

MINHWA

Introduction to the Folk Painting of the
People of Korea



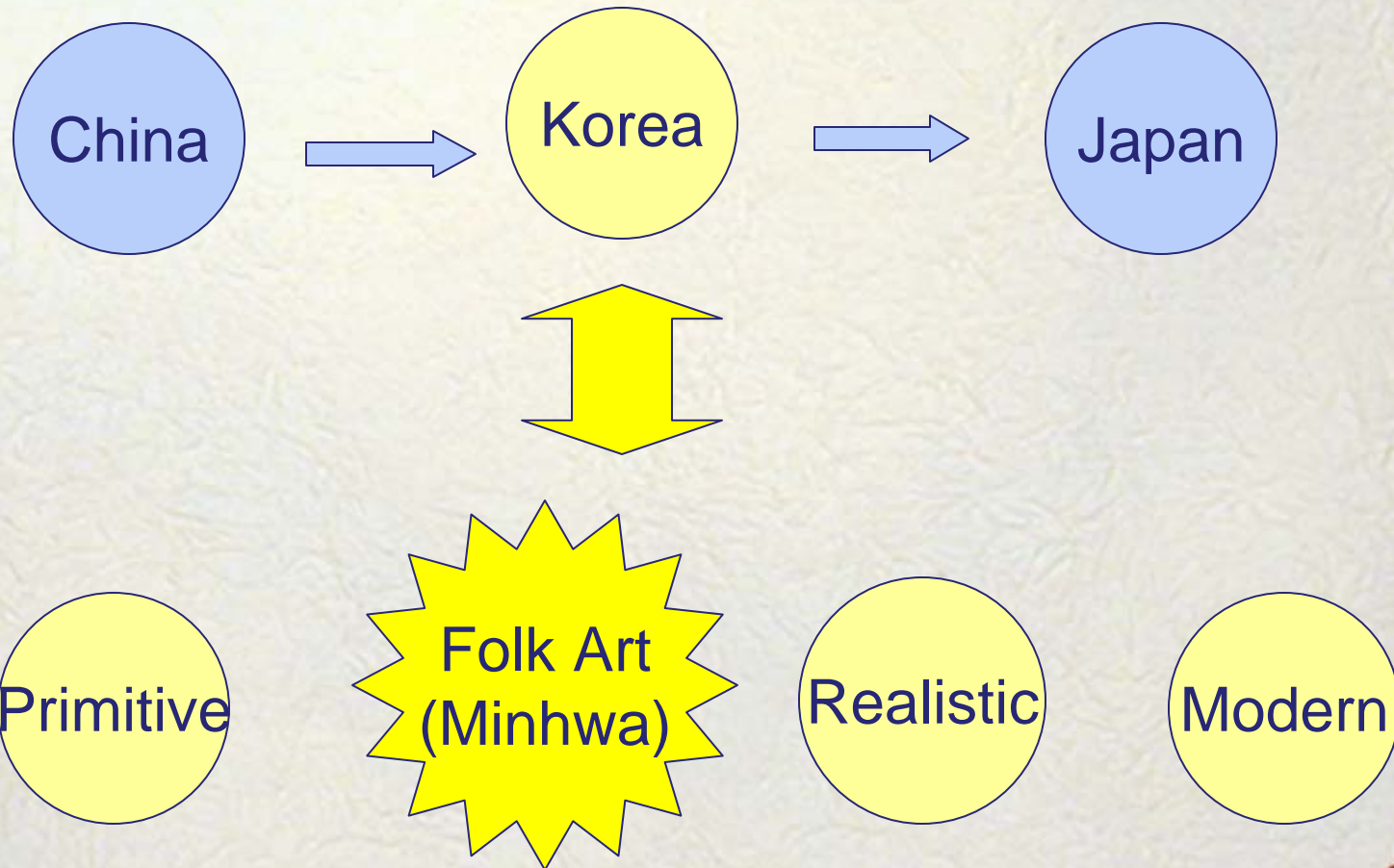
Disclaimer (of sorts)

- I am not Korean
- I don't speak Korean
- I've never been to Korea
- I am an artist
- Art is a universal language/communication
- I am interested in the art, its process and emotion

Korean Art Reveres the Past

- Utopia was in the past
- Imitate past, but do not simply copy
- “Mind of the brush” (p’ilui) *“... where the artist, through own hand re-experiences the world of the old masters to make it his own.”*

A Bit of Perspective



Timeline

- Shilla (57 B.C.-AD 935)
 - Buddhist, temple art
- Paekje (372 until absorbed into Koguryo)
- Koguryo (918-1392)
 - Oldest, most powerful kingdom
- Chosun (1392-1910)

Professional Artists and Dilettantes

- Professional painters were *despised*
- Paintings were *not despised*
- “Office of Painting” “Office of Rites”
 - Government artists
 - Recorded state events
- Ruling class loved to paint: “*amateur, literati, gentlemen, gentry schools*”
 - Drove trends
 - Free of “convention” and made own rules

Chosun (1392-1910)

- Evolved through phases
- Genres or styles
- Minhwa
- Minhwa obscure until 20c
 - Tiger exhibition 1969

Genres



Religion



Landscape



People



Minhwa

Forms

- Single panel on natural material
- Double panels
- Screens 6,8,10,12



Ten Panel Hunting

Common Symbols

- **Landscape, nature:** *natural order and balance*
- **Tigers:** *power, protection*
- **Magpie:** *bringer of good news*
- **Peonies:** *symbol of wealth, honor and social position*
- **Lotus:** *Buddha's mercy and high government service*
- **Longevity symbols:** *long & healthy life; sun, clouds, mountains, water, cranes, mushrooms, fungus, deer, turtle, rock, etc.*
- **Dragons:** *protection from evil*
- **Tiger hides:** *power to soldier*
- **Fish and Crabs:** *love*
- **Hunting scenes:** *bravery*
- **Hundred Children:** *wish for many descendants*
- **Life cycle:** *scholarship oriented*
- **Bookcases and scholarship:** *scholarship*
- **Shamanistic Deities:** *rites, deities, duties*



Why Minhwa?



- Stories and purpose
- Humorous
- Stylistic
- Optimistic
- Powerful colors
- Zen
- *“Tiger and Mocking Bird folk tale”*

Minhwa: Landscape



- Nature, derived from earlier Chinese
- People insignificant
- *“Autumn Mountain”*
- Mountain Spirits

Minhwa: Flowers & Birds



- Symbol of love between husband/wife
- Children
- Woman/child room

Minhwa: Peonies



- Symbol of wealth
- Longevity in love
- Seeds = Fruitful
- “Marriage Panels”
- Palace

Minhwa: Lotus



- Mercy
- Service of “king” or government, highest honor, top of professional ladder
- Success

Minhwa: Ten Symbols



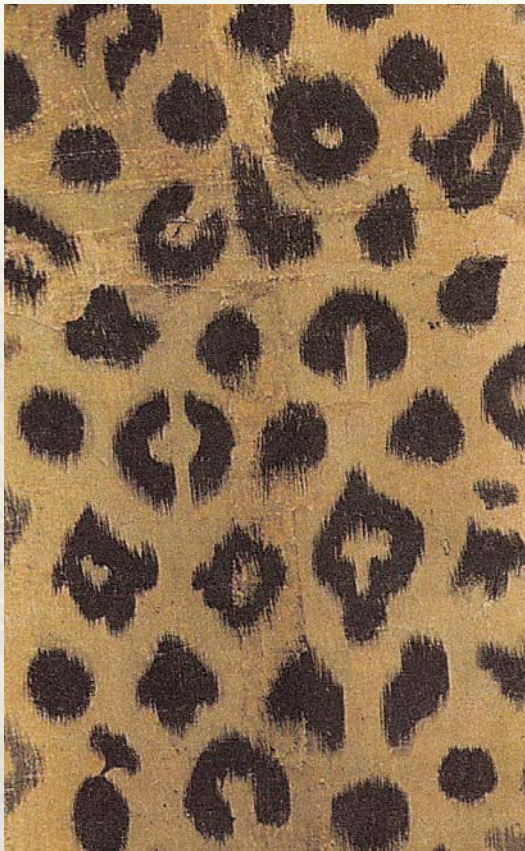
- Longevity & health
- Happiness & success
- E.g. sun, clouds, mountains, water, cranes, mushrooms, fungus, etc.

Minhwa: Dragons



- Repels evil
- Bring rain, good crops
- Not fierce, but approachable
- Multiple animal elements

Minhwa: Hides



- Military
- Masculine
- Strength, power
- Respect for nature

Minhwa: Fish and Crabs



- Love
- Carp rising from water to become dragon
- Hard efforts will bring success eventually
- Confucian students preparing for national examination

Minhwa: Hunting



- Masculine
- Integration man with nature
- Valor, strength, honor
- Left: detail of hunting panel

Minhwa: Hundred Children



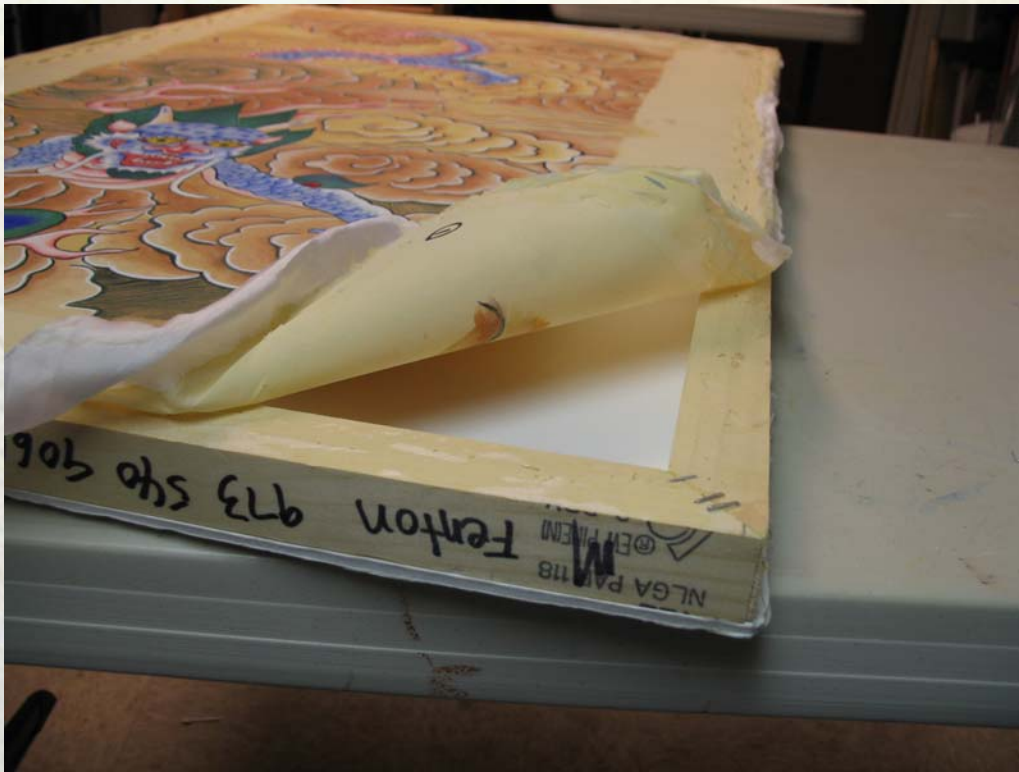
- Chinese origins
- Prosperous family
- Many healthy children/decendants
- Left: detail of larger painting

Minhwa: Scholarship



- Compare to still-life
- Books
- Masculine objects
- Found in “the man’s quarters”

Process



- Stretch
- Prepare
- Paint
- Remove
- Re-stretch
- Mount

Painter at Work



- Dab technique
- Water based paint

Dab



Completed Panels



- Complete
- Final check
- Remove silk
- Framing process
- Panels or Screens

Yesterday and Today

“Korean art has followed an evolutionary path through time, just like western art. Today’s Korean art is rooted in a traditional past in terms of technique, but is clearly of the present. While the traditional art was apolitical, lacked social impact and made no comment and employed two dimensional perspective, controlled brush strokes and bold, simple colors, today’s Korean artists use a more monochromatic, three dimensional style and focus on social issues...but they continue to use the techniques derived from a proud history.”