



## Virginia Museum of Fine Arts The Collections of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Art

### Collection Overview

In September 2012, VMFA celebrated the public opening of the newly renovated and reinstalled East Asian art galleries featuring 250 artworks from China, Japan, and Korea in roughly 5,000 square feet. Many of these works were acquired in recent years and are on display for the first time in Richmond. The new installation, arranged geographically and chronologically, aims to inspire visitors with its captivating array of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean artworks that trace a rich history of East Asian cultures.

Since its 1936 opening, VMFA has assembled approximately 2,000 objects from East Asia. The collection includes paintings, prints, sculptures, ceramics, metalwork, lacquers, and other decorative arts, from small jade bracelets to ritual vessels and life-size Buddhist sculptures. Collection themes include the Bronze Age, spread of Buddhism, cross-cultural influences, ceramic development and trade, scholars' implements, samurai culture, as well as tea-ceremony and incense art. Representing more than 4,500 years of visual history, these works reveal cultural influences and interactions among East Asia and beyond.

### Chinese Art

The core of VMFA's Chinese art collection features ritual bronzes and jade carvings of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, and Buddhist sculptures made in stone, bronze, and clay, dating from the 6<sup>th</sup> through the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Fine examples of ceramics, lacquers, bronzes, and jade reveal masterful craftsmanship from the Ming to the Qing dynasties. The painting collection includes portraits of civic and military officials, as well as religious priests from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century; a grouping enhanced by the recent gift of forty-one paintings depicting landscapes, flowers, and birds. The Chinese holdings of furniture include more than thirty tables, chairs, and screens dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The textile collection features embroidered costumes, large banners, and furniture covers.

Highlights of the Chinese holdings include outstanding representations of Shang-Zhou dynasty ritual bronzes, rare limestone sculptures of a bodhisattva and a guardian king, as well as a gilt-bronze figure of the Guanyin from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Fine examples of 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century lacquer wares, two magnificent 18<sup>th</sup>-century imperial Daoist paintings, and a spectacular 1782 imperial silk tapestry with an inscription by Emperor Qianlong are also of great aesthetic and historical significance.

### Japanese Art

VMFA's Japanese holdings grew dramatically in the 1960s when the museum hired as a curatorial consultant Alan Priest, former Curator for Oriental Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who acquired works of art directly from Japan. These early acquisitions range from magnificent Japanese Buddhist sculptures and ritual objects to religious and genre paintings and screens, dating from the

Heian to the Kamakura periods as well as the later Edo period. The holdings of Japanese woodblock prints, initially developed in 1941, have been enhanced since 2006 with gifts of the work of Kawase Hasui (1883–1957), a prominent landscape artist of modern Japan.

In addition to some 460 prints and watercolors by Hasui, VMFA's Japanese collection highlights include a pair of monumental 14<sup>th</sup>-century Buddhist sculptures of Monju on a lion and Fugen on an elephant; fine examples of Kamakura-period sculpture and paintings dating to the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century; and an impressive early 19th-century lacquer set for incense games, used as a dowry by the families of prominent provincial lords.

### **Korean Art**

VMFA's growing collection of Korean art contains fine examples of ceramics, metalwork, lacquer, and painting that span more than 1,500 years. The major periods represented include the Unified Silla, the Goryeo, and the Joseon, dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ceramics range from earthenware to celadon, along with white porcelain decorated in underglaze cobalt blue. In recent years, the museum has focused on developing its Korean painting collection by acquiring a number of traditional ink paintings, a decorative screen, and contemporary works on paper, silk, and canvas through gifts and purchases.

Significant works in the Korean collection include an 8<sup>th</sup>-century gilt-bronze standing Buddha and a rare 1740 Buddhist painting depicting the Sun-and-Moon emperor. Recent key acquisitions range from a ten-panel screen painting depicting objects in a scholar's studio to a garment lacquer box lavishly decorated with mother-of-pearl inlay.

### **Acknowledgement**

VMFA's suite of East Asian galleries is named for the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation to recognize its generous contribution to the expansion, exhibition and acquisition activities, as well as its support of the curatorial department. For the first time in the museum's history, Korean artworks will be on view in a dedicated space made possible by the support of the Korea Foundation. The museum is grateful to Korea's National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage for funding the Korean painting conservation project. VMFA recognizes the ongoing generosity of the Ellen Bayard Weedon Foundation for its continued support to projects in acquisition, conservation and research.

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