

# The Beauty of Korean Crafts

As the first memorial exhibition of our 80th anniversary, we hold an exhibition of crafts of the Joseon Dynasty and about 400 pieces of works from the museum collection including historical documents are on display. Soetsu Yanagi (1889-1961), founder of the museum, found out that most abundant national characteristics of Korean people were appeared in daily utensils of Joseon Dynasty. Please enjoy the ethnic beauty of crafts such as ceramics, wood works, stone works, metal works, and paintings which have colored people's daily life.

## Soetsu Yanagi and Korean Crafts

The collection of Joseon Dynasty crafts in our museum, which is best in quality and quantity in Japan, were mostly collected by Yanagi through his eyes in Korean Peninsula from 1910's to 1930's. It was Noritaka (1884-1964) and Takumi (1890-1931) Asakawa brothers who supported Yanagi's movement. Noritaka, an elder brother, connected Yanagi with Korean ceramics and porcelains. Takumi, a younger brother, tried hard to strengthen the relationship between Yanagi and Korean people. Yanagi looked back in his late years and said, 'I encountered with Korean ceramics and porcelain, and had come to like them very much, which let me decide which way to go in my life. It was deeply moving.' (*Yonjūnen no Kaiso* [Recollections of my forty years], 1959.) As his words indicate, Yanagi found remarkable beauty in people's daily wares after he met Asakawa brothers. Then, Yanagi developed his philosophy on aesthetics of mingei later on.

It was not only products that Yanagi paid attention to. In Korea, the right to people's self-determination was forfeited at that time, and moreover the assimilation policy was forced by Japanese government. Yanagi, going against the times, highly estimated the culture of Korean people, and appealed for preservation and protection of it. It was very natural for Yanagi to admire people who have produced splendid products he loved.

It is just one hundred years since Yanagi first visited Korea, and it is very meaningful that conservation treatment has been undergone in association with a research project by the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation on the Korean collection of the museum in this memorial year. We earnestly hope that this opportunity leads to deepen a mutual understanding between Korean and Japanese people through joy for the beauty, which was Yanagi's long desire.

## Korean Crafts of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum

The collection centers on ceramics and porcelains. Bowls and bottles of Buncheong wares, tea-bowls like *ido*, jars and ritual utensils of white porcelains, jars, bottles, and plates decorated with *sometsuke* (cobalt blue), *shinsha* (copper red), and *tessha* (underglaze iron), iron-glazed jars and bowls, and various shaped water droppers are housed. As for paintings, folk paintings drawn in the late Joseon Dynasty are the majority. In the Korean Peninsula paintings have been very popular in a daily life such as letter paintings which were design of Confucian principles usually hung on children's rooms, paintings of bookshelves in men's rooms, and paintings with birds-and-flowers motif in women's rooms. These paintings with traditional themes were drawn by unknown painters. In addition to folk paintings, traditional court paintings such as visual records of events drawn in the middle of Joseon Dynasty are also included in our collection.

In the field of wood works, furniture like chests and tables mostly made in the late Joseon Dynasty as well as small works like pen stands, letter cases, and cups, boxes with horn-finished or mother-of-pearl inlay design are housed. Their peculiar beauty are outstanding. As for stone works, Buddha statues, braziers, incense burners, pans, ink stones, etc. are splendid. Not only their dynamic forms which made most of raw materials, but fine and delicate stone curving are remarkable. Metal works include large iron jars, containers made of brass, keys, and cigarette cases and pen stands with inlaid silver or lead on the iron ground. It should be noted that Yanagi, a potter Kanjiro Kawai, and a potter Shoji Hamada enthusiastically traveled various areas of Korea, and that they also collected woven works like baskets and brooms as well as paper works like fans.

– from the museum collection commemorating the 80th anniversary of the foundation

April 2nd (Sat) – June 12th (Sun), 2016

## Soetsu Yanagi and Korea

When Yanagi and his followers visited various places of the Korean Peninsula in 1936 and 1937, they actively collected crafts of the time. The results were published in the book '*Ima mo Tsuzuku Chosen no Kogei* [Joseon crafts inherited today]' issued in 1947. In this room various Joseon crafts in those days are on display together with related materials.

## Ceramics of Joseon Dynasty

Fascinated with ceramics of Joseon Dynasty, Yanagi traveled the Korean Peninsula twenty-one times in total. He collected many Korean crafts there, which led to the Mingei Movement later. This room introduces the attractiveness of ceramics of Joseon Dynasty represented by white porcelains.

## Beauty of Korean Crafts

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the foundation, a research project by Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation was conducted, and some wood works were conserved by Korean specialists as part of the project. In this room, selected works of various Korean crafts in Joseon Dynasty from the museum collection are on display. The beauty of Korean crafts which have been nurtured with deep spirits and unique senses of the people.

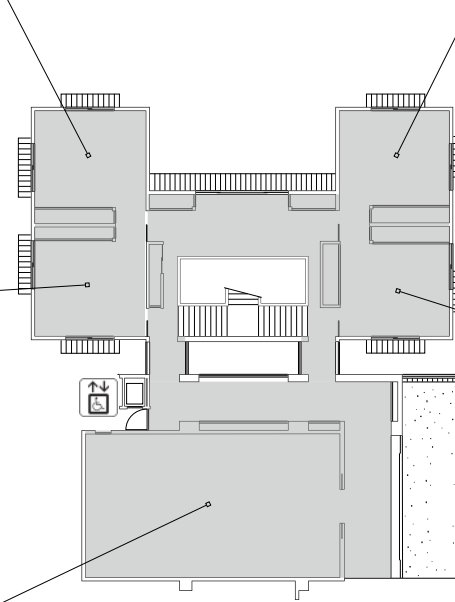
## Various Crafts of Joseon Dynasty

Stone works which have unique figures like ink stone, brazier, and pot. Wood works which show us familiarity like box, table, and table-wares. Metal works which have various forms like key, lighting device, and spouting vessel. These various types of works made in Joseon Dynasty present us free and unintentional minds of craftspeople. Please enjoy healthy beauty of crafts, which Japanese have respected and admired.

## Paintings of Joseon Dynasty

Folk paintings which were drawn by unknown painters in a free and informal composition and technique usually have unique styles of their own. In this room, paintings Yanagi admired besides folk paintings such as court paintings and calligraphy are exhibited.

## SECOND FLOOR



Special Exhibition

Special Exhibition

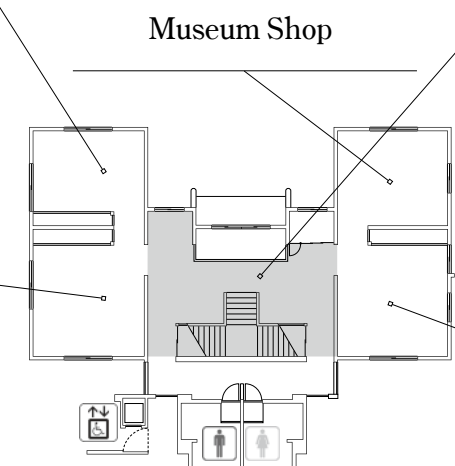
## Various Crafts of Japan

The museum houses about 2,500 pieces of Japanese wood/urushi works, metal works, baskets, and other works. Made from familiar materials with traditional technique, these works had been used in the life based on natural environment. We hope that you enjoy various crafts which have been nurtured with blessed four seasons of Japan and local traditions.

## Old Ceramics of Early Modern Japan and Otsu-e

Ceramics without paintings were popular in Medieval Japan. In Early Modern Japan, on the other hand, a technique of *tetsu-e*, motifs painted in iron pigments, was established, and more various decorative expressions had become possible. In this room are exhibited old ceramics of early modern Japan decorated with various decorative techniques. In addition, Otsu-e paintings which were drawn in approximately same period in Otsu, Shiga prefecture are introduced.

## FIRST FLOOR



## Introduction to Korean Crafts

During Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), the craft culture unique to the peoples had flourished. Here, ceramics, porcelains, wood/metal/stone works, and folk paintings are selected and exhibited as an entrance to the world of Korean crafts.

## Dyeing and Weaving of Japan

*Katsugi*, hood garment, which was used by women in Shonai area of Tohoku, tie-dyed summer kimono of Arimatu-Narumi, bedding with arabesque pattern, ikat kimono of hemp, paper textile –these dyeing and weaving of Japan are on display in this room. Most of them were used by ordinary people during Meiji period.

Thematic Exhibition

Special Exhibition

Thematic Exhibition

Thematic Exhibition