Undiscovered Art from the Korean War: Explorations in the Collection of Chester and Wanda Chang is a richly illustrated survey of Korean art from the Korean War (1950-1953) that introduces a missing chapter in the history of Korean modern art through selected pieces from the collection of Chester and Wanda Chang. The authors, who are researchers within the Smithsonian’s Asian Cultural History Program, carried out this study as a contribution to the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Korean War armistice (2013-2014). They feature works produced by important artists such as Li Jung Seop (이중섭) and Byeon Kwan-Sik (변관식) as well as lesser known artisans and artists. Under the duress of war, these artists utilized new media including painting on scrap cardboard, or on decorative glazed ceramic plates to be fired then sold as souvenirs to foreign troops. Brass arts flourished amid a surplus of expended munitions. Works were commissioned for presentation as gifts of gratitude to foreign nationals. These early precursors to the internationalization of Korean art recount a forgotten aspect of the Korean War, the inspiring story of Koreans who overcame the most severe adversities to honor and transform their artistry and craft.

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