



Book of Abstracts

Conference “Korean Wave(s)? Global Itineraries of Korean Art and Culture”

Date: Friday, May 16th, 9:00-18:30

Saturday, May 17th, 9:00-17:30

Venue: University of Zurich, Aula RAA-G-01, Rämistrasse 59, 8001 Zürich

Museum Rietberg, Park-Villa Rieter, Lecture Hall, Seestrasse 110, 8002 Zürich

The Conference “Korean Wave(s)? Global Itineraries of Korean Art and Culture”, organized by the Chair in East Asian Art History, University of Zurich in cooperation with the Museum Rietberg, is held in conjunction with the special exhibition “Hallyu – The Korean Wave”. The Conference seeks to engage with the exhibition by examining the global entanglements of Korean art and culture in a broader historical framework. It builds on the notion of “object itinerary” (Joyce 2015) as a tool for analysis of transcultural exchange, which offers a constructive framework for discussing the production, dissemination, and reception of art in a global perspective. This way the Conference conceptualizes the phenomenon of the Korean Wave as part of a continuum of regional and global cultural exchange that has been ongoing throughout Korean history from its earliest days, while critically reflecting on the notion of the 'wave,' as an analytical instrument used in the context of transcultural study of art.

Before *Hallyu*

The term “Korean Wave” or *Hallyu*, refers to the global surge in popularity of South Korean pop culture, which began in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and rapidly expanded soon after. Key elements driving this movement include pop music (K-pop), TV series (K-drama), and film (K-cinema) that over time grew to encompass other cultural genres like food and fashion, as well as the art scene experiencing a rapid rise in recent years. Due to its astonishing success among diverse audiences worldwide, the Korean Wave is commonly recognized as a global phenomenon reliant on the quality of the Korean productions, their innovative content keeping its offerings fresh and relevant, and favourable governmental policies and infrastructure that bolster the South Korean cultural industry and its exports. These interpretations of the Korean Wave often emphasize contemporaneity and singularity of the phenomenon positioned vis-à-vis the notion of the “Hermit Kingdom”, Orientalist moniker of isolation and insularity, used to characterize Korea and its cultural relationships before the 20th century. They also tend to accentuate South Korea's exclusive agency as the origin of the 'wave,' that may obscure the multidirectional and reciprocal nature of the processes of transcultural exchange that can be observed throughout the history of the Korean Peninsula. For example, as early as the Three Kingdoms period (trad. 57 BCE – 668



CE), historical evidence points to active cultural exchange between the kingdoms on the peninsula and their neighbors. The spread of Buddhist art in East Asia is a significant example of cultural flow during this early period of Korean history. During the Goryeo period (918 – 1392), a range of cultural products, such as highly valued celadon wares and the Buddhist canonical texts known as the Goryeo Tripitaka, fueled multidirectional regional trade and diplomatic exchange. Despite self-imposed restrictions on international exchange, the Joseon dynasty (1392 – 1910) witnessed an intensification of these trends on both regional and global levels, leading to the circulation of various cultural products, including literati paintings linked to Neo-Confucian thought.

Considering these mobilities, the ever-shifting temporal and spatial contexts of Korean transcultural exchange emerge as particularly significant topic, prompting numerous considerations. For instance, should the Korean Wave be viewed as a singular contemporary phenomenon, or is it one in a series of discrete, historically situated 'Korean waves' involving distinct artistic expressions? Moreover, what are the benefits, risks, and limitations of the notion of a 'wave' in this context, considering the diversity of agents, sources, and directions of cultural flows pertinent to these historical exchanges? Lastly, how do diverse spatial and temporal trajectories and contexts shape the reception and adaptation of art objects and related art historiography?

These issues demand critical examination and will form the core focus of the Conference, which will examine mobilities of art objects through different environments over time. This exploration will encompass their production, circulation, and transformation as they traverse various cultural and social spaces within East Asia and beyond. Importantly, these concerns are relevant not only to the Korean Wave but also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the global entanglements of Korean art and culture. This includes their positioning and role within the broader narratives of global art history, as well as the processes of transcultural exchange and globalization at large.

The conference is generously supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), the Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the Swiss Confederation, the University of Zurich Hochschulstiftung Foundation, and the UZH Alumni-Fonds.





Session 1: Exhibiting Global Itineraries of Korean Art and Culture

Keynote Lecture

Conflicted Realities: The Politics of Desire and Identity in Korean Art and History

J.P. Park, University of Oxford

To the surprise of many, the global response to Korean pop culture has reached an unexpected magnitude. As a result, K-pop has emerged as a prominent—if not dominant—subject of inquiry within Korean studies. Scholars in the field have increasingly examined its development, the factors behind its success, its contributions to Korea's economy and global reputation, strategies for sustaining or further advancing its influence, and its relationship with global fandoms and communities.

Rather than relying on conventional approaches that emphasize the success of Korean popular culture, this presentation situates Korean culture within broader historical and international contexts. It critically investigates whether K-pop's prominence is solely due to its intrinsic qualities or whether it is shaped by underexplored historical and structural factors. Furthermore, it addresses the potential limitations or unintended consequences of its global success. Other key questions include how Korea's cultural landscape compares to that of other East Asian nations, and how Korean art, art history, and scholarly achievements intersect with or diverge from the global prominence of K-pop. By exploring these questions from unconventional yet critically informed perspectives, this presentation seeks to offer a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Korea's cultural positioning within the global and historical context.



Session 2: Debating Global Itineraries of Korean Art and Culture

Keynote Lecture

Reflections on Korean Art in Motion: Movement, Reception and Scholarship

Charlotte Horlyck (SOAS University of London)

A photograph by Lord Snowdon taken in 1988 shows the British potter Dame Lucie Rie (1902-1995) next to a moon jar. Pristinely dressed in white, her fragile posture contrasts with the sturdy, silent presence of the jar beside her. The vessel was a gift from her friend Bernard Leach who purchased it during a visit to the Korean peninsula with Yanagi Muneyoshi in 1935. The photograph initiated Koo Bohncchang's decades-long project of photographing moon jars and other Chosŏn porcelains held in museum collections in Japan, America and Europe. Snowdon's image and its layered narrative of an object passing between hands, cultures and contexts, has made this particular moon jar one of the most iconic examples of its kind, reminding us that objects carry significance that is simultaneously central and marginal to their material form

This lecture explores the transcultural journey of Korean art and the shifting meanings artefacts accrue across time and space whether materially, conceptually or historically. Reflecting on Korean art in motion, it considers the tension between notions of uniqueness and the implications of isolation this presupposes, versus boundary-crossing waves of global popularity that challenge such narratives. In the wake of the opening of "Hallyu – The Korean Wave" at the Museum Rietberg, I ask whether the metaphor of "the wave" is adequate, or even useful, for capturing the complexities of cultural exchange and the layered histories of production, reception and movement that underpin Korean art and culture.



Panel 1: Transcultural Mobility of Art Objects: Production and Circulation

This panel explores the production and circulation of art objects in the context of Korean transcultural exchange. It discusses how art objects are created, disseminated, and exchanged across different spatial and temporal contexts, considering factors such as artistic materials, techniques, trade routes, and cultural networks.

New insights on early Buddhist artefacts from the northern region of the Korean peninsula, 5th-6th centuries AD

Ariane Perrin (University of New York)

The earliest known Buddhist images, sites and relics are mostly concentrated in the northern part of the Korean peninsula, in and around today's Pyongyang region, as well as in northeast China, at the site of the Koguryŏ kingdom's (37 BC-AD 668) early capital in present-day Ji'an, in Jilin province. Although Koguryŏ Buddhist sculptures and images are considered to be the earliest (fifth-sixth century AD) among the three ancient kingdoms of the Korean peninsula, they are also much less numerous when compared to the later Buddhist artefacts and sites from the Paekche (18 BC-AD 660) and Silla (57 BC-AD 668) kingdoms, which were found at various temple sites and carved into mountain rocks in the southern part of the Korean peninsula.

This study focuses on a group of clay and metal statues, some of which bear a votive inscription engraved in Chinese characters on the back that are ascribed to the northern kingdom of Koguryŏ. It will first address the problematic identification of these early statuettes, that are easily transferred from one location to another, and their cursory attribution to one particular kingdom.

Some of these small votive statues are stylistically similar, if not identical, to those found in China during the same period – the Northern and Southern Dynasties (386-581) – thus raising the issue of provenance. The author delved into the manufacturing methods of the clay sculptures across the two regions and will present the result of her investigations. Several newly discovered types of sculptures ascribed to Koguryŏ will also be discussed. These were discovered by the present author while researching the collection of gelatin dry plates made by the Japanese Government-General of Korea during the Japanese colonial period (1910-45).



The Journey of Joseon White Porcelain in the 19th Century_from Seoul to Hamburg

Namwon Jang (Ewha Womans University)

In July 2022, I discovered Joseon white porcelain displayed alongside Chinese white porcelain at a special exhibition of Chinese ceramics at the Hamburg Crafts Museum. It was a raised white porcelain cup with the ten longevity symbols design produced in a Joseon government kiln in the 19th century. It is very similar to the white porcelain produced in Dehua-yo, China in terms of shape, design, etc., but there are differences in the clay body, glaze color, and carved decoration. The purpose of the white porcelain cup is not certain, but there is a record of a cup of the same shape made of silver being used as a teacup during rituals at a place where portraits of kings and queens were enshrined. Therefore, it is thought that white porcelain was also likely to be associated with important royal ceremonies.

According to the museum records, this white porcelain was part of the collection of H. Saenger, a Hamburg art dealer, and was acquired by the museum in 1898. How could such an important ceremonial white porcelain of the Joseon royal family, and such a contemporary piece, have reached Hamburg, Germany? Joseon and Germany began their exchanges in 1883 by signing a mutual trade treaty, and Edward Meyer of Meyer Trading Company, headquartered in Hamburg, became interested in Korean culture and goods when he became the Consul General of Joseon in Germany (appointed in 1886). Meyer Trading Company also actively cooperated with the activities of diplomat P.G. von Möllendorff (1847-1901), who was dispatched to Korea. Meyer, Möllendorff, and Saenger all collected Korean artifacts and made important contributions to the formation of early collections in German museums. In this presentation, we will follow the journey of Joseon white porcelain that took place in such a complex historical context.



Panel 2: Transcultural Reception of Art Objects: Transformation and Adaptation

This panel examines how art objects from Korea are received and adapted in various cultural and social environments over time. It analyzes how cultural contexts shape the interpretation and reinterpretation of art objects, leading to their transformation and adaptation in different cultural settings.

Transcultural Reception of the Tiger Image: The Hanging Scroll by Yi Wonchan in the Berlin Collection, as Example

Jeong-hee Lee Kalisch (Freie Universität Berlin)

The Siberian tiger, native to Korea, has been closely linked to Korean cultural history and art since the Neolithic period and has now become a national icon in the global context. The paper focuses on the reception history of the Korean tiger image in Japan, starting with a hanging scroll with a tiger painted by the Joseon painter Yi Wonchan 李元燾 (lifetime unknown) from the collection of the Asian Art Museum, Berlin. It is from the Naumann Collection and was purchased by the collector in Tokyo in 1999.

This presentation first deals with Yi's depiction of the tiger and its stylistic classification in the Chinese and Korean painting traditions. Two additional paintings of Yi's tigers from the Osaka Museum of History in Japan and the National Maritime Museum in Busan, South Korea, will be taken into consideration. This study aims to shed light on Japan's investigation into Yi Wonchan's painting of a tiger and on how Japanese artists received and adapted it across cultures. Finally, the question of dating of the Berlin painting is looked at based on these investigations. The purpose of this study is to provide insight into how tiger images develop as a symbol of national identity in the postcolonial and global context.



The Legacy of An Gyeon: Attributions, Forgeries, and the Transmission of Northern Song Landscape Traditions in Korea and Beyond

Yoonjung Seo (Myongji University)

An Gyeon (fl. 15th century) is widely recognized as a foundational figure in early Joseon court painting, particularly for his adaptation of Northern Song landscape traditions. His *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land* (1447) remains the only authenticated work, yet numerous paintings circulating in Korea and Japan have been attributed to him (*jeonchingjak* 傳稱作). Whether genuine, copied, or forged, these works have significantly shaped perceptions of An Gyeon's artistic legacy in Korea.

This paper examines how Northern Song landscape painting traditions, particularly those of the Li-Guo (李郭) school, were transmitted, reinterpreted, and misattributed in Korea. It explores how An Gyeon's attributed works became central to defining the aesthetic values of Korean court painting and how they were later received and circulated beyond Korea, particularly in early modern Japan. Additionally, it analyzes the role of collectors, art markets, and exhibitions in shaping An Gyeon's reputation and the authentication of his works in Korea. The complex trajectory of these attributed works reflects not only shifts in artistic taste but also broader cultural negotiations surrounding Korean artistic identity and its engagement with Chinese models.

By reassessing An Gyeon's artistic legacy through the lens of attribution and transmission, this study sheds new light on the evolving discourse of Northern Song-inspired landscape painting in Korea and beyond, highlighting its historiographical significance within East Asian art history.



Panel 3: Art Historiography in Motion: Tracing Korean Art Across Time and Space

This panel focuses on the role of art historiography in tracing the spatial and temporal trajectories of Korean art. It discusses methodological approaches and challenges in studying the movement of art objects, as well as the implications for our understanding of Korean art history and its global entanglements.

Revisiting Prince Anpyeong's Dream of the 'Peach Blossom Land' in Early Joseon Korea

Burghard Jungmann (UCLA/Heidelberg University)

The famous handscroll *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land* by the court painter An Gyeon (1418-1453) is the earliest surviving signed and dated Korean landscape painting. Commissioned in 1447 by An Gyeon's patron Prince Anpyeong (1418-1453) it was, as the title suggests, inspired by the famous prose poem 'Journey to the Peach Blossom Spring' of the Chinese poet Tao Qian (sobriquet: Yuanming, 365?- 427). Tao famously described the utopia of a secluded land where people lived in peace and harmony. However, An's painting neither follows the narration of the poem, nor established Chinese iconographies. Moreover, Prince Anpyeong states in his colophon that he visited the secluded land in a dream and found it uninhabited and in ruins.

The ideas of utopia and retreat presented in Tao Qian's poem gain a more concrete meaning in context of the prince's vulnerable circumstances and the unstable political situation of his times. Only a few years after the painting was completed Prince Anpyeong's father King Sejong (r. 1418-1450) died and the fight for his succession ended in a bloodbath. Prince Anpyeong was assassinated by his own brother Prince Suyang, who in 1455 usurped the throne to become King Sejo (r. 1455-1468). Do Prince Anpyeong's dream and An Gyeon's painting connect to contemporaneous circumstances at court, or are they just poetic and stylistic reminiscences of century-old Chinese traditions? This paper will retrace the interpretations of the painting by art historians of different generations, that reflect the development of the field alongside changes in methodology.



From Han to Paekche. An Extraordinary Transformation

Youngsook Pak (SOAS University of London)

A gilt-bronze incense burner excavated from the temple site near the royal tombs in Nŭngsan-ni Puyŏ, the last capital of the kingdom of Paekche, is unprecedented in its form and complex iconography, and in its superb technical mastery. The mountain-shaped cover of the censer derives from the *boshanlu* 博山爐 of the Han dynasty. But was the Paekche censer just following the Han Chinese model? What is the religious concept of this ritual object? In order to interpret the significance of this censer the religious and historical factors surrounding it should be considered. Active diplomacy with Liang and Northern dynasties enabled Paekche to receive artistic ideological inspiration from China, but Paekche did not just follow their ideas. This gilt bronze incense burner testifies to the creativity and sophistication of Paekche culture. Furthermore, the proximity of the excavation site to the royal tombs indicates that the censer must have been the central piece in religious ceremonies held in the lost temple in Nŭngsan-ni which was not an ordinary temple.