

Summer Study Abroad 2023

Emily Booker

My goal with this program was to continue to grow my knowledge and experiences of traditional and contemporary Korean art and craft; and to see how that fits into my own way of working. This program accomplished that and so much more!

We learned about the Korean artist's way of life and how it compares to our perspective as artists in the United States. Learning about another culture's approach to handmade art and craft is especially meaningful as a graduate student in a craft-based MFA program.

The pace of the program was excellent and extremely well planned. We were able to experience a huge amount of Seoul, from the large monuments to the small streets and unique galleries. The accommodations were in an amazing location for students to explore easily and safely, and the included breakfast was fantastic! Even though I was exhausted by the end of each day, the experiences and opportunities provided by this program are entirely worth it!





N Seoul Tower, commonly called Namsan Tower, is a national landmark and global attraction in Seoul. It is a popular destination for visitors, giving a 360° view of Seoul and the surrounding landscape.

While touristy, Namsan Tower is an amazing place to visit to understand the breadth and diversity of Seoul. The cable car is a good alternative to hiking up the mountain, although there are still a fair number of steps to reach the Observation tower. It's an excellent opportunity to escape the concrete and traffic to enjoy some nature and fresh air.

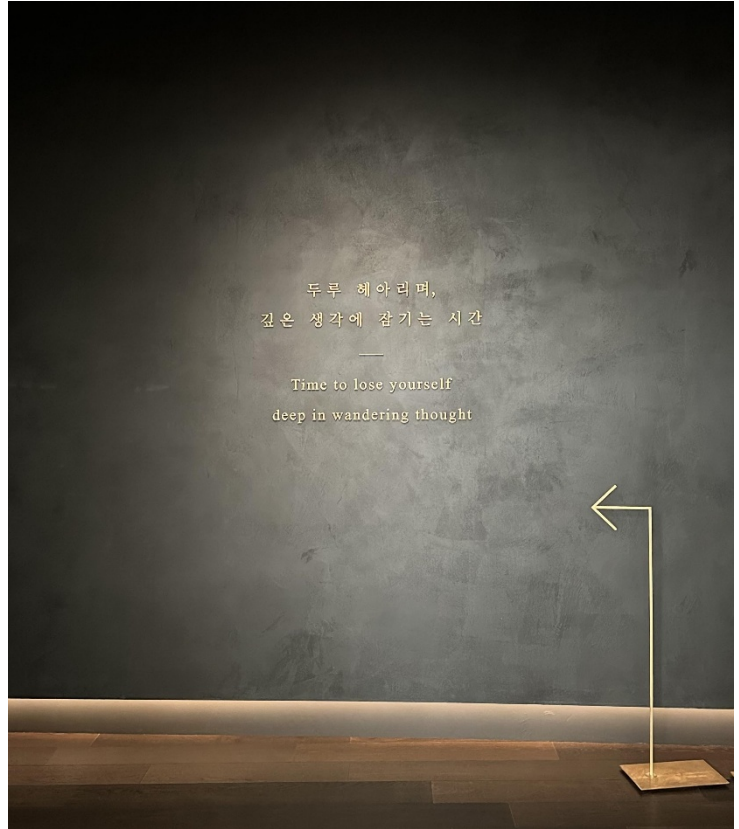
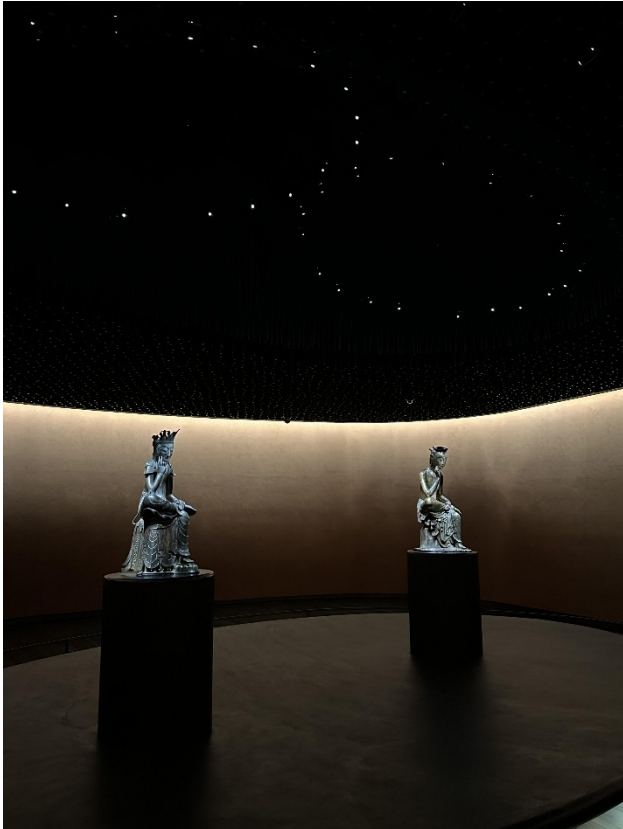


The National Museum of Korea houses a collection of Korean art and historical objects displayed as a means of educating the public on the rich history of Korean periods and mediums. It is also intended as a healing space in the city for leisurely strolling and connecting to nature and history. The museum's goal is to have visitors share thoughts, feelings, and dreams with the people in the past through these exhibitions, as well as focus on traditional acquisition and conservation.

The museum is a symbol of Korean identity and history. It has been displayed in several different locations in Seoul since Korea's independence from Japan in 1945. In 2005 the current museum building was constructed in Yongsan and the collection was moved to the geographic center of Seoul with Namsan Mountain in the background. The museum has been reborn as a cultural complex for all to enjoy, with free admission to permanent collections. Their mission is to preserve history and host a variety of programs to continue to educate their viewers.



The Room of Quiet Contemplation is my favorite exhibit at the National Museum of Korea. It's an experience that engages almost all five of the viewer's senses: The gentle sounds of winds, water, and waves, the low ambient light and video projections, the smell of spices in the air, and the gently sloping floor. The combination of these elements creates a fully immersive space for the quiet reflection and peace I am hoping to achieve with my own work. Photos don't fully capture the experience, as it's an installation rather than a single object.



Gyeongbokgung Palace





Changdeokgung Palace

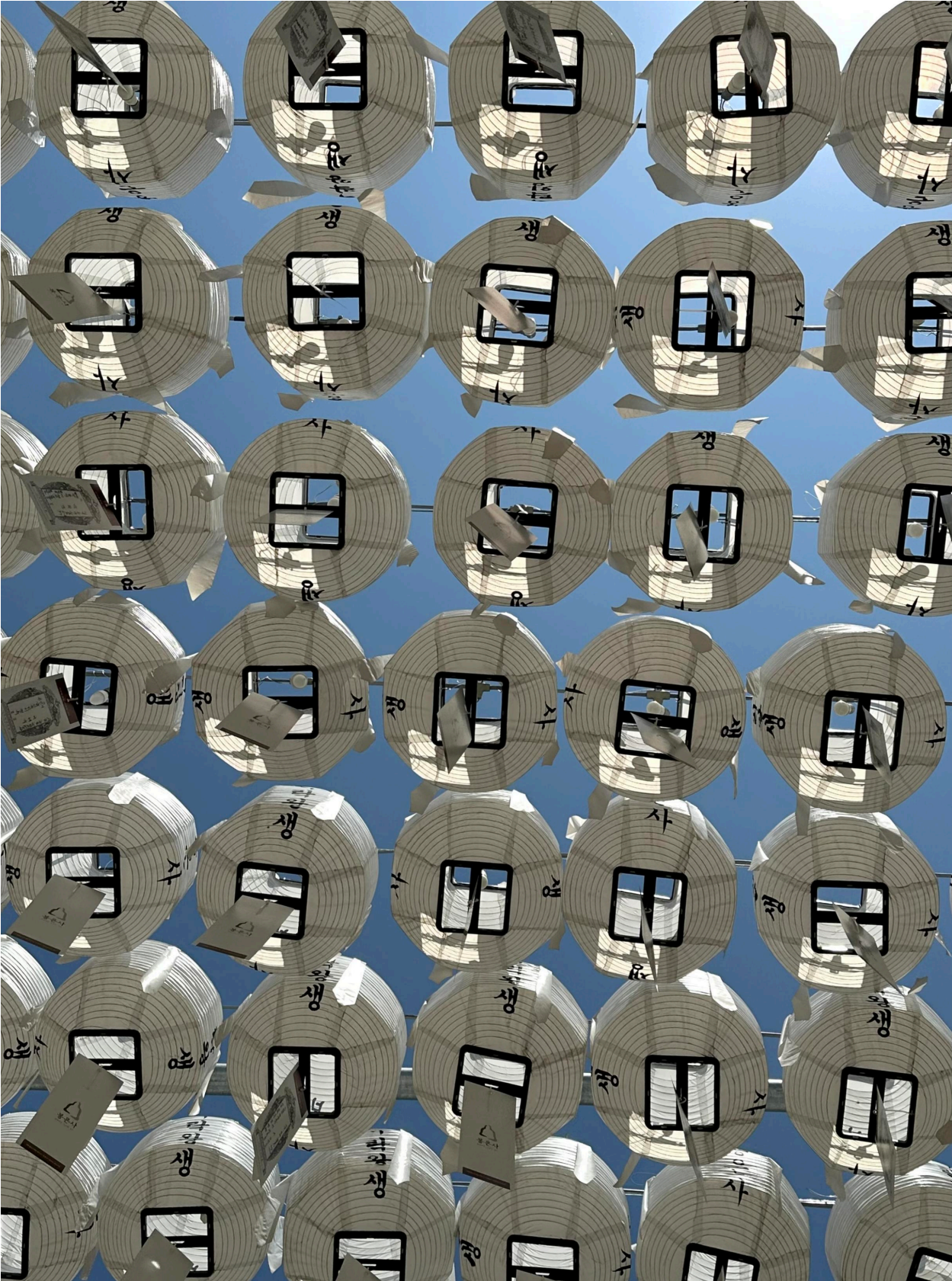


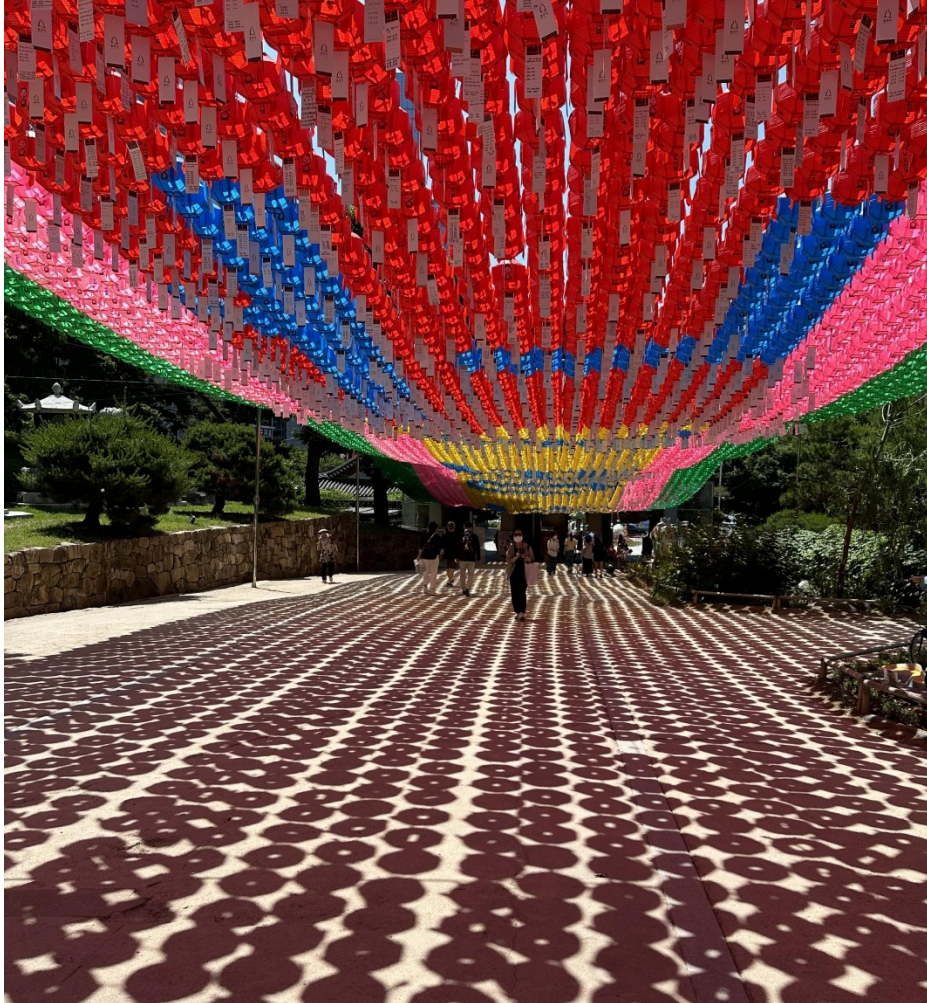


Changdeokgung Palace Secret Garden Tour



Buddhist Temple Lanterns







Some of the buildings at the Korean Folk Village are historical buildings from a historic folk village that was intentionally preserved to create a more educational experience for future generations. The KFV Shows the traditional social hierarchy of the Joseon Dynasty and how it was translated into architecture, as certain materials and styles were limited to certain social classes.

Namdaemun Market

Namdaemun Market is a huge complex of shop stalls with everything from food, home goods, clothes, flowers, and accessories. There are five levels: basement, outdoor street, and three story covered buildings.

While overwhelming, Namdaemun Market is a must see for anyone visiting Seoul. The variety of goods all in one place is amazing and there is a great enamel vendor in the underground levels. The flower hall is gorgeous and the vegetable stands give a good insight into how some people buy their food. And the donuts are amazing!



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Cityscape Photos





Coursework

While the experience of Seoul is, in itself, phenomenal, the coursework is perfectly designed to help each student further their own artistic practice through individual research. The final project is a research presentation featuring a specific technique, location, event, or material experienced throughout the program, and selected by the student. Along with historical context and research, each student is required to design six artworks or pieces inspired by their personal research and present them to the class. These designs are intended to be a continuation of each student's conceptual work, giving each student a deeper understanding of how to incorporate new experiences and information into a developing concept.

The workshops change from year to year. In 2022 we experienced traditional hanji paper decorations, and Damascene (Korean steel inlay). In 2023 we had lectures and workshops featuring hanji papermaking which included surface and sculptural techniques, Korean ink mixing and calligraphy painting, Chilbo (Korean enamel), and traditional Korean knot tying. The range of techniques and materials explored in this program is vast and often tailored to the interests of the individual students enrolled.

Professor Hur does an amazing job of connecting with South Korean artists, universities, and craft centers to create experiences that can educate ECU students in the traditional crafts and materials of South Korea. It can be difficult, as an artist, to be exposed to so many new artists, artworks, and perspectives without a creative outlet. The workshops Professor Hur organizes provide that necessary creative outlet and are a vital way for students to experience a new culture through a hands-on approach.

