

Worksheet (Room 3) East Asian Porcelain

Difficulty level: Can be adapted for undergraduate or highschool students.

Suggested ways to use this worksheet:

This worksheet is designed to go with Room 3 “Technology”. Ask the students to read the contents of Room 3, paying particular attention to the final section, “Porcelain Stone”. The questions are designed to encourage students to think about the stylistic and technical variations found in three representative examples of East Asian porcelain (Figs 42, 43 and 44), in order to develop their visual literacy and vocabulary for describing art objects.

Students should also be encouraged to think about the historical contexts in which the pieces were produced, including Neo-Confucianism in Korea (which placed value upon simple, unadorned beauty), and the market for Chinese export porcelain in the East Asian region (which motivated Korean potters brought to Japan to produce blue and white ware). These are discussed in the section “Porcelain Stone”. For further reading, more advanced students can be directed to the endnotes contained in the Resources page of the website.

In order to avoid essentializing East Asian art traditions it is advisable to ensure students understand that, although the three figures that are the focus of this worksheet are highly characteristic of three types of porcelain produced in Korea, Japan, and China respectively, they do not represent all porcelain/ceramics produced in these countries. It is therefore helpful to view the objects in question in the light of other types of ceramics included in the exhibition.

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East Asian Porcelain

Examine the three artworks (Fig. 42, 43, and 44) in comparison.

1. Describe what you see.

What shapes, colors, and design motifs do you notice?

Fig. 42:

Fig. 43:

Fig. 44:

2. What are the similarities and differences?

3. Do these artworks tell us anything about the cultures they come from? What do they tell us about the spread of ceramic technology in East Asia?

4. What questions do you have about these artworks?