

TORE NORDENSTAM

KOREAN AESTHETICS

– first impressions

If one looks for equivalents in other cultures to the texts which make up the field of aesthetics in the Western philosophical tradition, one will not find much. This seems to apply also to the rich culture of Korea. But from my point of view, that is peripheral. The search for equivalents in other cultures to Western writings on ethics and aesthetics has a repugnant smell of White supremacism and outdated views on the evolution of mankind.

If one wants to approach ethics in a non-Eurocentric way, one should look for the ways in which people handle eternal problems like life and death, child rearing, diseases and natural disasters, respect for oneself and for others, necessary cooperation and so on. In aesthetics, one should start with other universal aspects of human life: with the treatment of one's own body, with comportment and dress, with rhythm and flow, with everyday utensils, with love of nature.

Looking around for expressions of aesthetic attitudes of that kind during my five days in Seoul in November 2018, I was struck with the simple beauty of many people I saw in the streets and shops and cafés. An abundance of elegantly moving well dressed women and men, in settings which included elegant shops and beautifully served food in attractive rooms, again characterized by simple elegance.

Elegance and simplicity seemed to be the keys to aesthetic expression in Korea. When I came back to Norway, I looked it up on Google and found examples like the following ones:

Korean food is known for being colorful and artistic. Each dish is not only delicious but also a work of art. A great example is the bibimbap, rice on the bottom, with

many different types of vegetables, mushrooms, and meat on top. Eating it is almost a sin because of how much thought and artistic work comes into making the dish. The greatest piece of cultural art to come from the Korean culture perhaps comes from the Korean Traditional Dress, known as the Hanbok.

<https://fashiontrendss.com/vibrance-elegance-and-fashion-the-hanbok/>

Korean arts include traditions in calligraphy, music, painting and pottery, often marked by the use of natural forms, surface decoration and bold colors or sounds.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_art

Today, Korean ceramics are among the most popular and sought after for their finesse, elegance, and style.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJYfkf5mN_s



Korea Today – Korean Elegance through Tea

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cNNPHDHUKk>



FEEL THE TRADITIONAL KOREAN ELEGANCE IN ROYAL HANOK RESIDENCE

<http://www.minienmonde.com/2015/09/feel-traditional-korean-elegance-in.html>

I also found the key word in the title of a book dealing with Korean furniture: Edward Reynolds Wright, [Man-sil Pae](#), Korean Furniture: Elegance and Tradition, Kodansha International, 1984; and in a Facebook page in Spanish entitled Korean Elegance 한국의 우아함 (@koreanelegance20), an advertisement for a clothes store.

To be continued.