The simple forms, spare decoration, and monochrome glazes of the Joseon period (1392–1910) Korean tea bowls used in Japan attracted Charles Lang Freer to Korean ceramics. He expanded his collection to include celadon ceramics from the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392), which had once adorned palaces, Buddhist temples, and private residences of the aristocracy. During the last 20 years of his life, Freer acquired nearly 500 Korean art objects, including approximately 130 Goryeo and 80 Joseon ceramic pieces. When the Freer Gallery of Art opened its doors in 1923, Freer’s assembly of Korean art was considered unparalleled in quality and historical scope.

Map and details on back
“While visiting Freer in Detroit in November 1907, the famed art historian Ernest Fenollosa spent a day discussing his host’s recent acquisitions from the Horace Allen collection. This bottle caught his attention, and he sketched it in his notebook, noting that it was a “most superb [illegible] Corean (stork + cloud) tall vase... gray... with touches of dark gray green.”

Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919) made his fortune in railroad freight car manufacturing in Detroit. His remarkable shingle style residence on East Ferry Ave. was designed in 1892 by Wilson Eyre, Jr. Freer’s home contained one of the world’s greatest collections of Asian and American art, including works by Whistler and the Peacock Room. Freer bequeathed his collection to the Smithsonian where it is housed today at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

The Freer House (1892) is ranked as one of the most important historic buildings in Michigan. Its fine architectural detail and rich cultural history are both locally and internationally significant. The Freer House is also recognized for its role in child and family development as the home of the renowned Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute since 1920.

The Freer House membership organization works to preserve this landmark through public events, tours and fundraising for restoration. Recent accomplishments include the reproduction of original paintings for the main hall and parlor and a new historically appropriate roof. Current goals include the courtyard garden and the Whistler Gallery restoration projects.

For information contact: Director, William Colburn william.colburn@wayne.edu or 313-664-2511

Parking is available behind the Freer House. Travel south on John R. to access WSU Lot 35. Pay $7 at the gate with credit or debit card.