



# INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM



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## KOREAN ART IN THE WEST TRACING OBJECTS FROM CREATION TO COLLECTION

UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH, 26-27 JUNE 2019

### SPEAKER ABSTRACTS





## **Travelling Bowls: Social Lives of Korean Ceramics**

Prof. Dr. Hans Bjarne Thomsen

University of Zurich

What were the origins of Korean ceramic bowls in Western collections? How and where did they move and what were the changes in their meanings and local receptions? We may well ask this of any of the Korean objects in European collections; for many objects we no longer can trace the many steps along the way from Korea to, for example, Switzerland.

For this talk I propose to deal with a case study of a certain group of Korea ceramics. The objects first travelled to Japan, and from there to Paris and further on to Germany and Switzerland. We will follow the trails of the objects, as they change hands from Tadamasa Hayashi (1853-1906) to Ernst Grosse (1862-1927), and then to others. Along the way, the ceramics underwent changes in meaning and took on divergent roles: of inspiring new art forms or simply being forgotten in museum storage.

## **A Semiotic Narrative Investigation on a Goryeo Illuminated Manuscript: The Dae Banggwangbul Hwaeomgyeong (Avataṃsaka-sūtra), Vol.72, in the New York Public Library**

Prof. Dr. Jeong-hee LEE-KALISCH  
Free University of Berlin

The presentation addresses the Dae Banggwangbul Hwaeomgyeong (Avataṃsaka-sūtra), Vol.72, an illuminate manuscript by anonymous master now preserved in the New York Public Library. The item was registered formerly as a Japanese *kegongyō* illumination and has recently been identified as a Korean piece and for the first time published with scientific investigation in the Comprehensive Compilation of Goryeo Paintings. Volume 1. European and US Collections (Zhejiang University Press 2017/18). After introducing the unique characteristics of Goryeo sūtra illuminations as well as their aesthetic values, I would like to explain the text-image relations in the illuminations from a transmedial perspective. Through a synchronic comparison of the New York piece and other Goryeo sūtra illuminations in Japanese, US American and South-Korean collections I will also discuss the dating problems. Furthermore, this essay demonstrates, in the cultural and historical context, their routes of transmission, namely how they entered the collections in the US. This approach aims ultimately at pointing out ways of preserving and protecting Korean artifacts outside of Korea.

## **Korean Paintings Amidst “Chinese-Style Paintings”: Japanese Reception and International Circulation of Paintings of Peninsular Origin**

Prof. Seinosuke IDE  
Kyushu University, Japan

A number of Korean paintings of both Buddhist and secular subjects have been preserved over centuries in Japanese archipelago. These paintings of peninsular origin present an indispensable base when constructing the narrative history of Korean painting, because they contain most of the extant works from the Goryeo and the first half of the Joseon period.

In general, these paintings have been identified as Chinese in pre-modern Japan with a name of famous painters as Wu Daozi, Zhang Sigong, Li Longmian, Mao Yi, and so on, as a result of traditional Japanese connoisseurship and viewing system for the imported paintings from the Muromachi period onwards.

One may evaluate in negative their lives as migrants with ambiguous national origin, however, we cannot ignore the fact that misattribution to famous Chinese painters have made possible for these imported objects to remain until today with high value and sometimes they even have functioned as a canon in creative reproduction of Japanese arts as in case of Ito Jakuchu.

With this in mind, my talk illuminates the diaspora of the paintings of peninsular origin with more positive concerns. Their border-crossing or transcultural journey and the reception history over the times and spaces – from their birth in the original contexts, their moving to Japan over sea, their evaluation as Chinese paintings, the circulation to the West, the discovery of their peninsular origin, their returning and exhibition at home, and so on – should be discussed with a description opened to both local and global contexts, and as a consequence it will be proved to be new type of narrative that relativizes the narrow and institutionalized narrative of national art history.

## **Shamanic Paintings of Chosŏn Korea: Tracing History from Collections back to Sacred Ritual Objects**

Dr. Ariane PERRIN

The Centre for Studies on China, Korea and Japan, UMR 8173

Chosŏn Korea produced a large and varied repertoire of paintings of Shamanic spirits that can be broadly classified according to their function, protective power and appearance. Commissioned by a shaman, the paintings were used in his/her shrine or as portable devices used in rituals outside the shrine at the request of clients. Rituals were performed to ensure good fortune but also to determine the cause of a misfortune in the most significant events in one's life: birth, marriage, illness and death. As the seat of the spirits, and as such imbued with special power, the paintings allow the shaman to communicate with them and resolve such matters.

However, with the modernization of Korean society, the original meaning and identification of some of these figures are becoming increasingly difficult to assess. A spirit that fulfills several different roles can be classified into multiple categories. In addition, some spirits carry different names according to geographical provenance. Their study is, therefore, a challenge for art historians as the paintings are often undated and removed from their original context. The once decried paintings have today entered museum collections as their historical importance is being recognized, but this has also removed an essential component of their analysis; the relationship between the painting, the seat of the spirit, and the shaman during periods of ritual. Drawing from paintings kept in western collections, this presentation will address methodological issues pertaining to the iconographical study and identification of shamanic spirits by first investigating the religious and ritual context in which the paintings were used, then the multi-layered difficulties and limitations intrinsic in the study of them once they have been removed from their original contexts and become "unanimated".

## **Refined Craftsmanship and Exquisite Beauty – Goryeo Lacquer Artefacts in Western Collections**

Dr. Patricia FRICK

Museum for Lacquer Art (Museum für Lackkunst), Münster, Germany

The lacquer objects produced during the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392) are regarded as being amongst the finest artefacts to have been created in that era along with the dynasty's metalwork, celadons and Buddhist paintings. In all only around twenty-five Goryeo lacquer objects decorated with highly intricate mother-of-pearl inlay (*najeon chilgi*) have been preserved in the world today, merely two of which belong to the collection of the National Museum of Korea. The others are preserved either in Japanese collections or have ended up in the United States or Europe by way of Japan.

The small number of extant pieces – almost all related to the practice of Buddhism, like chests for storing sutras, boxes for prayer beads and containers for incense – makes it rather difficult to date the objects and answer questions related to the style and development of the dynasty's lacquer work. The artefacts, however, do have distinctive characteristics in common which will be presented and discussed based on selected examples from Western collections.

## **Contexts: Korean Art and the British Museum**

Dr. Eleanor HYUN

Curator of Korean Art, British Museum

The British Museum has approximately 4000 Korean objects that date from prehistory to the present, which will be discussed within three contexts: collecting, display, and audience. In examining the development of the collection, I will highlight the socio-cultural factors and the individuals involved in its formation and exhibition. Placing the collection within the larger discipline of Korean art history, I will discuss issues with regards to visibility and access, systems of knowledge, and new research initiatives.



## **The Export of Korean Genre Paintings to the West in the Era of Port Openings: Representations of ‘Korean People’ in the Collections of Western Powers**

Prof. Dr. Sunpyo HONG

Professor Emeritus, Ewha Womans University

Endowed-Chair Professor, Korea National University of Cultural Heritage

Of the traditional Korean paintings that are found in the collections of Western museums, the most numerous are genre paintings that date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Under pressure from various Western powers advancing upon East Asia, the ports of the Korean Peninsula were opened by Japan in 1876, an action which led to visits from diplomats, missionaries, travelers, and merchants from the West. These visitors brought with them a high demand for Korean artworks. Curiously, almost 1,200 of the works in present-day Western collections are paintings by an unknown artist named Jun-geun Kim (n.d.), about whom no information has been recorded in any Korean literature source. These paintings are housed in museum collections throughout Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, Russia, Canada, and the United States. Furthermore, there are some copies of genre paintings by the well-known painter, Hongdo Kim (1745–1806) and Yunbok Shin along with works painted by artists like the obscure painter Jin-u Han (n.d.) and the Buddhist monk painter Heasan Moon (n.d.). Recently, US museums have begun purchasing polychrome court paintings and other works by famous Joseon painters that are deemed of great aesthetic value. However, most of the traditional Korean paintings that are currently found in Western collections belong to the category of genre paintings that were originally collected as folk and ethnographic objects of anthropological interest.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Joseon kingdom was known alternately as the ‘Forbidden Land’ or the ‘Hermit Nation’—designations made due to the country’s prohibition against foreigners and that had been in use since the 1668 publication of Hendrick Hamel’s journal in Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Although the Joseon dynasty maintained a closed-door policy for three centuries, the kingdom opened heteronomously in 1876 and formalized exchange agreements with the West via treaties signed with the United States in 1882, the United Kingdom and Germany in 1883, Russia in 1884, and France in 1886. In order to research cultures untouched by ‘modernity,’ and to expand their interests overseas, these countries collected anthropological data by sending experts and diplomats to countries and regions that were unknown or perceived as ‘backward.’ Thus, for a variety of Western powers, Korea became a subject of study. Some Korean objects were individually collected by diplomats, missionaries, and travelers and subsequently donated, while many others

were systematically acquired by experts who traveled in accordance with the 'collecting plan' of national museums. This presentation aims to share my views about why genre paintings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were so sought out by Western museums and to investigate the nature, history, and significance of Jun-geun Kim's works, which comprise the largest portion of these museums' collections of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## The Characteristics of Korean Ceramics Collected by the West in Modern Times

Prof. Dr. Namwon JANG  
Ewha Womans University

This presentation is based on a few cases of celadon collected in the West from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. In the late 19th century, the Joseon government signed various treaties initiating an official relationship with the West. After 1882, when the government signed the United States–Korea Treaty, the Joseon dynasty began to encounter Western cultures. As the Joseon dynasty changed its name to the “Korean Empire” and began actively participating in international expos held in America and Europe, westerners started learning about Korea and its art. Foreign diplomats, soldiers, missionaries, scholars, medical doctors, and teachers came to Korea, and some collected Korean artworks and antiques. Westerners who had never visited Korea could also purchase and collect Korean artworks indirectly. Many of the Korean art collections in American museums began to develop through donations from these early collectors of Korean art and artifacts.

Through this process, a substantial number of westerners began to encounter and collect Korean ceramics. One such figure was William Richard Carles (1848-1929), a British diplomat who served as Vice-consul in Korea between 1884 and 1885. He published a book in 1888 entitled *Life in Corea* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1888) which includes descriptions of the ceramics he collected in Korea. Particularly notable were ceramics from “Song-do,” which he purchased in Seoul. Explaining that “Song-do was formerly the place of manufacture of the best Corean [Korean] pottery,” he offers detailed descriptions of the ceramics, their clay-inlay decoration, and production techniques with accompanying illustrations. He purchased celadons from the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392) that “were said to have been taken out of some large grave near Song-do.” Song-do, meaning ‘city of pine trees,’ was a nickname of Kaeseong, the capital of Goryeo.

Ceramic collectors from abroad at that time were mostly interested in Goryeo celadons, which were known for their beautiful greenish color and delicate clay inlay. In the early 19th century, Japanese people had already begun purchasing and collecting Goryeo celadons. As more westerners began visiting Korea later in the century, they began to take up the fad of collecting celadon. After first attending the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, the Joseon dynasty (soon to become the “Korean Empire” in 1897) continued to participate in the world expos

held in Europe and America, which further contributed to the circulation of information on Korean artifacts including ceramics. After Korea became a Japanese colony in 1910, Europe and American collectors had limited access to Korea, and Korean artworks and crafts were collected primarily through Japanese dealers. As a result, Goryeo celadon was originally collected from the viewpoint of ethnologists for Westerners, and gradually changed its character as an object of artistic collection or academic research. And the price of Goryeo celadon rose to an obstacle to the formation of a new collection.

## **Painting of Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva in the Museo d'Arte Orientale Edoardo Chiossone in Genova, Italy**

Prof. Dr. Woothak CHUNG  
Dongguk University

As only eight out of a total of 160 Goryeo Buddhist paintings are housed in European museums, the discovery of a new Goryeo Buddhist painting, as one of the over 15,000 artworks that Edoardo Chiossone (1833-1889) donated to the city of Genova, should be considered a remarkable event.

This Painting of Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is a masterpiece that contains delicate details and a composition and color harmony that are gentle but perfect. Although it is generally similar to other paintings of its kind created during from the Goryeo Dynasty, this painting shows unique characteristics of its own, including a pine tree facing the viewer on the top of the left side. This is the first example of a pine tree depicted in the painting of Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and, at the same time, it is the oldest painting of a pine tree in the history of Korean painting.

Goryeo Buddhist paintings tend to reveal their topics to the full. They seek to express the "beauty of stillness" with delicate details and exquisite harmony of lines, colors, forms and patterns. I believe that the delicacy of Goryeo Buddhist paintings can be attributable to their bold actuality, selected accessibility, and shared practical purpose.

## **The Evolution of Landscape Painting (*Sansuhwa*) in the Art of Modern Korea**

Prof. Dr. Sunglim KIM  
Dartmouth University

"What happened to the long tradition of Korea's landscape painting (so called, *sansuhwa*) in modern time?" This presentation explores how landscape painting has evolved in recent years. Ever since becoming an important and independent genre during the Joseon dynasty, landscape painting has been produced by artists as a theme representing not only nature but their inner thoughts, as well as to project their ideals and make social, political, and artistic statements. We will examine how modern artists differently define landscapes in their artworks and express them through various media and styles. We also will seek the significance and interpretations of the genre on the contemporary Korean art scene.

## **Exhibitions Abroad:**

### **Promoting a Master Narrative of Korean Art in the Postwar Period**

Prof. Dr. Nancy LIN  
Lawrence University

This presentation examines the deployment of the traveling loan exhibition, *5,000 Years of Korean Art*, as an exercise in cultural diplomacy during the era of international blockbuster exhibitions and its subsequent function in the construction of a master narrative of Korean art. Sent abroad during a period of intense domestic political upheaval, the exhibition emerged from a specific political and cultural moment and demonstrated the organizers' intentions in fostering cross-cultural understanding during the Cold War era. The aim here is to explicate the exhibition's parameters through installation views and catalogues and to assess its reception in order to examine the role of the exhibition in the modern canon-making process of Korean art history.

## **Arts, Diplomacy and History: Cultural Exchanges between Korea and Sweden**

Dr. Hyojin LEE  
Heidelberg University

Diplomacy through arts has a long history. Hongade Kim (see below) categorized the function of art in diplomacy into 'Art as a gift' and 'Art as an art.' According to him, art is a symbol of the peaceful relationship between the two countries. This presentation aims to examine the connections between Korea and Sweden through the arts. ROK and the Kingdom of Sweden established the formal diplomatic relations in 1959. However, the beginning of the exchanges between Korea and Sweden goes back to the early 20th century. Swedish Journalist Grebst A:son traveled to Korea and wrote *I Korea* in 1905. A few years later, in 1908, Swedish geographer Sven Hedin (1865-1952) visited Korea and was awarded the first-class metal badge by King Sunjong. In 1926, a Korean woman went to Sweden and studied in Sweden for five years. The crown prince Gustaf VI Adolf visited Korea in 1926 and discovered the golden crown Seobongchong. There are more cases that show the connections between Korea and Sweden before 1959. After the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the arts are one of the most important and symbolic things which show their relationship. This implies that the Korea-Sweden connection through arts has been conducted in the colonial period and has been continuing till now.

Kim Hongade (2017), "Diplomacy and Art: Joseon-Ming Diplomacy from the Annals of the Joseon Dynasty", *Art History Forum* No. 45, Center for Art Studies: Korea, 79-99.



## **Tangible Memories and Intertwined Histories: Sweden-Korea Relations as Seen through the Collection of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities**

Isabelle LEEMAN, M.A., Museum of World Cultures, Stockholm, Sweden and  
Michel LEE, M.A., Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, Sweden

The Korean collection at the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, National Museums of World Culture, Sweden is closely intertwined with the historical relationship between the Korean Peninsula and Sweden in the 20th century. Starting with a discussion of the earliest objects donated to the Museum, including the collection of King Gustaf VI Adolf, the speakers will clarify how the establishment of the Korea collection is rooted in cultural and diplomatic exchange between Sweden and Korea and reaches back to the very foundation of the Museum itself. The second part of the talk will focus on objects donated by doctors and nurses who served in Korea during and after the Korean war, a chapter in Swedish-Korean history that deeply shaped the relationship between the two countries. The presentation will then provide an overview of the most recent developments of the collection and give an outlook into future. In conclusion, this presentation shows that Korean objects held in collections in Europe can tell the stories not only of a distant culture, but of two peoples with an intertwined history.

## Collaborative Publications and Early Swiss Receptions of Korean Culture

Rosa Jiyun KIM, M.A.  
University of Zürich

*Korea*, a book held in the Swiss Military Library in Bern, was published in 1955 by Paul Eynard (1913-1986), a Swiss soldier and editor in commemoration of the second anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement. The book was published in Lausanne, Switzerland and contains ten woodblock prints, on which are nine seals of Kawase Hasui (1883-1957), seven seals of the Swiss painter Fred Bieri (1889-1971), one seal of Natori Shunsen (1886-1960), and three seals of Sesson Ōta (김설촌, 1922-2014). In the book's colophon, the author wrote that the woodblock prints were created in the Tokyo workshop of the woodblock print publisher Watanabe Shōzaburō (1885-1962). I would like to introduce this book, describe a group of previously unknown woodblock prints by Hasui, and illuminate the collaborative process between three cultures that led to the publication of this book.

In 1953, immediately after the cessation of the Korean War, Switzerland dispatched 96 soldiers as members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission to Panmunjom. From then and until today, the Swiss Neutral National Supervisory Commission has been stationed at the Panmunjom, even with a reduction of the personnel number. Paul Eynard and Fred Bieri who were involved in the creation of this book, first met at Panmunjom in 1954. Since Bieri writes in his diary that he did the first sketches for Eynard's book on 14 February 1954, it seems likely that there was already a plan between them at that time to publish a book.

Since Swiss soldiers stationed in South Korea had their Base Camp in Tokyo, vacations and contact with their home countries were conducted mainly in Japan. We know from the diaries that Fred Bieri had lunch with Paul Eynard in Tokyo on March 16, 1954. We also know that Bieri met with Watanabe Shōzaburō afterwards in order to talk about the production of the woodblock prints, and that he met the famous woodblock print artist Hasui and the Korean artist Sesson Ōta at this occasion. The book *Korea* was published in Switzerland on July 27, 1955 after an intensive year-long process.

In the introduction to his book, Eynard mentions that they used the finest washi paper, picked the most beautiful photos, had the woodblock prints hand-made at a traditional woodcut studio, and selected the finest Shanghai silk for the book's cover. Hasui died two years after the book's publication, and the woodblock prints that he made for the book may well be some of his last works. Another interesting aspect of the book can be found in the

colophon, where Eynard lists the names of all the artists who took part in the work. According to this record, there were no direct meetings with Shunsen, rather, Bieri copied aspects of Shunsen's design from his prints.

During this time, Swiss soldiers formed various networks in Tokyo, including the Red Cross Club, the military clubs for the other Western soldiers stationed in Japan, Japanese cultural figures, and various politicians. At that time, although Japanese woodblock prints were not as popular as they once used to be, they still appeared to Westerners, such as the Swiss, as a beautiful East Asian art form. Therefore, it became possible to publish this book in Switzerland through a close collaboration with a Japanese woodblock print publisher and artists from Switzerland, Japan, and Korea. At that time, due to the destruction of the war, it was not possible to publish Eynard's book in Korea.

## **Swiss Collectors of Korean Art: Dr. Paul Ritter and Dr. Heinrich von Niederhäusern**

Natasha FISCHER-VAIDYA, lic.phil.  
University of Zurich

Korean art first began to enter Swiss collections during the first decades of the twentieth century. Museum records show that the Korean objects found in Swiss collections today were donated by or acquired from a fairly small number of collectors. While in most cases it is known how and from whom these objects were obtained, tracing their histories further back is often difficult. Nonetheless, a study of the biographies of collectors and donors offer a better understanding of the collections and on the early movement of Korean objects to the West.

This presentation will focus on two notable donors to Swiss museums, Dr. Paul Ritter and Dr. Heinrich von Niederhäusern, whose names appear most frequently in the museums' records of their Korean collections. As a diplomat and acting in his capacity as Swiss ambassador to Japan that enabled him to travel to Korea, Paul Ritter's commissions for the acquisition of Korean objects are well documented in museum records. In contrast, we know much less of Heinrich von Niederhäusern's personal and collecting history. Aside from their prominence as donors in terms of the sheer numbers of objects they procured for the collections, what sets them apart from other Swiss donors is that they acted primarily in the service of Swiss museums, and by extension, with the Swiss public in mind. The Swiss collections holding Korean objects and artworks are, for the most part, ethnographical collections, implying a purpose of informing on foreign cultures.

The Bern Historical Museum's Korea collection includes albums of both Ritter and von Niederhäusern with photographs from their visits to Korea. They are arguably most revealing of what captured the interests of each of these men. The photographs represent some of the earliest photographs of Korea by Europeans and will be explored as primary source materials that may offer insight on Ritter, the diplomat, and von Niederhäusern, the private traveller, as donors.