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KOREAN TREASURES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR THE FIRST TIME

Asian Civilisations Museum presents an intimate glimpse into a dramatic period that has left a definitive legacy on modern Korea



Singapore, 20 April 2017 – The allure of Korean culture has led to a global surge in popularity of all things Korean. But what do you know of its genesis? A showcase of Korean treasures and artefacts will travel to Southeast Asia for the first time, inviting you to traverse history and uncover the origins of what you know and love about Korea today.

Joseon Korea: Court Treasures and City Life is an intimate inspection of 500 years of Korea's last dynasty, the Joseon (1392 – 1897) – a period that inimitably shaped modern Korea. Presented by the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) in Singapore, this exquisite showcase has been three years in the making, in collaboration with Korea's most renowned national museums, and is ACM's largest to date. In the spotlight are more than 150 artefacts and treasures from the National Museum of Korea and National Palace Museum of Korea that depict various facets of a vibrant Joseon era – from its royal and religious patronage, life in the courts of power, to the everyday lives of the people.

ACM Director Kennie Ting said, "Fans of K-culture will not find this showcase unfamiliar, as many of the stories and treasures that we are showing in this exhibition have inspired Korea's

popular culture – from period drama series to contemporary arts and aesthetics, and even fashion. Much of what is regarded as traditionally Korean today had been developments and innovations during the Joseon period. In the same thread, South Korean artist Ran Hwang's art installation adds to the experience of the exhibition, with its contemporary interpretation of Korean traditions. The Joseon dynasty's extraordinary legacy not only withstands the test of time by being relevant to this day, but also resonates with new audiences beyond geographical boundaries."

The exhibition guides visitors through an immersive narrative of Joseon's rich cultural and artistic legacy across six sections:

- **Departing from the Goryeo kingdom** sets the stage with an introduction of the transition between two dynasties, including key episodes and figures like King Taejo of Joseon, whose changes and ideas laid the foundation for the dynasty. His move to adopt Neo-Confucianism distinguished a new era for Korea, and shaped its political and cultural life;
- **Royal authority and court culture** unveils life inside the royal palace, the roles and expectations of the king and queen, courtly rituals and ceremonies, and even costumes, food and music. The calculated pomp and pageantry that surrounded them was central to asserting the royal authority, and the King's multiple roles as leader, ruler and scholar;
- **The *yangban***, which looks at the elite and aristocratic class in Joseon. Considered the moral pillar of Joseon society, their adherence to Confucian ideals and hierarchical values translated to their daily lives and in their living spaces. This examination of the *yangban*'s public and private lives paints a picture of their prominence, priorities and pursuits;
- **Nature in Korean Art** depicts the importance of nature to Joseon artists – not just as inspiration, but also the material for their creations. Among the showcase are traditional *buncheon* stoneware, popular during the first two centuries of the Joseon dynasty,

and the characteristically Korean style of 'true-view' landscape paintings that reflect the socio-political climate of developing a distinct Korean identity;

- **Sacred art and religious traditions** provides insight to the influence of Confucianism and Buddhism in Joseon ritual life – from grand state ceremonies to private family religious practices. Beyond the connections of the living to their forefathers and enhanced solidarity among kin through such traditions, how Buddhism integrated with indigenous folk religion for mass reception is also examined; and
- **Streets of Hanyang: Everyday life of the people**, depicting life in the capital through genre paintings – a major form of Korean art that flourished in the 18th century. These vignettes candidly capture everyday life, societal classes, and how important occasions like the first day of the Lunar New Year, harvest festival *Chuseok* and individual rites of passage were celebrated.

Joseon Korea: Court Treasures and City Life concludes with an invitation to step into a contemporary interpretation of traditional Korean cultural motifs, by award-winning artist Ran Hwang. ***Becoming Again; Coming Together*** is her largest single mixed-media installation to date. The five-part installation at ACM's Learning Gallery features three newly-commissioned site-specific works, and includes an elaborate seven-metre-wide pins-and-thread mural of a pair of phoenixes, as well as a 21-plexiglass panel video installation accompanied by traditional music performed with Joseon-era instruments.

Joseon Korea: Court Treasures and City Life exhibition runs from 22 April to 23 July 2017 at the Asian Civilisations Museum. Admission charges apply for this special exhibition.

Annex A: Fact sheet

Annex B: About the exhibition and programme highlights

Annex C: About *Becoming Again; Coming Together*

Annex D: Exhibition highlights

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About the Asian Civilisations Museum

The Asian Civilisations Museum is the only museum in region devoted to exploring the artistic heritage of Asia, especially the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans. The museum has launched two new wings with new galleries in late 2015 and early 2016. Founded in 1993, and in its present building by the Singapore River since 2003, the museum's collection grew out of the 19th-century Raffles Museum. The ACM spotlights the long historical connections between the cultures of Asia, and between Asia and the world.

Objects on display tell stories of the trade and the exchange of ideas that were the result of international commerce, as well as the flow of religions and faith through Asia. Singapore's history as a port city that brought people together from all over the world is used as a means of examining the history of Asia. Special exhibitions bring magnificent objects from around the world to our Singapore audience. Programmes like the annual River Nights encourage visitors to connect more closely with culture and the arts. For more information, visit www.acm.org.sg.

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ANNEX A: FACT SHEET

5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT JOSEON

1

안녕하세요! Familiar with the Korean alphabet, *Hangeul*? An emblem of Korean identity today, *Hangeul* was invented during the reign of King Sejong (r. 1418–1450), regarded as one of the greatest kings in Korean history. It was promulgated in 1446 and is one of the youngest alphabets in the world, created from scratch. The simplicity of the alphabet and the ease with which it can be learnt are believed to have contributed to Korea's extremely high rate of literacy today. *Fun fact: Hangeul Day is celebrated on 9 October as a national public holiday!*

2

Ever wondered about the strict emphasis on social customs and etiquette in Korea?

Neo-Confucianism was the official state doctrine during the Joseon period. As it took root, many social norms became engrained in Joseon society and are passed down through generations till this day. For instance, Confucianism places great emphasis on showing respect for one's elders and superiors – this translates into many areas of life, such as dining etiquette (eg. elders must be seated and be ready to eat, before anyone else can begin their meal) and social behaviour (eg. a young person should refrain from smoking before an elder/superior at work).

3

Take a close look at a 10,000 South Korean won banknote, and behind the portrait of King Sejong the Great, spot a painting of *the Sun, Moon and Five Peaks* in the background. This highly-stylised landscape was typically positioned behind the King's royal throne during the Joseon dynasty, and served to display the majesty of the Joseon royal court.

You might have seen a glimpse of this painting at royal palaces in Seoul like Gyeongbokgung and Changdeokgung, or in historical dramas like *Moon Embracing the Sun* (2012). If not, look out for the six-fold screen of *The Sun, Moon and Five Peaks* in the exhibition, and find out what its different elements represent.

4

The Joseon period left an immensely rich cultural and artistic legacy that can still be seen and felt in Korea today! Many characteristically-Korean genres of painting, such as true view landscape painting, as well as Korea's distinctive ceramics (*buncheong* ware) were first developed during this period. Key aspects of Korea's intangible cultural heritage, such as *pansori* (a form of musical storytelling), also emerged during this time.

5

Saeguk fans (ie. lovers of historical dramas), you'll be pleased to know that quite a bit of what you see in the dramas is pretty accurate. This exhibition will be your chance to get up close with Joseon historical treasures in Singapore – see the intricate *hanboks*, *buncheong* ware developed during the Joseon period, and furniture that sat within the households of the *yangban* (traditional ruling class).

ANNEX B: ABOUT THE EXHIBITION AND PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Joseon Korea: Court Treasures and City Life

韩风雅韵：韩国朝鲜王朝之文化瑰宝

조선왕조의 예술과 문화

- Exhibition dates : 22 April to 23 July 2017
- Venue : Asian Civilisations Museum
1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555
- Admission fee : \$10 for Singaporeans and PRs (free for children and seniors) and \$15 for tourists (\$10 concession, \$45 for a family of 5), including entry to permanent galleries
Free Admission to *Becoming Again; Coming Together* for all visitors
- Website : www.acm.org.sg
- Enquiries : 6332 7798 / nhb_acm_vs@nhb.gov.sg
- Opening hours : Monday to Sunday: 10am to 7pm (to 9pm on Friday)
- Getting there : By MRT – Raffles Place
By Bus – 75, 100, 107, 130, 131, 167
By Car – Parking is available at Parliament House, Connaught Drive, The Fullerton Hotel, One Fullerton, and Six Battery Road

Programme Highlights for Joseon Korea: Court Treasures and City Life

SEOUL AWESOME! WEEKEND FESTIVAL



17 and 18 June
Saturday, 1 to 9pm
Sunday, 1 to 5pm
Free admission (includes free entry to special exhibition)

Saranghaeyo, Korea! Join us as we bring you heart thumping music and dance performances, food tasting sessions of delicious Korean food, and participate in a mass Taekwondo session. Shake legs by the ACM Green with a movie marathon of your cute Kpop stars as accompaniment. Don't forget to say *annyeonghasaeyo* to the new special exhibition, *Joseon Korea: Court Treasures and City Life*, as you end off your day!

CURATOR TOURS



Fridays, 12 May, 9 June, 14 July
7.30 to 8.30pm
\$25 per session, book at ACM Front Desk or Peatix
(<http://acmcuratortours.peatix.com>)

Fact or fiction – was Joseon Korea really like what you see in dramas and movies? Join exhibition curators Kan Shuyi or Dominic Low as they unravel the truth and get exclusive behind the scenes insights into the Joseon dynasty.



A minimum of 15 people is needed to proceed. Payment must be made at Front Desk or Peatix before the closing date. Registration closes a day before each tour.

FUN-TASTIC FRIDAYS



Fridays, 2, 9, 16, 23 June
12 to 5pm
Free admission

Journey back in time to Joseon Korea this school holiday. Dress up in traditional *hanboks*, attend workshops, and watch traditional cultural performances rarely seen in Singapore! Sit back and catch a special movie screening of what's hot in Korea, and join us for a good time every Friday! Fighting!

ANNEX C: ABOUT *BECOMING AGAIN; COMING TOGETHER*



***Becoming Again; Coming Together* (2017)
Ran Hwang
Mixed-Media
Asian Civilisations Museum, Learning Gallery, Level 1
Free admission for all visitors**

Korean artist Ran Hwang interweaves notions of timelessness and transience. Here she likens the Joseon dynasty to a wedding ceremony, as both can be thought to connote the zenith of brilliance and splendour. Both the traditional Korean dress – *hanbok* – and the image of the moon between the couple are typical of wedding ceremonies of common people in the late-Joseon period. A pair of phoenixes reinforces the theme of everlasting love. White peppers hang at the back, a Confucian custom associated with the desire for male offspring. The music, performed with instruments of the Joseon period, amplifies the magnificence of Joseon legacies.

The transitory quality of the installation is meant to contrast with the enduring Joseon dynasty. Images are revealed then obscured, colours appear then give way to monochrome. These contrasts are echoed in Hwang's choice of materials and techniques. The glass panels recall the fragility of life, while the beads, buttons, and pins hammered into the backdrop demonstrate exactitude and vigour.

Hwang's work has largely been inspired by Zen Buddhism, and this is reflected in the laborious and repetitive nature of her craft. Casting shadows, the movements of visitors contribute to the transient forces inherent in this work, momentarily eclipsing the video images while infusing new rhythms.

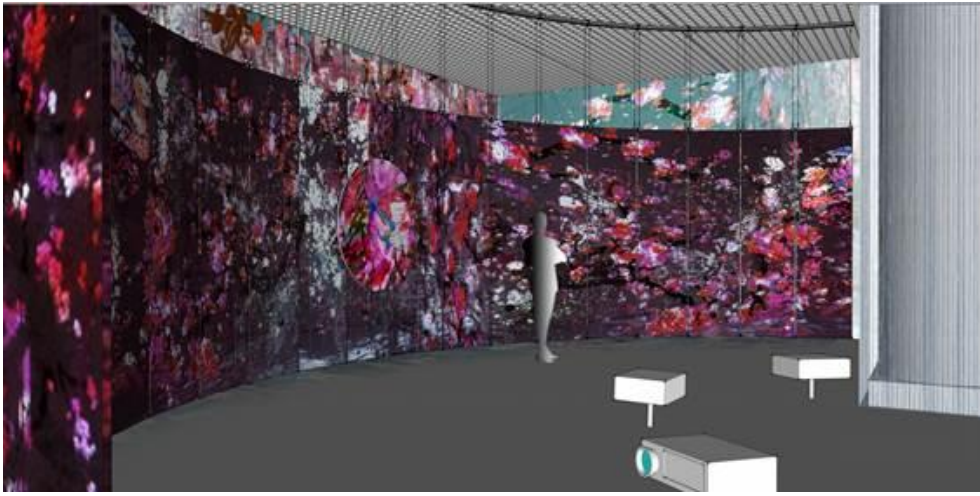
About Ran Hwang

Born in the Republic of Korea in 1960, Ran Hwang lives and works in both Seoul and New York City. She studied Fine Arts at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and attended the Graduate School of Fine Arts at Chung-Ang University in Seoul.

Hwang's motifs of blossoms, birds, and palaces come from her preoccupation with the nature of cyclical life, non-visibility and the beauty of transient moment. Additionally, Zen Buddhism plays a part in Hwang's creative process. Creating hand-made paper buttons and hammering each pin approximately 25 times until it is secure are time-consuming tasks. The monotony and receptiveness of these actions require the utmost concentration and discipline, recalling the meditative state practiced by Zen masters.

Ran Hwang has exhibited at several international institutions including the Queens Museum of Art, New York; MASS MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art), Massachusetts; IMAS (International Museum of Art and Science), Texas; Third Floor Hermès, Singapore; UNESCO Headquarters, Paris; The Hudson Valley Center for the Arts; New York; National Museum of Contemporary Art; The Seoul Arts Centre Museum; and The Jeju Museum of Art, Jeju Island. Hwang's work is also a part of numerous private and public collections including The Brooklyn Museum, New York; Dubai Opera; The Des Moines Centre for the Arts, Iowa; The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul; The Hammond Museum, North Salem, NY and King County Library in Issaquah, WA, USA.





Reference illustrations courtesy of Ran Hwang Studio

ANNEX D: EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

The Sun, Moon and Five Peaks



The Sun, Moon and Five Peaks

19th or early 20th century

Six-fold screen, colours on silk

149.3 x 351.8 cm

National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul [chang 6419]

Painted folding screens were a major type of pictorial format popular in the latter part of the Joseon dynasty. They were used by all social classes, but screens featuring the sun, moon and five peaks were specific to the Joseon court. A symbol of royal authority in Joseon Korea, screens illustrating this theme were placed behind the throne or royal portrait of a king. The formalised landscape represented the universe in microcosm — the forces of *yin* and *yang* are symbolised by the moon and sun respectively, while the five peaks signify the five elements of earth, fire, water, wood, and metal. The evergreen pine trees connote the wish for the longevity of the dynastic lineage as well as the king's regime.

King Jeongjo's Procession to His Father's Tomb



King Jeongjo's Procession to His Father's Tomb

1795

Handscroll, ink and colours on paper

H. 46.5 cm, W. 4483 cm

National Museum of Korea, Seoul [duk 2507]

It was customary for Joseon kings to periodically leave the palace to pay their respects at royal tombs located around the country. Most kings did so once every few years but King Jeongjo (reigned 1776–1800) was an exception. To demonstrate his deep filial love for his father, the Crown Prince Sado, King Jeongjo visited the tomb at Hwaseong (present day Suwon city) every year.

This intricately-rendered handscroll depicts King Jeongjo's visit to his father's tomb in 1795. As the visit coincided with the sixtieth birthday of his mother Lady Hyegyeong (1735–1815), an unprecedented number of people were mobilised for this special occasion. According to records, some 6,000 people were involved in this eight day-long visit, which also included a banquet to celebrate Lady Hyegyeong's birthday. As it was of such great importance, the event was meticulously documented in various formats, including this fully-coloured scroll painting with details embellished in gold paint and which stretches for an extensive forty-five metres.

In addition to projecting his royal authority with the massive royal procession, King Jeongjo used the occasion to observe the lives of the common people and listen to their troubles or grievances. He also made many civic improvements along the route, ordering roads to be paved and buildings to be repaired or built.

Portrait of Seo Jiksu



Portrait of Seo Jiksu

By Kim Myeonggi (1756–after 1802) and Kim Hongdo (1745–after 1816)

1796

Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk

148.8 cm x 72.4 cm

National Museum of Korea, Seoul [duk 5688]

Treasure no. 1487

Korea has a long tradition of painting portraits of notable people as a means of honouring their lives and achievements. Most extant historical portraits are from the Joseon period and this particular one depicts the scholar-official Seo Jiksu (1735–1811). He is shown dressed in a long overcoat and a tall hat, which was the representative attire of Joseon Confucian scholars.

This is an unusual painting as portraits featuring standing figures are rare. Its uniqueness is enhanced by the fact that Seo is portrayed without shoes. Furthermore, the inscription written by Seo on the upper right corner indicates that the portrait was executed by two of the era's most famous court painters – Yi Myeonggi and Kim Hongdo. Yi painted the face while Kim painted the rest of the body. Their proficiency with the brush is evident in their realistic portrayal of Seo, where even details like his age spots and wrinkles are captured. Despite the efforts of two highly-skilled painters, who were also renowned for painting the royal portrait of King Jeongjo (reigned 1776–1800), Seo felt that the artists had not successfully captured his mind.

Octagonal water dropper



Octagonal water dropper

19th century

Porcelain with underglaze-blue decoration, height 12.6 cm

National Museum of Korea, Seoul [ssu 15150]

Treasure no. 1329

Used for holding water to prepare ink for writing or painting, water-droppers were frequently seen on desks in a scholar's studio. Compared to most water droppers, which were generally small vessels to be grasped within one's hand, this one is unusually large and heavy. Its elongated sides bring to mind an eight-panel folding screen.

Seven sides of this octagonal water dropper are painted with landscapes that resemble the "Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers", an artistic theme that was popular in China during the eleventh century and later taken up by both the Koreans and Japanese. The eighth side is inscribed with excerpts from two Tang dynasty poems on the theme of the Eight Views. In contrast to the faceted sides that exude a sense of lyricism, the top is carved with a dramatic design of a dragon writhing amid waves or clouds. Harmonising the spirit of poetry and painting, this water dropper could have also served as an object purely for appreciation.

Chaekgado (Painting of shelves full of books)



Chaekgado (Painting of shelves full of books)

Ten panel folding screen, ink and colours on silk

Late 19th or early 20th century

Per panel: 39.5 x 161.7 cm

National Palace Museum of Korea

This finely painted screen creates the illusion of a shelving unit tightly packed with stacks of books. The incorporation of the Western painting technique of linear perspective enhances the sense of realism. Folding screens which depicted books arranged on shelves are believed to have first appeared at the Joseon court in the late eighteenth century at the behest of King Jeongjo (reigned 1776–1800). He was a monarch well-known for his great love of books and scholarship, and for also building up the Royal Library. Extant examples of folding screens featuring only books are rare today, although they were once produced in large numbers at the Joseon court where they were used as a backdrop in the study of the crown prince.

Screens featuring books came to be favoured by other classes in Joseon society but the books were typically portrayed with other items such as stationery, antiques, and even fruits and flowers.

Landscape of Segeomjeong Pavilion



Landscape of Segeomjeong Pavilion

By Jeong Seon (1676–1759)

18th century

Fan painting; ink and light colours on paper

W. 62.4 cm

National Museum of Korea, Seoul [duk 1191-2]

Located on Mount Bugak in Seoul, and overlooking a stream of clear water flowing over boulders, Segeomjeong Pavilion was a popular sightseeing spot during the Joseon period. The name of the Pavilion means “to wash swords” and different explanations have been posited for its unusual moniker. In one story, the group who led the Restoration of King Injo (reigned 1623–1649) in 1623 had supposedly conceived of their plan while they were at this spot washing their swords in the stream.

Segeomjeong Pavilion was also located near the office of the Overseer of the Paper Manufactory, and the stream became known as a place to recycle paper. As Korean traditional paper is very thick and durable, papers that had been used for writing drafts of the annals of a Joseon kings were washed and re-used after the final versions were completed.

This landscape is painted by Jeong Seon (1676–1759), one of the leading artists in 18th-century Korea. He is best known as the creator and master of “true-view” landscape painting, a new movement which saw artists depicting actual scenery they had seen, instead of idealised landscapes drawn from Chinese cultural references or generic images of nature. Jeong has painted Segeomjeong Pavilion from a high vantage point, setting it amid an idyllic landscape. Inside the pavilion with a distinctive T-shaped roof, two literati appear to be having a relaxing chat. The details of the landscape and the structure of the pavilion are precisely depicted, illustrating Jeong Seon’s ability as a true-view landscape painter.

Three-part norigae



Three-part norigae
19th century
Silk with metal, jade, coral, amber, and malachite
H. 43 cm
Daegu National Museum, Daegu [don 1130]

The word *norigae* originally referred to “pretty and playful objects” but came to designate a type of tasselled ornament exclusive to Joseon Korea. A *norigae* was attached to the ribbon of the short jacket worn by women or to the sash of their long skirts. Made in a variety of designs, sizes and with different materials, the type of *norigae* worn depended on the social status of the wearer and the occasion when it was worn. However, these regulations grew lax by the late Joseon period and women wore what they wanted as long as they could afford it.

The three-part *norigae* was the most elaborate in design, and embodied harmony among heaven, earth and humans. Precious materials like coral were reserved for three-part *norigae*s, which often also featured exquisite metalwork designs inlaid with enamels. The designs also carried auspicious meanings. For instance, butterflies (which can be seen on this *norigae*) symbolised marital bliss.

Wrapping cloth (bojagi)



Wrapping cloth (bojagi)
Joseon dynasty, 1392-1897
Colours on hemp, 73.5 x 70.7 cm (square cloth)
National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul [Chang7979]

Wrapping cloths were used to cover gifts and food as a sign of respect. The Joseon people believed that if an object is wrapped in such cloths, good luck and happiness would be retained within. This wish for good fortune is expressed and enhanced by the array of motifs painted on the *bojagi*. The peonies, pomegranates, and peaches seen on this *bojagi* signify prosperity and longevity.

Although wrapping cloths were used by all classes of Joseon society, those produced in the palace were distinguished by their phoenix patterns, and by their large size and material. The phoenix was a royal emblem as it was believed to possess the qualities (uprightness, honesty, fidelity, justice, and benevolence) a king should have. Moreover, a phoenix was believed to only appear in times of peace and prosperity under the rule of a virtuous king. The grace of a phoenix made it popular as a motif for the clothing and ornaments of Joseon queens and crown princesses.

Jar with dragon design



Jar with dragon design

17th century

Porcelain with iron-brown decoration, height 34.8 cm, diam. 38.2 cm

National Museum of Korea, Seoul [duk6234]

With its googly eyes, spiky eyelids (or eyebrows) and gravity-defying mane, the dragon encircling the jar is more comic than regal or fearsome. Globular jars painted with humorous dragons were popular during the seventeenth century as several similar examples are known among museum collections. The striking visual quality of having dark-brown pigments juxtaposed against a plain white surface would have also contributed to their popularity.

The stylised representation and bold rendering of patterns are characteristic of most underglaze iron-painted porcelains from the Joseon period. Iron-brown oxide was increasingly used as a pigment to decorate Joseon porcelain from the sixteenth century but it was during the seventeenth century when the style particularly flourished. This stemmed from the dearth and high costs of imported cobalt supplies, a situation compounded by the Japanese and Manchu invasions of Korea during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Moon jar



Moon jar
18th century
Porcelain, height 46 cm
National Museum of Korea, Seoul [jub 2084]

One of the key types of ceramics produced during the Joseon period was white porcelain (*baekja*). In fact Joseon Korea was a frontrunner in the history of porcelain production as it was the second country in the world (after China) to succeed in making porcelain. The use of plain white porcelain was promoted early on in the dynasty by King Sejong (r. 1418–50).

The 'moon jar' is perhaps the most iconic vessel among all Joseon porcelains. Its name is derived from its round and milky-white appearance, which brings to mind a luminous, full moon. While the substantial proportions of these jars evoke a sense of robustness, they exude a tranquil elegance through their simple form and unadorned surfaces.

Moon jars were made by joining two separately potted halves together. Thus, warping of the clay body often occurred during the firing of these large vessels and the jars are never exactly spherical, as this example shows. However, it is the presence of such 'imperfections' that have imbued these vessels with an unpretentious charm and endeared them to so many people over the centuries.

These vessels were mostly produced during the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries at kilns located in Gwangju, Gyeonggi province. Although these jars are now treasured as a quintessential expression of Joseon art and culture, they were used as containers for liquor or food, as well as for display purposes in the Joseon era.

Saving Hungry Ghosts by Giving Nectar



Saving Hungry Ghosts by Giving Nectar

18th century

Colours on hemp

200.7 x 193 cm

National Museum of Korea, Seoul [ssu 13521]

During the Joseon dynasty, rituals were often held at Buddhist temples to wish for Buddha to guide the souls of the deceased to enlightenment, and this painting was used in such ceremonies. Also known as Nectar Ritual Paintings, this genre of works were unique to Korea. In Buddhism, the nectar or “sweet dew” (*gamno* 甘露) represents Buddha’s teachings. Just as nectar can alleviate one’s thirst, the Buddha’s teachings will also relieve the spirit from suffering.

Encircled by dramatic flames is a large central figure of a “hungry ghost” who represents the soul in suffering. The hungry ghost holds a bowl and kneels on one leg, preparing to receive the sweet nectar of Buddha’s teaching. Surrounding the hungry ghost are graphic depictions of various types of suffering and death, such as flogging, decapitation, the horrors of war. These vivid portrayals were intended to instill sympathy and fear in people.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas who will save the hungry ghost occupy the upper section of the painting. They include the Seven Buddhas as well as the triad of Amitabha Buddha, Avalokiteshvara, and Ksitigarbha. Standing on clouds, they appear to have descended from the Pure Land to free all sentient beings from suffering and misfortune.

Bridal Robe



Bridal Robe
Late 19th century
Embroidery on silk, 124 x 198 cm
National Museum of Korea, Seoul [don 4937]
Gift of Lee Sang-ryong, 2002

In the late Joseon period, the wedding day was the only occasion when commoners were permitted to wear a *hwarot* ("flower robe"), which was a heavily embroidered overcoat usually worn by princesses.

The robe is lavishly decorated with auspicious emblems which provide an abundance of blessings. Longevity symbols like peaches and cranes are interspersed with butterflies and pairs of birds, which represent conjugal harmony. On the other hand, the peonies connote wealth and honour, while the lotuses embody purity and fecundity. A Chinese phrase adorns the shoulder area of the coat: 二姓之合百福之源 (*yiseong jihap baekbok jiwon*), which translates into 'the union of two families is the source of a hundred blessings'. This was a popular celebratory saying that was frequently incorporated into the design of bridal robes.