

KOREAN TREASURES TO TOUR MAJOR U.S. MUSEUMS

News Release

The National Museum of Korea, Seoul, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), are organizing the first comprehensive survey in the United States devoted to the art of the celebrated Joseon dynasty (1392–1910), an era that profoundly shaped the culture of Korea in ways that continue to resonate today. The exhibition will be presented first in Philadelphia (March 2–May 26, 2014) before traveling to Los Angeles (June 29–September 28, 2014) and Houston (November 2, 2014–January 11, 2015). More than 150 works will be on view, including a number of designated National Treasures that will be entirely new to American audiences. The works range from the courtly arts of ceremonial screen painting and calligraphy to scenes that vividly illustrate life across the social classes. Also displayed will be ritual vessels, outstanding examples of Korean ceramics, and works that illustrate the dynamic encounters between the “Hermit Kingdom” and the West at the end of the nineteenth century. A range of illustrated books, metalwork, sculpture, lacquer, furniture, costumes, textiles, and photographs have been selected to demonstrate the breadth and scope of the artistic achievement of the Joseon dynasty.

Treasures from Korea: Arts and Culture of the Joseon Dynasty, 1392–1910 will comprise works drawn primarily from the collection of the National Museum of Korea, supplemented by loans from public and private collections in Korea and the United States. It is part of an unprecedented cultural exchange conceived to foster greater understanding and friendship between the people of the United States and Korea. A reciprocal survey of American art from the collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, LACMA, and MFAH recently traveled to the National Museum of Korea and the Daejeon Museum of Art to introduce Korean audiences to American art and culture.

The exhibition will be organized around five key themes that will illuminate the artistic accomplishments and dynamics of Korean cultural life under the world’s longest-ruling Confucian dynasty, which saw the succession of twenty-seven kings over 518 years. The period is a subject of deep fascination because it continues to influence modern Korean manners, norms, and societal attitudes. The exhibition will also shed light on the external influences that exerted a profound effect on Korea’s culture. These include the adoption of the Chinese writing system in the second century BCE, the spread of Buddhism, and the introduction of Confucian values that would impose strict moral

codes and standards. As the founding philosophy of the Joseon dynasty, Confucianism provides a unifying perspective for the artistic styles of the dynasty as these evolved over time.

The exhibition's five sections focus on the role of the king and his royal court in establishing distinctive art and culture throughout Korea; the taste for simplicity assiduously cultivated at this time and its embodiment in ceramics and other media; the strict hierarchies that defined the social distinctions of class and gender; the production of ritual implements in metal and ceramics that gave expression to ancestral worship; the suppression and persistence of Buddhism under Confucian rule; and the direct encounter with Western civilization beginning in the late nineteenth century as seen from internal and external points of view.

Timothy Rub, The George D. Widener Director and Chief Executive Officer, Philadelphia Museum of Art, stated: "*Treasures from Korea* breaks new ground on many levels. It is the first full-scale survey presented in the United States of Korean art from the Joseon dynasty, which continues to profoundly shape Korean culture today, and it will enable us to share the art of this important period, including many treasures never before seen in the U.S., with audiences throughout the country. We are pleased to have organized this exhibition in partnership with the National Museum of Korea, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, expanding on an initiative that began with a survey of American art presented in Korea earlier this year and now on view in Sydney, Australia. Altogether it has become an exceptionally rich collaboration among many museums and between two great cultures."

Michael Govan, Chief Executive Officer and Wallis Annenberg Director, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, said: "We are grateful to the National Museum of Korea for making this exhibition possible. This partnership embodies LACMA's mission to mount exhibitions that represent the diverse populations of Los Angeles, home to the largest Korean community outside of Korea. LACMA's comprehensive holdings of Korean art, which boast a dedicated gallery and focused education programs, are a strength of the museum's encyclopedic collection."

Gary Tinterow, Director, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, commented: "We are thrilled with this opportunity to bring this extraordinary exhibition to the public. The MFAH has a particular interest in Korean art and related scholarship, and houses the only museum gallery in the Southwest dedicated solely to Korean art, featuring fine objects lent from the National Museum of Korea. We are therefore very pleased to once again partner with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, LACMA, and the National Museum of Korea for this remarkable exchange."

Kim Youngna, Director-General, National Museum of Korea, said: "In our ongoing quest to promote world history and culture, we are very pleased to be able to share

the treasures of our heritage with American audiences, in the same way that the Korean public gained a better understanding of the art of the United States through the exhibition *Art Across America*. We are delighted to take part in this important cultural collaboration between Korea and the United States.”

Treasures from Korea: Arts and Culture of the Joseon Dynasty, 1392–1910 is organized by Hyunsoo Woo, The Maxine and Howard Lewis Associate Curator of Korean Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, in close consultation with curators of the National Museum of Korea, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated scholarly catalogue, co-published by the Philadelphia Museum of Art with Yale University Press.

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In Philadelphia, the exhibition is presented by The Exelon Foundation and PECO. Additional support is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Kathleen C. and John J. F. Sherrerd Fund for Exhibitions, the James and Agnes Kim Foundation, Sueyun and Gene Locks, Maxine S. and Howard H. Lewis, Dr. Sankey V. Williams and Constance H. Williams, Frank S. Bayley, Lois G. and Julian A. Brodsky, Dr. Bong S. Lee and Dr. Mi W. Lee, James and Susan Pagliaro, Maude de Schauensee, and other generous individuals.

The exhibition is organized by the National Museum of Korea, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Contact:

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Jennifer Francis
215-684-7861
jennifer.francis@philamuseum.org

Norman Keyes, Jr.
215-684-7862
nkeyes@philamuseum.org

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Miranda Carroll
323-857-6543
mcarroll@lacma.org

Jessica Youn
323-857-6515
jyoun@lacma.org

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Mary Haus
713-639-7712
mhaus@mfah.org