



13th century
Porcellaneous stoneware
with inlay decorations
under celadon glaze
1 1/2 x 3 3/8 inches (3.8 x 8.6 cm)
Korean

Gift of Horace H. F. Jayne,
1929, 1929-123-1a,b

COSMETIC BOX

This small, lidded box, one of the Museum's treasures of Korean celadon, was designed for holding cosmetics. It has been decorated using an inlay technique called *sanggam*, invented by Korean potters in the early 1100s. Designs are incised (cut) into the clay body with a very sharp instrument and then filled with white or red slip (liquid clay). Then the vessel is covered with a translucent celadon glaze before firing. When fired, the white and red clay slip creates white or black contrasting design motifs.

Upper-class women used this type of cosmetic case. There were probably smaller, round boxes in this case to store oils and cosmetic pigments. The center of the lid is decorated with a medallion containing three white chrysanthemums and surrounded by four cranes set among simplified clouds. Most of the inlay designs are white with some black accents of cranes' legs and chrysanthemum leaves. The majority of Korea's early ceramics were destroyed over centuries of wars and invasions; however, those pieces that were buried in the tombs of royal families survived. Although we do not know the early origins of this case, it may have come from such a tomb.

For another example of Korean celadon, see the Teacher Resource *Wine Ewer in the Form of a Melon*.

RESEARCH IDEA: COSMETICS

Cosmetics—products to beautify, perfume, and color the skin and hair—are popular today, but have also been used in many cultures for several centuries. Egyptian women are thought to have invented eyeliner. George Washington wore a white powdered wig. In Japan, kabuki actors wore very elaborate face paint to create dramatic characters. Have students research the use of cosmetics around the world, both in ancient and contemporary cultures.

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