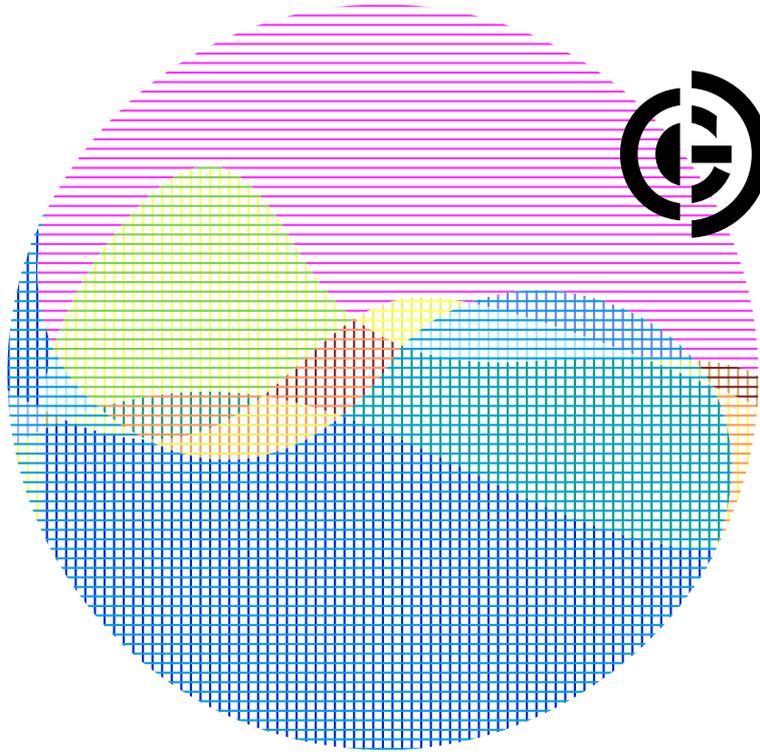




Guimet 2026 K-completely Korea!

2026년



To mark the 140th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and Korea in 2026, the Guimet Museum is going Korean!

From the splendour of the Silla Kingdom to the origins of K-Beauty, from the contemporary creations of visual artist Seulgi Lee to the delicacy of 18th- and 19th-century trompe-l'oeil libraries, Korea reveals itself in all its aesthetic, spiritual and symbolic depth.

Through three exceptional exhibitions, a monumental installation on the façade and a rich programme of events in the auditorium, the Guimet invites the public to discover the many faces of a culture that has spread throughout the world, in a perpetual dialogue between centuries-old traditions and innovations that open up new futures.

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K-Beauty Beauté coréenne, histoire d'un phénomène

K-Beauty. Korean Beauty, Story of a Phenomenon

Exhibition
18th March – 6th July 2026



A major cultural powerhouse, South Korea is now setting trends and inspiring a globalized generation. At the forefront of this wave, K-Beauty is imposing a holistic approach to beauty that is typically Korean and establishing a true aesthetic. Going beyond simple cosmetics, it is forging new standards and creating striking and unique imagery.

Bringing together masterpieces from the collections of the Guimet Museum and major South Korean institutions (paintings, photographs, advertisements, dresses, and beauty accessories from the 18th century to the present day), the *K-Beauty* exhibition deciphers its codes and shows how they are part of a centuries-old tradition, between balance and virtue, naturalness and sophistication.

At the end of the 18th century, Korea, under heavy influence of the Neo-Confucian movement, celebrated a particular feminine aesthetic: flowing clothes, pale skin, refined makeup, and hairstyles. The painters who immortalized these beauties, such as Shin Yun-bok, contributed to the development of a visual heritage that has had a lasting influence on Korean popular culture. This refined culture, where cosmetics drew on traditional pharmacopoeia, linked beauty, harmony, and inner balance. Marked by successive foreign dominations and influences, the 20th century in Korea saw the emergence of new aesthetic codes.

Photography, cinema, and the emerging cosmetics industry spread and cemented these new standards, while the « Korean economic miracle » placed heritage, art, and cosmetics at the heart of cultural discourse.

Since the 2000s, *Hallyu* (the Korean wave) has cemented South Korea's soft power: K-Beauty, combining tradition and innovation, has made its mark on cinema, fashion, literature and K-Pop, conquering the entire world.

Through this exhibition, visitors will discover how a distinctly Korean aesthetic has been consolidated, with certain standards – forged since the late Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) – retaining their appeal to this day and becoming the subject of tributes and numerous reinterpretations. The *K-Beauty* exhibition highlights the evolution and enduring nature of the concept of Korean beauty, from the second half of the 18th century to the contemporary globalized world.



Curators

Claire Bettinelli, Guimet Museum
Claire Trinquet-Solery, Guimet Museum

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Heinkuhn Oh
Seoul National University Museum
ThierryOllivier
GrandPalaisRMN (Musée Guimet, Paris),ThierryOllivier

DAL DARI

La Lune et les Jambes

DAL DARI. The Moon and the Legs

by Seulgi Lee

With the support of SBS Foundation Friendship for Korea Artist Prize Promotion Fund

Based in Paris since 1992, artist Seulgi Lee (born in Seoul in 1972) combines the formal heritage of modernism with traditional craft practices in her work.

Invited by the Guimet Museum, she has designed a temporary installation for the building on Place d'Iéna. Entitled '*DAL DARI, The Moon and the Legs*', this intervention is displayed both outside, with a monumental sculpture on the façade created in collaboration with architect Jean-Benoît Vétillard, and inside the building, in the rotunda on the 4th floor.

Whether paintings, sculptures or installations, Seulgi Lee's works are presented as arrangements of elementary geometric surfaces or volumes and flat colours. This formal sobriety is counterbalanced by the vividness of the colour range or by the evocative power of the vernacular references.

The title '*DAL DARI, The Moon and the Legs*' was inspired by a popular Korean belief that crossing a bridge under the first full moon of the year strengthens the legs.

Facade installation

In Seulgi Lee's design for the Guimet Museum, the facade is adorned with two semi-circular shapes, installed on either side of the museum entrance, perpendicular to each wing of the building. The structure of these half-moons consists of a latticework of wooden battens assembled at right angles. The pattern is reminiscent of modernist grilles and wooden screens (or moonsal) used as space dividers in traditional Korean architecture. Only one side of the structure's battens is painted in colour, resulting in a fluid perception that changes and shifts as visitors move around.

Curator

Cécile Dazord, curator, project manager for contemporary art at the Guimet Museum

Seulgi Lee

Seulgi Lee was born in Seoul in 1972 and has lived in Paris since 1992. For the past decade, the artist has been collaborating with craftsmen who perpetuate vernacular practices and skills, particularly in France, Korea, Mexico, Morocco and Japan.

An artist inspired by anthropology, Seulgi Lee won the Korea Artist Prize in 2020 and has participated in numerous group exhibitions: the Lyon Biennale and Manarat Al Saadiyat in Abu Dhabi in 2025, the Art Sonje Centre in Seoul in 2022, and the Busan Biennale in Korea in 2020. Her work has been the subject of several solo exhibitions at the Ikon Gallery art centre in Birmingham in 2025, at the Incheon Art Platform in Korea in 2021 and at La Criée contemporary art centre in Rennes in 2019.

She is preparing an artistic intervention for 2028 as part of the Grand Paris Express on metro line 15, at the Agnettes station, as well as solo exhibitions at the Frac MÈCA Nouvelle-Aquitaine in Bordeaux in October 2026 and at the SeMA (Seoul Museum of Art) in November 2026. Her work is represented by the Jousse Entreprise gallery in Paris and the Hyundai Gallery in Seoul.



© Photo: Benoit Beauchaine

Silla : l'Or et le Sacré. Trésors royaux de Corée (57 av. J.-C. - 935 apr. J.-C.)

Silla, Gold and the Sacred. Royal Treasures of Korea
(57 BCE - 935 AD)

Exhibition
20 May 2026 – 31 August 2026



Thanks to an exceptional collaboration with the Gyeongju National Museum and other South Korean and French museums, the Guimet Museum is presenting, for the first time in Europe, an exhibition on the Kingdom of Silla (57 BC-935 AD), one of the most brilliant civilisations in East Asia.

Revealed by archaeology as well as medieval chronicles, Silla art appears today as a living heritage at the heart of South Korea's cultural memory. This unique presentation highlights a kingdom where, for nearly a millennium, art, spirituality and power combined to shape a culture of remarkable richness.

From the mythical origins of Silla, recounted in medieval Korean chronicles, to the fall of the kingdom, the exhibition unfolds in five thematic sections that trace the history, artistic expressions and memory of a state that was both powerful and deeply rooted

in spiritual traditions. It offers a fresh perspective on this civilisation, revealing how political, religious and aesthetic dynamics intertwined to produce a legacy that has survived to this day.

From the 4th to the early 6th century, the period known as Maripgan marked a decisive stage in the affirmation of Silla's identity with the rise of the Kim clan. Gold became the kingdom's striking signature, a symbol of consolidated power. The treasures unearthed from the great royal tombs (gold crowns, jade ornaments, intricate jewellery, figurative sandstone) bear witness to exceptional craftsmanship and a kingdom open to trade along the routes connecting Japan, China, the steppes, Central Asia and even the Mediterranean world. Political prestige and artistic splendour merged, giving rise to a visual language of exceptional inventiveness. During the Unified Silla

period (668–935), the kingdom established itself as the dominant southern power, with Buddhism as the spiritual force and protector of the territory. Precious materials once reserved for royal tombs now found their way into monasteries, pagodas, reliquaries and sacred images.

The treasures of iron, gold, silver, glass and stone from Silla constitute a living heritage, still visible in the landscape of Gyeongju and in the collective memory.

The exhibition brings together an exceptional collection of iconic pieces, including many national treasures being shown outside South Korea for the first time.

Nestled between wooded mountains and rolling plains, the city of Gyeongju, capital of Silla, still offers one of the most unique landscapes in South Korea. Pagodas, royal tombs and monumental ruins interact with the lines of a contemporary city that is careful to preserve its heritage. Visitors literally walk in the heart of history, in a space where the past remains visible, inhabited and transmitted.

© Photos: Gyeongju National Museum, South Korea

**Exhibition organised by the Guimet -
National Museum of Asian Arts
and the National Museum of Gyeongju
(South Korea)**

Curators

Dr Arnaud Bertrand
Curator of the Korea – Ancient China collections
at the Guimet Museum

Yun Seogyong
Assistant Curator at the Gyeongju National
Museum

Le cabinet des illusions Savoirs en trompe-l'œil, Corée (18^e-20^e siècle)

The Cabinet of Illusions
Trompe-l'oeil Knowledge, Korea (18th-20th Century)

Whether royal, academic or museum-based, libraries remain treasure troves of knowledge and escape. At the end of the 18th century in Korea, in the Joseon kingdom, King Jeongjo (r. 1776-1800) found in the contemplation of the painting of a library a way to remain symbolically surrounded by his books: a trompe-l'oeil extending the spirit of the study, stimulating the virtues of curiosity and scholarly conversation. Jeongjo then commissioned painters from the Royal Academy to create the first trompe-l'oeil library paintings, which were installed in his study and even behind his throne. The Korean embassies in Beijing played a decisive role in this development. The Joseon envoys discovered Chinese treasure cabinets there, as well as the Jesuit art of perspective, which was disseminated at the Qing court and in the churches of the imperial capital by European artists. The alliance between Chinese scholarly accumulation and European expertise in trompe-l'oeil fuelled the inventiveness of Korean painters, who developed a unique use of perspective, known as *chaekgeori*.

This new art of books and objects quickly spread to palaces, aristocratic residences and provincial homes. Books, porcelain, archaic bronzes, writing instruments and objects from China, Japan and the West accumulated there in a skilfully mastered display of optical illusions. Far from European vanities, these painted libraries did not refer to real collections, but to a cabinet of desires, to what one aspired to own one day. From the end of the 18th century onwards, books lost their scholarly value and became decorative; perspectives were broken, forms distorted, and fantastical animals appeared. The library moved away from reality to join a universe halfway between surrealism, fauvism and dreamlike imagery.

For the first time at the Guimet Museum, an exhibition restores this pictorial movement to its rightful place, far from the folkloric or purely decorative image with which it is too often associated. It weaves links between Jesuit art and Korean art, shows the impact of Korean embassies at the Chinese court, notably through an exceptional 18th-century painted scroll measuring over five metres, presented for the first time, and reveals the spread of perspective codes through works from the Louvre and the Asian Civilisation Museum in Singapore. It also demonstrates that Joseon Korea was anything but a 'hermit kingdom', but rather an open, curious country in constant dialogue with the world.

Exhibition
16 September 2026 – 4 January 2027



Six-panel screen (detail), Yi or Choson dynasty (1392-1910), Former Lee U Fan collection, Paris, Guimet – National Museum of Asian Arts © Musée Guimet Paris, Dist. GrandPalaisRmn / Thierry Ollivier

Curator

Dr Arnaud Bertrand
Curator of the Korea –
Ancient China collections at the Guimet Museum

Artistic and
cultural
programme

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Shows for young audiences and animated films, literary events, pansori performances and shows inspired by Korean Buddhist and shamanistic traditions, film series, a special K-Pop day for Music Day and K-Horror for Halloween...

In 2026, the entire museum will be beating to the rhythm of Korea!