

Fall 2026 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
Unknown Makers, Lasting Beauty: Rethinking Fine Art Across Asia
Sponsored by the Society for Asian Art

In the Grain: Wood in Korean Art, Past and Present

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I. A Brief Timeline of Korean History

Three Kingdoms Period (삼국시대) | 57 BCE–668 CE

An era of three major kingdoms: Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla.

Goryeo Dynasty (고려시대) | 918–1392

An era known for Buddhist art, refined celadon ware, and lacquerware.

Joseon Dynasty (조선시대) | 1392–1910

An era shaped by Confucian ideals, when wooden furniture and everyday household objects became important expressions of craftsmanship.

Japanese Colonial Period (일제강점기) | 1910–1945

Korea was under Japanese colonial rule, a period of profound political, social, and cultural change.

Post-Liberation Korea (광복 이후) | 1945–Present

Following liberation in 1945 and the Korean War (1950–1953), Korean artists and craftspeople continued to reinterpret traditional materials and techniques.

II. Key Terms: Traditional Korean Woodcraft

1. Medicine Cabinet (Yakjang, 약장, 藥櫃)
2. Rice Cake Stamp (Tteoksal, 떡살)
3. Divination Coin Container (Jeomtong, 점통)
4. Gourd Dipper (Pyojubak, 표주박)
5. Open-Sided Display Stand (Sabang Takja, 사방탁자, 四方卓子)
6. Scholar's Desk, Gyeongsang (경상, 經床)
7. Scholar's Desk, Seoan (서안, 書案)
8. Village Guardian Pole (Jangseung, 장승)