



STUDY ABROAD IN SEOUL KOREA

- Chase Shotton
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Introduction

Going into this trip I had little knowledge about Korean history, especially relating to craft. I am familiar with quite a few contemporary Korean jewelers whose work I had hoped to see, but beyond that I was mostly excited to throw my caution to the wind and let Mi-Sook lead us on an incredible journey.



Nam Tower and Mountain

Namsan Seoul Tower was built in 1969 as Korea's first integrated transmission tower beaming television and radio broadcasts across the capital. Since opening to the public in 1980, it has become a much-loved Seoul landmark.

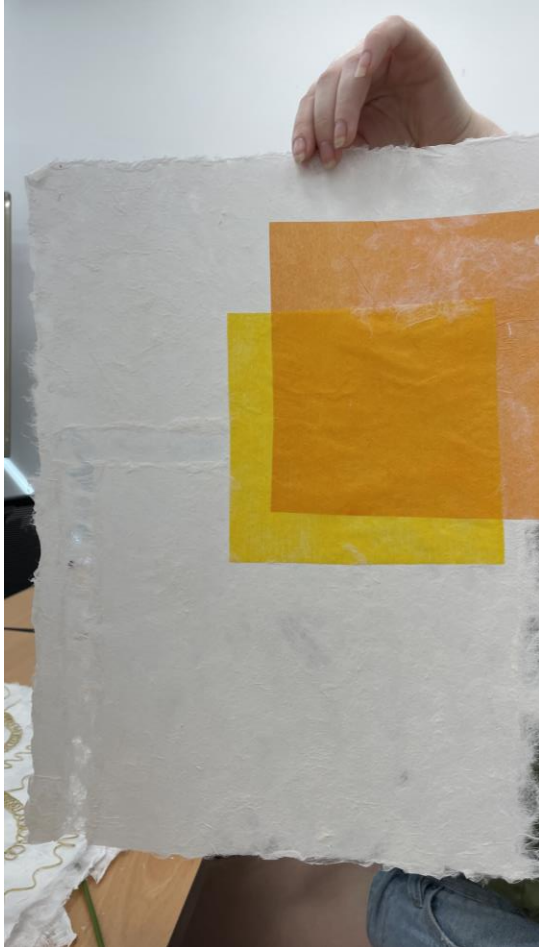




National Museum of Korea

- Founded in 1945, the National Museum of Korea is an organization committed to research in the fields of art, history, and archaeology
- Located in the Yongsan district of Seoul, it is home to many of the South Korea's greatest historical treasures
- The museum was originally created to house the collections of the Imperial Household Museum at Changgyeonggung, and the Japanese Government General Museum. Over the years, the museum's collection has been housed in several locations, including Gyeongbokgun palace, the former Japanese Government General building, and its current location in the Yongsan district.
- The museum is full of traditional ceramic and metal work, as well as large textile and sculptural art

Hanji



- Hanji is a paper making process that utilizes the inner bark from mulberry trees to make pulp
- The pulp is added to water along with a coagulant to help bind the fibers and is then pulled using a metal screen stretched over a wooden frame. The pulp is then padded with a cloth towel to get rid of excess water, then removed from the screen and left to dry.
- Hanji paper's durability allows for its use in a wide range of applications, from writing and calligraphy, to crafting lanterns and permanent windows on traditional Korean houses

Hanji Arts and Crafts

- In the Hanji arts and crafts workshop at SNU we learned about the traditional methods of preparing your own ink for calligraphy, as well as how to collage different papers together before beginning our drawing/calligraphy



National Folk Museum

- Located within the Gyeongbukgung palace grounds, the national folk museum hosts exhibitions depicting traditional Korean cultural practices, as well as folklore and a collection of unique artifacts
- The museum was opened in 1946 with the purpose of illustrating the history of traditional life for Korean people. It hosts 3 main exhibition halls, "History of Korean People" features materials of everyday life from Korean culture, "Korean way of life" illustrates Korean villagers in ancient times, and "Life cycle of Koreans" which depicts the roots of Confucianism that have shaped Korean culture into what it is today.





Gyeongbokgung Palace

- Gyeongbokgung Palace was the main royal palace of the Joseon dynasty. It was constructed in 1395, but many of the original structures have burned down over the years, some instances by accident, as well as some structures being systematically destroyed by the Japanese during their occupation in the early 20th century. The refurbished structures, however, stay true to the original designs of the palace and are a breathtaking sight to behold.

Kwangjang Market

- Opened in 1905, Kwangjang market is Seoul's oldest street market.
- Located in Jongno-gu, Seoul it is home to over 5,000 shops.
- Kwangjang market was opened after the Japanese government took control of Namdaemun market following the Eulsa treaty of 1905 as a place for Korean citizens to sell their wares without interference from the Japanese government.
- Today, the market is bustling with merchants selling garments, food, and abundance of other goods.



Korean Chilbo (Enamel)



- Korean Chibo is the process of fusing powdered glass (enamel) onto a metal surface in order to achieve different surface colors and textures on a jewelry object.
- Some of the processes involved are the wet packing of the enamel into recessed areas on the metals surface – a technique called "wet packing". The wet enamel is then left to dry, and once it is ready it is fired in the kiln at 1450 degrees Fahrenheit.
- The material is tough to work with, and can be likened to painting with wet sand, but the result is a colorful glossy surface that makes the tedious process worth the struggle.



Master Cho Seong Jun

- During our time in Seoul, we were able to visit the studio of Master Cho Seong Jun. He is an esteemed metalsmith who focuses primarily working on large scale objects made from nickel silver – a notoriously tricky material to work with, but his expertise expands far beyond that, with his masterpieces incorporating techniques such as keum-boo, metal inlays, and masterful chasing and engraving techniques. He demonstrated for us some of his tool making processes, as well as his method for scoring and bending metal to create complex hollow form objects.



Korean Folk Village

- The Korean Folk Village is an interactive living museum located in the city of Yongin
- It features real houses from across the country that were relocated and restored to create a replica of a village from the late Joseon period. The purpose of the Korean Folk Village is to display traditional Korean life and culture through immersive experiences and traditional performances.
- During our time there we witnessed a traditional dance performance and were informed on the function of many of the different structures in the village, and taught about the ancient ways of Korean living by our guide. The trip was unfortunately cut short when I unknowingly summoned a rain storm during my acknowledgement of this beautiful idol pictured here.



Namdaemoon Market

- Namdaemun Market is the oldest and largest traditional marketplace in Seoul. It is located next to the Namdaemun, "The Great South Gate" which was the main southern gate to the old city.
- Management of the market was overtaken by the Japanese in 1922 during their occupation, but was returned to the merchants in 1945 after the establishment of the Namdaemun Merchant Organization. The market was destroyed in 1953 during the Korean war, and has suffered from multiple subsequent fires in the following decades, but with funding and renovations from the city, Namdaemun market is as lively as ever. During our time there we visited stone shops, furniture stores, and were lucky enough to meet a merchant who specialized in selling leaded enamels that are exceedingly rare to find in the U.S.



National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art

- The Seoul MMCA is a contemporary craft and art museum located near the Gyeongbokgung Palace and is built on the former Military Defense Security Command building.
- It also has two other branches located in Deoksugung and Gwacheon
- The museum has a rotating display of different contemporary installation, video, craft, and art media from Korean artists. I was enamored with some of the large scale stoneware work that was on display, as well as some mixed media wall pieces that are pictured here. I was particularly interested in the piece on the left by artist Hakchul Shin who has used incredibly delicate needlework to thread a pair of scissors into the canvas.



Seoul Craft Museum

- The Seoul Craft Museum is the country's first public craft art museum. Located next to Gyeongbokgun palace, the museum's collection resides in what used to be the Pungmoon Girls' High School. Its collection is comprised of various craft and craft materials that range in style from traditional to contemporary. The historical site where the structure currently stands is at the center of Jongno-Gu, where Joseon-era master artisans of the royal palace would produce and deliver their artwork.





DMZ

- The Demilitarized zone is a stretch of land between North and South Korea and acts as a buffer zone between the two countries under the provision of the Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953. Today, tourists are allowed to visit the DMZ where they can learn more about this history of the Korean war, the two country's tensions since then, and how the DMZ operates today.
- The site we visited was only a short trip from Seoul, but the DMZ stretches a total of 160 miles across the Korean Peninsula. During our trip we were able to travel down a passage into one of the tunnels that had been built to breach the border in the years following the countries' split, though unfortunately no photos were allowed. We were also able to visit an observation tower, where you could see the north Korean town of Kijong-dong. The area around the DMZ information center was decorated with sculpture and art symbolizing the people's hope to again one day have a united Korean republic



Secret Garden

Behind the Changdeokgung palace lies the Huwon, or "rear garden". This garden sprawls over 78 acres and was at the time was privilege only to the royal family and women of the palace. The garden is home to a number of pavilions, bridges, and halls, some of which were exclusive only to the king. Today, tourists can only walk the gardens in a tour led by a guide. We were very lucky to have an excellent English-speaking guide who led us on a two-mile long tour of the gardens. The traditional Korean architecture contrasted with the beautiful nature setting was truly a sight to behold.



Chandeokgung Palace

- Chandeokgung is one of the Five Grand Palaces in Seoul; its name translates to "The Palace of Prospering Virtue". It is said to have been favored among the Joseon kings because it retained many design elements from the Three Kingdoms of Korea period that were not incorporated into Gyeongbokgung or the other palaces, such as the blending of the buildings into the natural topography of the land, rather than imposing themselves upon it. Like the other palaces, many of the original structures were destroyed during the Japanese occupation of Korea, with only 30% of pre-japanese structures still remaining. The renovated buildings are beautiful nevertheless.



Bongeunsa, Buddhist Temple

- Bongeunsa is a Buddhist Temple that was originally constructed in 794 located in Samseong-dong. It was originally named Geonseongsa, but during the Joseon Dynasty after decades of Buddhist suppression, queen Jeonghyeon moved to reconstruct it, and it was renamed Bongeunsa, which is a term for the act of honoring the king. With the support of queen Munjeong, it became the main temple for the Korean Seon sect of buddhism from 1551 through 1936. Today Buddhists and visitors from all over the world come to see this beautiful temple; around the grounds you will find a plethora of stacked rocks which are assembled with a particular thought or intention in mind as a form of prayer or manifestation.

Korean Knots



- Korean knotting, also known as "Maedeup" is a traditional handcraft that dates back to the Three Kingdoms period of Korean history, and is heavily inspired by Chinese knot tying techniques. Traditionally, the knots were used to hold hunting tools around the waist of royal families, but later spread to be used by common people. Today these knots are used as decorative elements in craft, jewelry, furniture, and more.
- The process usually begins with a single string that is meticulously woven into complex geometric patterns. Once the main knot is done, decorative embellishments may be added to form a more complete ornament.
- In our workshop, we learned some very "simple" knot tying techniques as well as some braiding techniques.

Conclusion



I would not trade this experience for the world, being able to experience such rich culture and beautiful art was truly life changing. At first I was very nervous to travel so far away from home, to a country with a language and customs so different from ours, but being immersed in the bustle of the city gave me an entirely new perspective on Korean culture, and I am incredibly grateful for that. I am glad to have had the opportunity to learn so much about South Korea's beautiful and harsh history through my experiences with the places we visited, and I am thrilled to have had the opportunity to look at some of the most beautiful art – ancient and contemporary - that I have ever seen. If there is ever a chance for me to come along on this trip again, I would jump at it with no hesitation