

Travelling Bowls: Social Lives of Korean Ceramics

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What were the origins of Korean ceramic bowls in Western collections? How and where did they move and what were the changes in their meanings and local receptions? We may well ask this of any of the Korean objects in European collections; for many objects we no longer can trace the many steps along the way from Korea to, for example, Switzerland.

For this talk I propose to deal with a case study of a certain group of Korea ceramics. The objects first travelled to Japan, and from there to Paris and further on to Germany and Switzerland. We will follow the trails of the objects, as they change hands from Tadamasa Hayashi (1853-1906) to Ernst Grosse (1862-1927), and then to others. Along the way, the ceramics underwent changes in meaning and took on divergent roles: of inspiring new art forms or simply being forgotten in museum storage.