

The Aesthetic of the Korean Scholar: Purity and Virtue

ceramics - paintings - furniture



Han Collection
Korean Arts & Antiques

A glimpse into the life of a Joseon dynasty Korean scholar

ceramics - paintings - furniture

The Sarangbang

For its first exhibition following the easing of the lockdown restrictions, Han Collection is focussing on the life of the Korean scholar during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897) and the objects that surrounded a man of such culture.

The exhibition features furniture, paintings, and ceramics that would have been found in the Sarangbang, or scholar's studio. Yangban (aristocratic) scholars and the educated literati studied Confucian classics and Neo-Confucian literature. As a result, Confucian thought permeated Korean society and was reflected in its art.





ceramics



18th century White Porcelain Jar
H20cm W13cm



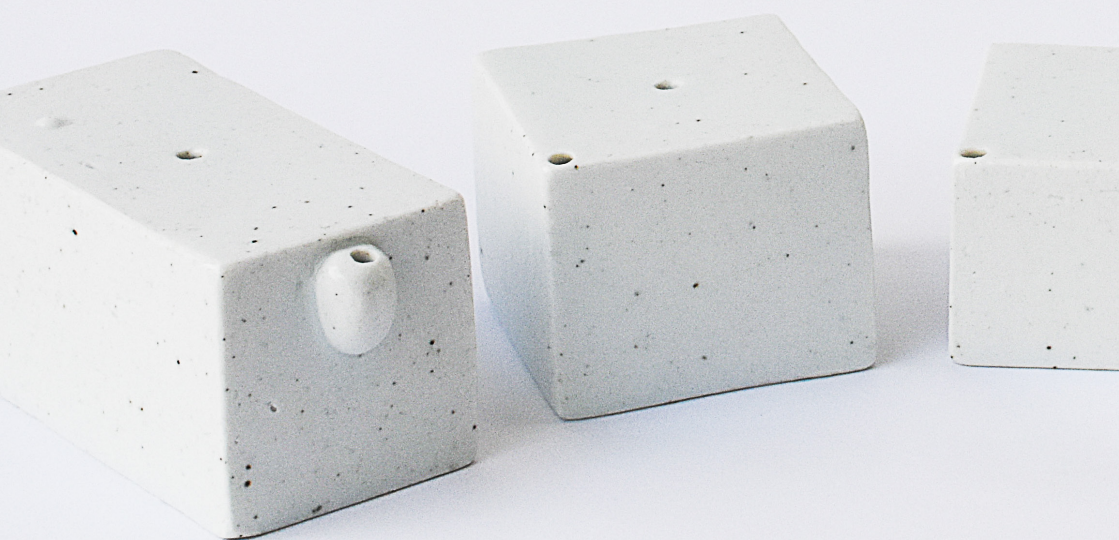
**15th century White
Porcelain Bottle**
H32 L7 W11.5

Early in the Joseon dynasty, potters, who had been influenced by Yuan and Ming porcelain from China, were able to produce true or hard-paste white porcelain. Its beauty and strength led it to become the chosen material for royal ceramics.

Porcelain was produced at the official kilns in Gwangju, Gyeonggi Province under the supervision of the Saongwon, the government office responsible for providing food for the king and royal court. Glaze colour varied over time and decoration was introduced through underglaze painting with pigments, such as cobalt (blue), iron (brown) or copper (red). Cobalt was a very expensive pigment, so blue and white porcelain was reserved for the royal court; private ownership was forbidden. The most skilled court painters were sent to the official kilns to paint directly onto porcelain vessels.

Porcelain Jar With Iron Decoration, by Ji Suntak
H32cm D35cm





White Porcelain Water Droppers, by Yi Yongho
Various sizes





Water droppers were essential objects for the scholar's desk. When filled with water, the tiny pouring holes allowed for precise control of the water flow for grinding ink on an inkstone. Although they were functional objects, their aesthetic qualities were not neglected. Amongst the many designs that were produced were droppers shaped as frogs and toads, fish, peaches, mountains or elaborate openwork pieces.

18th century Chest Shaped Water Dropper
W11cm H7.7cm

19th century Mountain Shaped Brush Rest
W20cm H8.2cm







19th White Porcelain Ritual Dish

H4.5cm D10.8cm

Based on examples from the late Joseon period, this brush pot was made by Ji Suntak (1912-1993), who was designated a living national treasure. The piece has a bluish hue, which resembles porcelain from the 19th century.

Porcelain Brush Holder, by Ji Suntak

H12.5cm D11.5cm



15th century Brush Washer
H6.2cm D5cm







15th century Lidded Jar
H16cm W13cm



19th century White Porcelain Jar
H35cm W23cm



19th century Blue and White Faceted Jar With Orchid Decoration
H19cm D10.7cm



19th century Blue and White
Dragon Jar
H60.5cm W9.5cm



19th century Blue and White Wine Bottle

H26cm W10.5cm



19th century Blue and White Phoenix Jar

H15cm W9cm



19th century Blue and White Dragon Jar
H43cm W15cm



**19th century Blue and White Wine Flask
with Chrysanthemum Decoration**

H19cm W7.8cm





19th century Wine Flask
H17cm W8cm



19th century Iron Glazed Flattened Flask

H19cm W7cm



19th century White Porcelain Bottle

H23cm W9.5cm



18th century Faceted Bottle

H28cm W9cm



The moon jar is the most iconic ceramic form in Korean art. The unique shape is due to the method of production: two roughly hemispherical bowls are thrown before being luted (joined) together. This results in a jar that is not quite spherical, each moon jar having a unique shape and character.



Moon Jar, by Shin Jeonghee
H38cm W16cm





15th century White Porcelain Bowl
H10cm D16.7cm

19th century White Porcelain Incense Burner
H27cm D18cm

15th century White Porcelain Bowl
H10.8cm D13cm



paintings



Plum blossom,
by Kim Yoo Taek









Horyup-do (Hunting Scene Painting)

Four panel screen: W160cm H81.5cm including frame



Horyup-do (Hunting Scene Painting)
Detail





渭川漁雨暗秋





Bamboo Painting, by
Haegang Kim Gyujin
H130cm W32cm

furniture



19th century Sabang Takja (display cabinet)

H164.5cm W50cm L34.5cm

Pear and Paulownia Wood

Rooms in Korean houses were small with low ceiling heights, so that they could be warmed efficiently using the ondol system (underfloor heating). As people sat on the floor, indoor furniture was produced in smaller sizes and generally placed against the walls, in order to maximise floor space. Furniture was designed for the specific requirements of the sarangbang. They included small desks for reading and writing, inkstone boxes, trays to hold tobacco boxes and small tables for food.

The ondol system meant that floors were warm, so furniture was often raised on short legs to allow heat to circulate around the room. Pieces of furniture could be made of a combination of different woods (bokpanje) to prevent warping when the temperature or humidity level varied.

In keeping with the frugal lifestyle of the scholar, ornamentation was eschewed, allowing the natural grain of the wood to be appreciated. Pine was preferred for larger pieces of furniture, as it held connotations of strength and integrity. Alternatively, paulownia, which could be polished to a shiny black, could be used. Zelkova and persimmon were often used for smaller objects in the sarangbang, as the wood grain resembles clouds or abstract paintings.





19th century Gyung Sang (Reading Desk)
H28cm W74cm D33cm



19th century Mungab Document Chest

H33cm W89.8cm D27cm

Persimmon Wood



Namhan Sansong Bandaji (Chest)

H92cm W96cm D50cm

Elm Wood and Korean Birch



objects

19th century Silver Inlaid Incense Burner

H14.5cm D13cm





19th century Silver Inlaid Box
H9.9cm D7cm

White Stone Tobacco Box

H8cm D12.5cm





Shoes (Heuk Hae)
L26cm W8cm H8.5cm

19th century Arm Rest

H26cm L48cm





19th century Ink Stone Box

H18cm W18.7cm L36.5cm



19th century Brush Holder

H15.5cm D12cm



19th century Document Box
H14.5cm W52cm D13.5cm



Mirror Box
H10cm W15cm L18.5cm

Han Collection

Han Collection was founded in 2006 in South West London, and in 2014 it moved to a vibrant spot near the British Museum, one of the major cultural areas in London.

Alongside Korean antiques and arts, including ceramics, mother of pearl inlay, lacquer ware, woodwork, furniture, prints, paintings, and Buddhist art we have also been exploring modern and contemporary art from Korea. Through our commitment and expertise we present exceptional Korean antiques and arts that express an authentic vision, excellent craftsmanship, and an intellectual engagement with global audiences.

Han Collection is pleased to offer antique and art advisory and appraisal services to both individual and corporate clients. Site visits to homes and offices can be arranged, and we are happy to work with clients to provide antique and art which reflects personal taste or captures the ethos of a museum and gallery or private company. Han Collection is able to source a wide range of Korean antiques and arts for every situation.

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Text References

Earth, Fire, Soul: The Masterpieces of Korean Ceramics, National Museum of Korea, 2018
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