

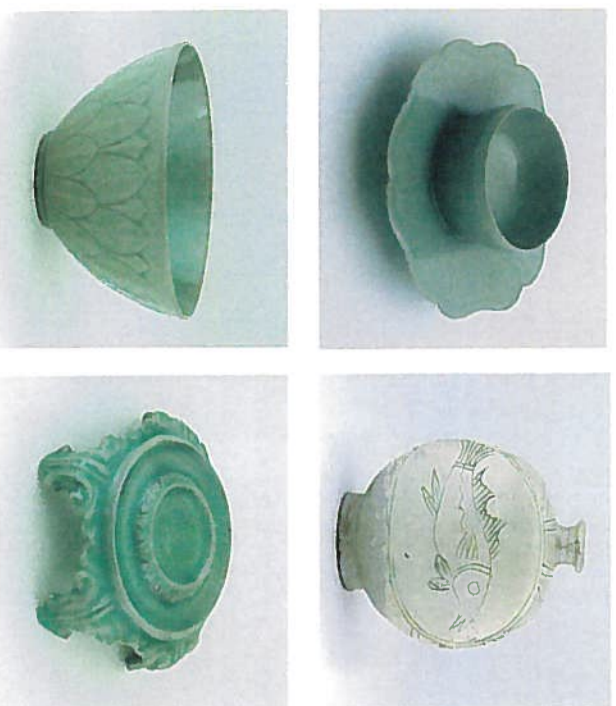
Ceramics

Korea is perhaps best known internationally for its superb ceramic tradition. The celadon cupstand, shown below, is a beautiful example of this tradition. The mallow shaped saucer with attached cup made of stoneware is covered by a lustrous blue green color glaze. It is the quality of the manufacture and the perfection of the color of the glaze that is most highly prized among these early Koryŏ wares.

The unique color of celadon is achieved through a firing technique known as reduction firing wherein the kiln is deprived of oxygen. This type of ware was used by aristocratic households and also by Buddhist temples. This cupstand is from the early 12th century, widely regarded as the period of finest celadon production in Korea.

There are several types of Korean cup stands, some have pierced plates which then take a pointed cup, others are plates with flat saucers to receive flat bottomed cups while still others, like the one illustrated here would act as a cup stand for placing a larger cup within the stand. The Honolulu Academy of Arts Korean collections contains examples of all three types.

In the upper right is a Punch'ŏng ware wine bottle from the Chŏsŏn dynasty. This 15th century bottle is made of stoneware and covered with a white slip on which a delightful fish design has been quickly and expertly etched out and then the overall piece was covered with a thin celadon glaze.



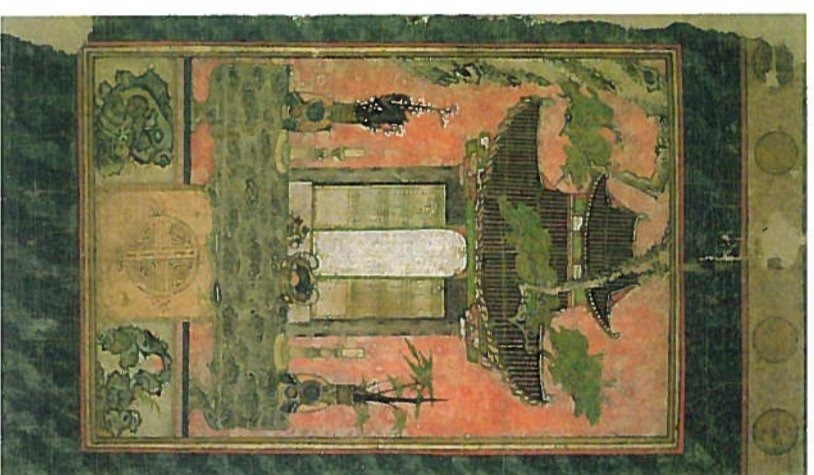
TOP LEFT
Cupstand
Korea, Koryŏ dynasty, early 12th century
Stoneware with celadon glaze
Gift of Mrs. Robert P. Griffing, Jr.,
in memory of W. Damon Giffard
(3434.1)

TOP RIGHT
Punch'ŏng Wine Bottle
Korea, Chosŏn dynasty, late 15th century
Stoneware with white slip and celadon glaze
Gift of Lt. General Oliver S. Picher, USAF, 1958
(2522.1)

Bowl
Korea, Koryŏ dynasty, 12th century
Stoneware with celadon glaze
Gift of Lt. General Oliver S. Picher, USAF, 1955
(2053.1)

Stand for a cup
Korea, Koryŏ dynasty, first half of the 12th century
Stoneware with celadon glaze
Purchase, 1972
(4087.1)

Ritual Painting



Spirit House Shrine Painting
(*Keon Mo Yo Je Doi*)
Korea, Chosŏn dynasty, 17th century
Ink and color on cloth
Purchase, 1999
(8991.1)

The Honolulu Academy of Arts Spirit House Shrine Painting is a fine example of the type of painting that came to be the popular substitute for these expensive rituals. In this painting an ancestral shrine is depicted beneath the branches of a pine tree. A table laden with offerings for the ancestors is just in front of a blank area that would have been used for placing slips of paper listing the names of the ancestors that were to be recognized. A ceremony would then be performed which focused on requests to the ancestors for happiness, abundance, and prosperity for the remaining family members. This Confucian practice very likely got its start from similar Buddhist practices.

The Korean people have several traditional ways to honor their ancestors which vary slightly in intent and practice depending on whether they are Buddhist inspired rituals or Confucian rituals. Often times these practices became intertwined or obviously influential from one ritual to another:

One important way to recognize the ancestors was through the establishment of household shrines. Set up with tablets containing the name of the deceased head of the household, they would be placed on special altars with food and drink. Festivals that included massive banquets were also held. These practices were expensive and unavailable to the common and middle class who instead devised a type of painting that depicts the ritual shrine setting.

Funding for the Korea gallery reinstillation was generously supplied by The Korea Foundation.

Julia M. White
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HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS

KOREAN GALLERY
Gallery Fourteen



HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS

KOREAN ART



The Korean collection at the Honolulu Academy of Arts is one of the most highly prized and celebrated collections at the museum. A 1996 publication by the Korea Foundation selected 153 works of art from the Academy's collection for inclusion in a catalog featuring Korean art from four U.S. mainland institutions. It was determined during the survey conducted by leading scholars and curators from Korea that the Academy's collection of Koryŏ period ceramics, especially celadons, is of particularly rare and exceptional quality. More recently a noted scholar from a U.S. mainland institution conducted a survey sponsored by a grant from the Museum Loan Network was able to grade the quality of the collection. His report was taken in consideration in the choice of ceramics in the inaugural exhibition. Nearly all of the ceramics being shown in the first installation were considered by this expert to be of "A" ranked quality or above.

The founder of the Academy, Mrs. Cooke, created the initial foundation and contributions to the Korean art collection through judicious purchases of works of art. In 1927 she purchased a beautiful Koryŏ period, 12th century Wine Jar which demonstrates the Korean craftsmen's ability in the slip decorated technique. A similar example, thought to have come from the same kiln and date to the same period, is in the National Museum of Korea. Another important contributor to the Korean ceramic collection was Lt. General Oliver S. Picher whose numerous gifts of Koryŏ celadons included a number of bowls. Robert Griffing Jr., director of the Academy of Arts from 1947-1963, was also a passionate admirer of Korean art and helped to develop the collection, most significantly in the area of ceramics. Jack Paldi was another influential collector and connoisseur who gave generously to the Korean collection. Most recently Henry Clark, former chairman of the Board contributed funds for the purchase of a Dragon painting and "Patches" Damon Holt was the donor of the large Lotus Screen now in the collection.

The inaugural exhibition of the newly renovated and reinstalled collection of Korean art is seen as the beginning of a higher profile and presence of Korean art in the community. Our hope is that it will bring to the attention of our many visitors the beauty and depth of the Korean culture.



Screen Paintings

Large screens were frequently used in traditional Korean homes both as decoration and as practical devices for creating private areas within larger spaces. This unusually large sized screen, pictured above, probably belonged to a relatively wealthy person.

The decoration of lotus, fish, and birds is rendered in a somewhat unusual continuous landscape scene stretching from the spit of land on the upper far right panel to the banks of the lotus pond on the lower left. The view is intended to be across the flowering pond with prominent pairing of fish and birds above and below the water and horizon line.

The theme of this painting can be read at several different levels for the lotus is traditionally associated with Buddhism and a lotus serves as the throne for the Buddha who is also frequently seen surrounded by lotus buds. It is more likely however that in this screen, the lotus symbolizes the great fecundity of its nature with the multiple lotus seeds produced by the lotus pod referring to the hope for many offspring. The paired birds and fishes also point to their frequent symbolic meaning of marital fidelity.

The colors are bright and fresh and reflect a very strong Korean aesthetic. In all likelihood, given the subject matter and colorful rendition, this screen would have been used in the women's quarters.

Lotus, Fish and Birds
Korea, Chosŏn dynasty, 19th century
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Frances "Patches" Damon Holt, in memory of John Dominis Holt
(9119.1)

Dragons

Dragons are powerful beings in Korean mythology riding both on the clouds and beneath the sea. They are thought to bring good luck and are frequently depicted in paintings such as this one as dynamic, animated, and powerful animals. Occasionally the dragon image is associated with King Munmu of the Silla Kingdom who was said to have become Dragon King after his death. In addition to being a symbol of the ruler the dragon also symbolizes the direction east.

There is some indication that this painting may have been cut down slightly from a larger work however, it loses none of its original vitality. The paper used is mulberry paper, a very typical Korean paper of high quality known throughout Asia for its beauty and strength.



Dragon
Korea, Chosŏn dynasty, 18th century
Ink and color on mulberry paper
Purchase, Robert Allerton and Priscillee Acquisition Funds,
with a matching gift from Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Clark, 1981
(4947.1)