

The Cultural of Archives, Museums, and Libraries
May 5, 2009
Gwan Yong Jeong

A case-study comparison of Korean ceramic collections

I did a case-study on two Korean ceramic collections in the National Museum of Korea and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I visited both museums two years ago. For this research, I traced back my memory and searched their websites.

National Museum of Korea

First, I would like to introduce the National Museum of Korea. The National Museum of Korea is the head museum of Korean history and art and is the cultural organization that represents the nation. It was first established in September 1945, one month after the liberation from Japanese colonial rule. In October 2005, the museum opened a new building in Yongsan Family Park in Seoul. It claims to be the largest museum in Asia and the sixth-largest museum in the world in terms of floor space.

There are several exhibition places, the Archaeological Gallery, Historical Gallery, Fine Arts Gallery I & II, Donation Gallery, Asian Arts Gallery, Special Exhibition Gallery, Children's Museum, Path to History, Great Hall, etc. In the Fine Arts Gallery II, there are permanent exhibits for three kinds of ceramic, Celadon, Buncheong Ware and White Porcelain.

Celadon is stoneware decorated with a color range that includes greens of various shades, olive, blue, and gray (from Britannica Concise Encyclopedia). Its origin is China and it was introduced into the Goryeo Dynasty (918~1392). In the celadon exhibition, the ceramics that were excavated from the Goryeo's royal tomb are displayed in the title of ceramics of Goryeo's royal family.

Buncheong Ware or Grayish-blue-powdered Celadon is a form of traditional Korean stoneware, with a bluish-green tone. Its origin is Sanggam Celadon which was made in the late of Goryeo dynasty and it made great strides in the early Joseon Dynasty, largely replacing celadon in common use. It generally disappeared from Korea after the 16th century due to the popularity of the White Porcelains. The Buncheong Wares are exhibited in chronological order and by the pattern techniques.

White Porcelain or Joseon Baekja refers to the white porcelains produced during the whole Joseon dynasty (1392-1910). White porcelains were preferred and praised than any other porcelain during the time because it represents Confucian ethics very well such as temperance and purity. This exhibition is organized in the consideration of the four stages of the White Porcelain.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, there is a Korean artifacts exhibition, 'Arts o

f Korea'. In June 1998, the Korea Foundation and the Samsung Foundation of Culture for Korean Art supported the opening of the 'Arts of Korea' Gallery.

The gallery has a permanent collection of 400 pieces of Korean artifacts, including paintings, Buddhist sculptures, metalwork and decorative arts and ceramics of Three Kingdoms Period and the Goryeo and Joseon Dynasties. The Korean ceramic collections are exhibited in chronological order from the Neolithic age.

Funding

The National Museum of Korea is under the Korean government agency's program, so its budget comes wholly from the government. No admission fee is required for the permanent exhibits, the Children's Museum, and temporary exhibitions except special exhibitions that require separate tickets for admissions. This policy is made by the Korean government because they want to let more people come to the museum. In case of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the 'Arts of Korea' exhibition is sponsored by the Korean foundation and two Korean big companies, Samsung and LG.

Issue

The website of the National Museum of Korea provides short video clips to give some visual tours, but they are played only in the Internet Explore web-browser. It seems to be for Korean internet users because over 90% Korean internet users are using Internet Explore. However, even in case of the English version, other we

browsers cannot play these video clips. The video clips should be able to be played on any kinds of web-browsers and also in any kinds of operating systems.