



1989

Ink on paper; mounted
as a six-fold screen

45 x 39 inches
(114.3 x 99.1 cm)

Mount: 45 inches x 9 feet 6 inches
(114.3 x 289.6 cm)

LEE MI-KYUNG
(PEN NAME
FLOWER GARDEN)

Korean

Gift of the artist, 2003, 2003-30-1

CALLIGRAPHY OF SIX POEMS ON FLOWERS

This six-panel screen created by Lee Mi-Kyung contains precise and beautiful calligraphy. The art of calligraphy—writing the Chinese language using black ink and brushes on paper—was part of a traditional Korean scholar’s training. Even after Korea’s own alphabetic writing system, *Han’gul*, was invented in 1446, many Korean calligraphers continued to use Chinese characters. The characters on this screen are written in *Han’gul*. Lee Mi-Kyung has written out a twentieth-century poem in the classical *sijo* style. It reads from right to left and top to bottom. Its verse translates as:

You are so pure as to be almost ethereal.

You are purer and more ethereal than a lucid sheet of ice.

Your purity and simplicity mirror the soul of our nation.

Your sweet fragrance and elegant beauty

Are gifts of the angel of Spring upon her beloved maid.

Magnolia, anonymous

Notice how this *Han’gul* writing is done so differently from Son Man Jin’s *He Who Tries to Travel Two Roads*. Whether writing in Chinese or in *Han’gul*, Korean calligraphers use language to convey emotion and passion in their art. *Han’gul* is so easy to learn that today virtually everyone in Korea can read it. The 28 original letters composing the alphabet invented by King Sejong have been standardized and reduced to 24 letters.

HAN'GUL CONSONANTS

ㄱ ㅋ ㆁ ㄷ ㅌ ㄹ ㄴ ㄷ ㅁ ㅂ ㅅ ㅇ ㅈ ㅊ ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ ㅎ
g,k n d,t r,l m b,p s ng j c,h k t p h

HAN'GUL VOWELS

ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ ㅠ ㅡ ㅣ
A ya eo yeo o yo u yu eu i

ART ACTIVITY: CALLIGRAPHY

The art of calligraphy begins with practicing the beautiful strokes that make up each *Han'gul* letter or Chinese character. Make a photocopy of Korean-language *Han'gul* letters for your students. Have your students first try to write *Han'gul* letters with a pencil and then with a calligraphy brush and sumi or black ink. Discuss differences and similarities of the two mediums. Erasing and touch-ups are not allowed with sumi ink so you only have one chance.

RESEARCH IDEA: HISTORY OF HAN'GUL

Learn more about the amazing invention of a written language. There are many websites on the *Han'gul* language and the history of its invention. You will also learn more about King Sejong and other things he invented, or caused to be invented, during his reign.

This object is included in Learning from Asian Art: Korea, a teaching kit developed by the Division of Education and made possible by a grant from the Freeman Foundation of New York and Stowe, Vermont.