

Exhibition of  
MASTERPIECES OF KOREAN ART  
To open at National Gallery of Art  
On Sunday, December 15

PHOTOGRAPHS  
ON REQUEST

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
Washington 25, D. C.

REpublic 7-4215, Extension 242

Advance for release:

Sunday papers December 15, 1957

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 15: John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that the EXHIBITION OF MASTERPIECES OF KOREAN ART will open here on Sunday, December 15. This is the first great exhibition of Korean art ever to be held outside the Far East. Honorary patrons of the Exhibition are The President and Mrs. Eisenhower, and Dr. Syngman Rhee, President of the Republic of Korea, and Mrs. Rhee. The exhibition is being held under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Korea, whose Minister of Education, Kyu Nam Choi, states: "By sending this exhibition the Korean people mean to express their gratitude to the American nation." It has been organized with the cooperation of the Department of State, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the American-Korean Foundation. The exhibition closes at the National Gallery on January 12, and will then be shown in the following museums: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Seattle Art Museum; The Minneapolis Institute of Arts; California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco; Los Angeles County Museum; and Honolulu Academy of Arts. After the Honolulu showing the exhibition will be returned to Korea by the United States Navy.

MASTERPIECES OF KOREAN ART presents a cross-section of Korean art from 200 B.C. up to about 1900. "It is a rare opportunity," states Mr. Walker, "to be able to introduce to the American public a field of art with which they have been too little familiar. The art of Korea, although one of the oldest and finest cultures in the world, has been but rarely seen in the West. So extensive has been the destruction of art in Korea's past that if it were not for excavations in the twentieth century, little would be known of her great artistic history and no such exhibition as the present one would be possible."

Soon after 400 B.C. Chinese civilization expanded into neighboring Korea, bringing with it a highly developed metal culture. Further Chinese penetration resulted in the establishment of a Chinese administration under the Han Dynasty. In this exhibition a beautifully worked gold buckle from a northern Korea tomb attests to the stimulus this contact provided for the cultural development of the peninsula.

Chinese control ended in Korea in 313 A.D. The period of the Three Kingdoms dominated until 668 A.D. From one of these Kingdoms, the Paekche, priests, scholars, poets, artists, and administrators went forth to Japan to lay the foundations for the Buddhist culture of that nation. At the National Gallery the Paekche Kingdom's artistic achievement is represented by the loan of three gilt bronze Buddhist statues and four tiles that once adorned a temple.

Another of these Kingdoms, the Silla, succeeded in uniting Korea under a single rule in 668 A.D. Filigree earrings, pendants, bracelets, and buckles of gold which have been excavated from the

mountain tombs near the Silla capital are part of the treasures here displayed. Three famous gold crowns, recovered from these tombs, are an impressive feature of the exhibition. No objects similar to them have been found on the Asiatic continent. From the Old Silla Dynasty date two large bronze statues of the seated Buddha; they are among the most important and beautiful objects of the entire exhibition.

Towards the end of the 9th century A.D. Silla's domination began to decline. The succeeding period, the Koryo, is represented by more objects than any other period, and these are more distinct from Chinese precedent than those of the preceding or following dynasty. The Koryo was the famous ceramic-ware period, particularly celebrated for its celadon (pale green) wares. Starting with simple ceramic forms about the end of the 10th century the celadon technique developed rather slowly through the 11th century, and then improved rapidly and brilliantly until the mid-13th century. Koryo celadon types include bowls, incense burners, wine pots, cosmetic boxes, vases, and food jars. Excellent examples of these, illustrating the total range of Korean celadon shapes, glazes, and designs, have been lent to the exhibition by the National Museum of Korea, Seoul.

In contrast to the Koryo Dynasty the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910) was more concerned with painting than pottery. Accordingly, the Yi period is represented mostly by painted scrolls and albums that reflect in subject and inspiration the close ties which the dynasty maintained with China. Yi pottery, displayed in the last gallery of the exhibition, was also the point of departure for Japan's ceramic tradition, since the Yi potters started the great kilns of Kyushu and southern Honshu.

The objects, selected by a joint Korean and American committee, were packed with the cooperation of United States Army personnel in Korea and transported to the United States by the United States Navy. Two Korean officials, Dr. Chewon Kim, Director of the National Museum of Korea, Seoul, and his assistant, Mr. Hisoon Choi, are accompanying the exhibition. The display at the National Gallery has been specially designed by Mr. Benjamin Lawless and Mr. Robert B. Widder of the staff of the Smithsonian Institution. There will be a total of 187 objects: 18 of gold, including three jeweled crowns of the 5th-6th century A.D.; 10 of stoneware and tile; 23 gilt bronzes; 34 paintings; and 102 potteries, including superb examples of the celebrated Korean celadon (pale green) ware. There will be a completely illustrated catalog with historical introduction and descriptions of the individual objects.

In his foreword to the exhibition's catalogue Mr. Walker states that "it is by such an international artistic undertaking as this that the mutual understanding of the two peoples of our two republics will be significantly furthered."