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East Asian Galleries Open this Month

Collections feature many new acquisitions from China, Japan, and Korea

On September 20, VMFA will celebrate the public opening of the new East Asian art galleries. The East Asian suite – about 5,000 square feet – is devoted to display 250 artworks in the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean galleries. Many of the works acquired in recent years will be on display for the first time. The new installation is arranged geographically and chronologically and will provide visitors with inspiration and a captivating experience of the history of East Asian art. Li Jian, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter curator of East Asian Art, oversaw the reinstallation.

“For more than 27 years, the Carpenter Foundation has supported the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts’ expansion, exhibition, and acquisition projects in addition to its support of the curatorial department,” Director Alex Nyerges said. “The East Asian galleries are the capstone of our permanent collections reinstallation and a rich and exciting new space for inspiration and study.”

Since VMFA opened in 1936, the museum has assembled nearly 2,000 works from China, Japan, and Korea. The collection includes paintings, prints, sculptures, ceramics, metalwork, lacquers, and decorative arts, ranging from a small jade bracelet to ritual vessels and life-sized Buddhist sculptures. The collection focuses on the themes of the Bronze Age, spread of Buddhism, cross-cultural influence, ceramic development scholars’ implements, samurai culture, tea ceremony, incense art, and export ceramics.

Chinese Art

The core of the Chinese art collection includes bronze and jade of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1200 BC), and Buddhist sculptures made in stone, bronze, clay, dating from the 6th through 14th centuries. Fine examples of ceramics, lacquers, bronzes, and jade reveal masterful craftsmanship from the Ming (14th-17th centuries) to the Qing dynasty (17th-20th centuries). The painting collection features portraits of civilians, military officials and religious priests from the 17th through 19th century. The collection is also greatly enhanced by the recent gift of 41 paintings depicting landscapes, flowers and birds. The Chinese holdings of furniture include more than thirty pieces of tables, chairs, and screens. The textile collection features large banners, and furniture covers decorated with embroidered design.



Goddess Bodhiruma, ca. 1740, Chinese, Qing dynasty, Qianlong period. Hanging scroll; ink, color, gold on silk. Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund. Photo: Travis Fullerton © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Highlights of the Chinese collection include Shang dynasty ritual bronzes, Buddhist sculptures, two 18th-century imperial silk paintings depicting Daoist deities, and a rare large-scale imperial silk tapestry with an inscription by Emperor Qianlong dating to 1782.

Korean Art

For the first time in the museum's history, Korean artworks will be on view in a dedicated space made possible through the support of the Korea Foundation in Seoul. The VMFA's Korean collection features a myriad of Korean ceramics in varied forms which includes earthenware of the 6th century, green glazes of the 12th century and white porcelains decorated with underglaze blue cobalt from the 18th through early 20th century. 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.

Highlights of the Korean collection include the gilt-bronze standing Buddha of the 8th century and rare Buddhist painting depicting the Sun-and-Moon Emperor dated to 1740. Recent purchases that helped to strengthen the collection include a ten-panel screen painting depicting objects in a scholar's studio, and a garment lacquer box lavishly decorated with mother-of-pearl inlay.

Japanese Art

The VMFA's Japanese holdings grew dramatically in the 1960s when the Museum contracted Alan Priest, former curator for Oriental Art from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as a consultant, to help the museum acquire works of art directly from Kyoto, Japan. These early acquisitions range from magnificent Japanese Buddhist sculptures to ritual objects, religious and genre paintings and screens, dating from the Heian (8th-12th centuries) to Kamakura (12th-14th centuries) period, and the Edo period (17th-19th centuries). The Japanese holdings of woodblock prints, which started to grow in 1941, is enhanced by recent-year gifts of 460 works by Kawase Hasui (1883-1957), a prominent landscape artist of modern Japan.

The collection highlights feature a pair of monumental Buddhist sculptures Monju on a lion and Fugen on an elephant dating to the 14th century, and an example of dowry for prominent provincial lords' families consisting of a lacquer set for incense ceremonies, dating to the 1820s.

The Korean Gallery is made possible through the support of 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.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 33,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years of world history. Its collections of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, English silver, Fabergé, and the art of South Asia are among the finest in the nation. With acclaimed holdings in American, British Sporting, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, and Modern and Contemporary art – and additional strengths in African, Ancient, East Asian, and European – VMFA ranks as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus fun after-hours events. VMFA's Statewide Partnership program includes traveling exhibitions, artist and teacher workshops, and lectures across the Commonwealth. VMFA

is open 365 days a year and general admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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