through the various ceramics imported from China, such as those unearthed at the Mireuksa Temple Site. This exhibition explores the cultural exchanges between the Goryeo and Song Dynasties, offering a detailed glimpse into the flourishing tea culture of the period.





National Treasure Tour:  
A 180-day Journey for Everyone

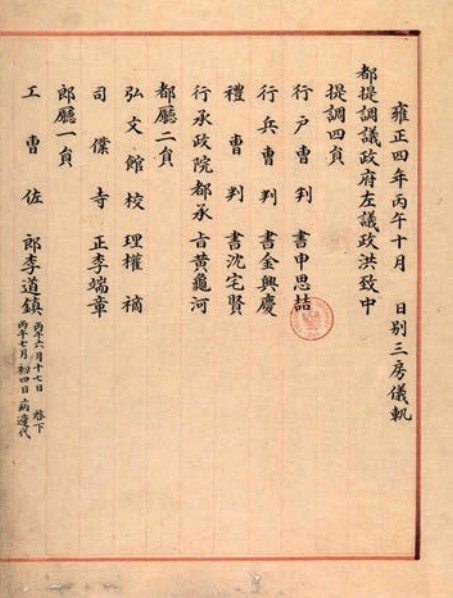


The National Museum of Korea (NMK), in collaboration with its affiliated museums, is holding the exhibition titled *National Treasure Tour* at eight public museums, with the first four museums displaying it in the first half of the year. Now in its second year, this exhibition aims to provide more people with opportunities to enjoy Korea’s cultural heritage by displaying items that most people might have seen only in textbooks before, at local public museums.

The exhibition is organized around four themes, each focusing on different eras. Representative artifacts such as the “Earthenware Patterned Tiles” which showcase the skill and elegance of the Baekje people, the “Golden Ornaments of Silla” with their vibrant designs, the “*Buncheong* Wares” embodying the free and simple beauty of the Joseon Dynasty, and the “Blue-and-white Porcelains” used in the Joseon royal court will travel across the country.

The first session of the exhibition will take place from May to August, starting at the Goheung Buncheong Culture Museum, followed by the Cheongnyangsan Museum, the Baekje Military Museum, and the Uiseong Jomunguk Museum. From September to December, the exhibition will be at the Jeongeup City Museum, the History Museum of Jinan, the Hamyang Museum, and the Samcheok Municipal Museum. Emphasizing the spirit of sharing, this exhibition aims to provide an opportunity to reflect on personal memories and emotions through encounters with pieces of well-known cultural heritage and in turn for visitors to discover the significance of cultural heritage in everyday life.

Korean Translation of the Oegyujanggak  
Uigwe Published Online



The NMK has been leading on the translation project for the Oegyujanggak Uigwe, the Royal Protocols of the Joseon Dynasty, specifically focusing on the books with just a single remaining copy. The first volume selected for translation is the Byeolsambang Uigwe, which documents the duties of the temporary organization known as the “Byeolsambang” responsible for producing ceremonial items such as palanquins and flags used during the procession of a newly enthroned king.

The Byeolsambang existed only during the reigns of four kings; Hyeonjong, Sukjong, Gyeongjong, and Yeongjo of the Joseon Dynasty. Therefore, the four volumes of the Byeolsambang Uigwe spanning these four reigns are all unique copies and hold significant historical value.

The NMK completed the translation of the Byeolsambang Uigwe last year and has been providing online access to the original images, original text, and translated content since this spring. This makes the previously inaccessible content of the Byeolsambang Uigwe, which is written in classical Chinese characters, easily readable for the general public on the official website ([www.museum.go.kr/uigwe](http://www.museum.go.kr/uigwe)).

Hosting CIPA 2025 SEOUL, an International  
Symposium on Digital Heritage



The NMK is preparing to host the International Symposium, CIPA 2025 SEOUL, from August 25 (Mon) to 29 (Fri). CIPA is one of the international scientific committees under the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) that focuses on the documentation and recording of cultural heritage. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the symposia, which is co-hosted by the NMK and KAIST. The theme of this year’s event is “Heritage Conservation from Bits: From Digital Documentation to Data-driven Heritage Conservation” and experts from various fields around the world are expected to participate. Highlighting the convergence of museums and science and technology, the NMK will host a special session highlighting the evolving landscape of digital heritage documentation and conservation through direct engagement in museum practice, under the theme “Digital Heritage Reimagined at the NMK: Innovative Practices for Engagement, Access, and Conservation.” The program features six presentations by the NMK curators, illustrating how digital technologies are being meaningfully integrated across the museum’s exhibitions, collections, and conservation efforts.

For more information, please visit [www.cipa2025seoul.org](http://www.cipa2025seoul.org).



A space filled with fun and excitement

The Immersive Digital Gallery 1, which has already received a lot of positive feedback from visitors, recently introduced two new content pieces; the first, *One Cat’s Great Day* is a 3D video that fills a 60-meter-wide screen, featuring a cat from the *Painting of Sparrows and Cats* by Byeon Sangbyeok before 1726–1775. In the video, the cat ventures out to Baengnyeong Peak on Bugaksan Mountain in Samcheong-dong, Seoul, providing a glimpse of its ordinary yet subtly unfamiliar activities. At the end of the video, visitors can look and see which paintings have been recreated into immersive 3D videos.

The second video, *Tigers in Korean Art*, features a 3D tiger roaming across a giant screen, showcasing Korean traditional culture full of wits and humors. The video begins with a tiger gazing straight into the audience while majestic music playing in the background. A number of short stories unfold on different parts of the screen, making it enjoyable to watch repeatedly and discover new scenes each time.

Such content, infused with Korea’s unique aesthetic sensibility, creates a new type of experience and makes the audience feel as though they are experiencing the excitement and fun depicted in old paintings first-hand.



**Duck-shaped Water  
Dropper, Celadon**

**Period** Goryeo Dynasty,  
12th century

**Dimensions** H. 7.3 cm



**Cherishing a Practical Object Inspired  
by Nature**

This duck-shaped water dropper evokes the tranquility of nature and gives a glimpse into the serene disposition of the Goryeo people, who took pleasure in creating and observing the creatures that lived there. Duck-shaped Water Dropper, Celadon, gracing the cover of this issue, carries a twisted lotus stem in its beak, part of it draped across its back. The lotus leaf and bud resting on the back poetically suggest that the duck has been gliding through a lotus pond. In the deeply carved areas like the wing feathers, the glaze has pooled, enhancing the sculptural effect, while the touch of iron pigment in the eyes brings the duck to life. The posture of the duck, floating on water with its feet tucked up and hidden beneath its tail feathers, reflects the artisan's keen observation and skillful depiction of details.

Although ducks are commonly seen around us, historical texts such as *History of Goryeo* and *Dongguk Yisanggukjip* (Collected Works of Master Yi) show that the royal family and literati took pleasure in raising and observing these birds. This duck-shaped water dropper was thus a special object reflecting the Goryeo people's tastes and preferences. Fitting snugly in one hand, it is a window into the heart of the user at the time—a person who would have used it with scholarly aspirations, finding companionship in nature.