

The Architect's First Greeting



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In 1998, with the mission to “Benefit the World through Technology,” I founded an IT company that has since expanded to operate in 90 countries. As a first-generation IT entrepreneur navigating the global market, two fundamental questions have guided both my business philosophy and, ultimately, my approach to architecture.

The first question was, “What kind of business can make Korean companies truly competitive on the global stage?” This sparked my drive to innovate—not just to enter new fields, but to create them. I believed that to succeed, we must explore uncharted territories, take risks where others hesitate, and protect what is uniquely ours.

The second question goes beyond business—it touches on the very nature of the digital world. Digital technology mimics reality, but it remains a virtual reflection. After years of working in the digital realm, I found myself yearning for something deeper—a return to the tangible. During my travels to small European villages, where history and tradition remain intact, I felt a sense of comfort and nostalgia for something lasting and real.

This longing led me to architecture. I wanted to create spaces where people could reconnect with the physical world—places that offer comfort, simplicity, and a true sense of belonging.

The most comfortable space for anyone is home, and for me, that home was a hanok, a traditional Korean house. As a Korean, I wanted to recreate the sense of comfort and belonging that I felt growing up in a hanok. A hanok is not just a building—it's a living space where nature and humanity coexist in harmony. Every element of the hanok—from its design to its materials—embodies this connection, and the entire process of its creation is real, tangible, and deeply analog. Most importantly, it's something uniquely ours, a form of architecture that stands out on the global stage.

Despite having no prior experience in hanok architecture, I was driven by a belief—a deep conviction that the traditional wooden structure of the hanok is unparalleled in its architectural sophistication. With passion as my guide, I immersed myself in the study of Korea's traditional building techniques and aesthetics. Along this journey, I also encountered challenges that needed resolution. The hanok, a cultural treasure passed down through generations, had become a relic—its evolution halted in a rapidly modernizing world.

My goal became clear: to build a hanok that respects its heritage while reimagining it for the future. I wanted to bring out the hanok's true charm and adapt it to meet modern needs without losing its essence. With this vision, I created The Hanok Heritage—a place that revives, redefines, and re-envisions traditional Korean architecture for a future that honors its past while embracing modernity.





The Hanok Heritage: The Journey of Building a Hanok

As an architect, my goal has always been to turn imagined spaces into reality. In my pursuit of understanding the essence of architecture, I focused on the natural elements—like the sun and wind—that shape every space. Over 12 years of research and development, I explored construction methods, structures, and materials, running tests to address the limitations of traditional building practices.

Along the way, I realized that common issues associated with traditional hanok—such as poor soundproofing, insulation, heating, and noise reduction—were not flaws of the hanok itself but the result of outdated techniques. Through in-depth study of wood, careful site selection, and collaboration with master craftsmen, I sought to improve and modernize the hanok. By blending modern technology with traditional craftsmanship, we continue to advance both the materials and techniques used in creating these spaces.

Studying Wood

While hanok are traditionally built with wood, their development had stalled due to a key issue: the drying process of the timber. For centuries, the wood used in hanok construction needed a natural drying period of 10 years to be suitable. When wood with high moisture content was used, the structures faced problems like warping and misaligned elements.

This long drying period became a major obstacle, especially for large-scale hanok projects. It wasn't just a challenge for builders but also for the future of hanok architecture itself. To solve this, we developed a new technique that drastically reduces the drying time from 10 years to just 6 months.

By meticulously selecting premium large timbers and using a microwave drying method, we lowered the wood's moisture content to a maximum of 15%, far below the 25% standard used for cultural heritage restoration. This ensures the wood remains stable and resistant to warping, eliminating common hanok issues like drafts and misaligned windows, and introducing modern precision to the traditional craft.

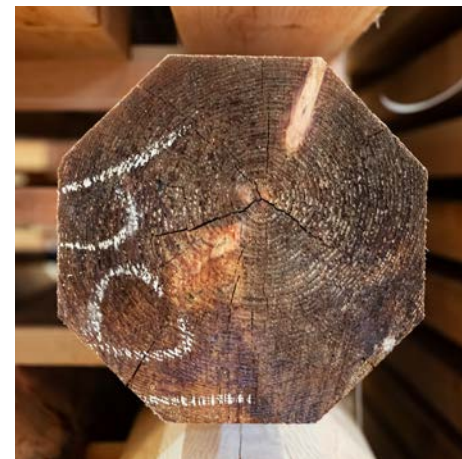
These advancements allow us to continue innovating hanok construction, bridging the gap between traditional craftsmanship and modern technology.



Precise Processing of Premium Large Timbers:
We use data-driven methods to process top-quality timbers, ensuring stability and durability.



Microwave Drying Technique:
This method reduces drying time while preserving the wood's integrity, minimizing deformation risks.



Donghae City Timber Storage Depot -
Natural Drying in Progress

Finding the Perfect Site

In hanok architecture, choosing the right site is as crucial as planting a seed in fertile soil. It's not just about finding land—it's about aligning with nature. I asked myself, "Where should we place the hanok to achieve perfect harmony with the environment?" This question led me on a journey across South Korea in search of the ideal location.

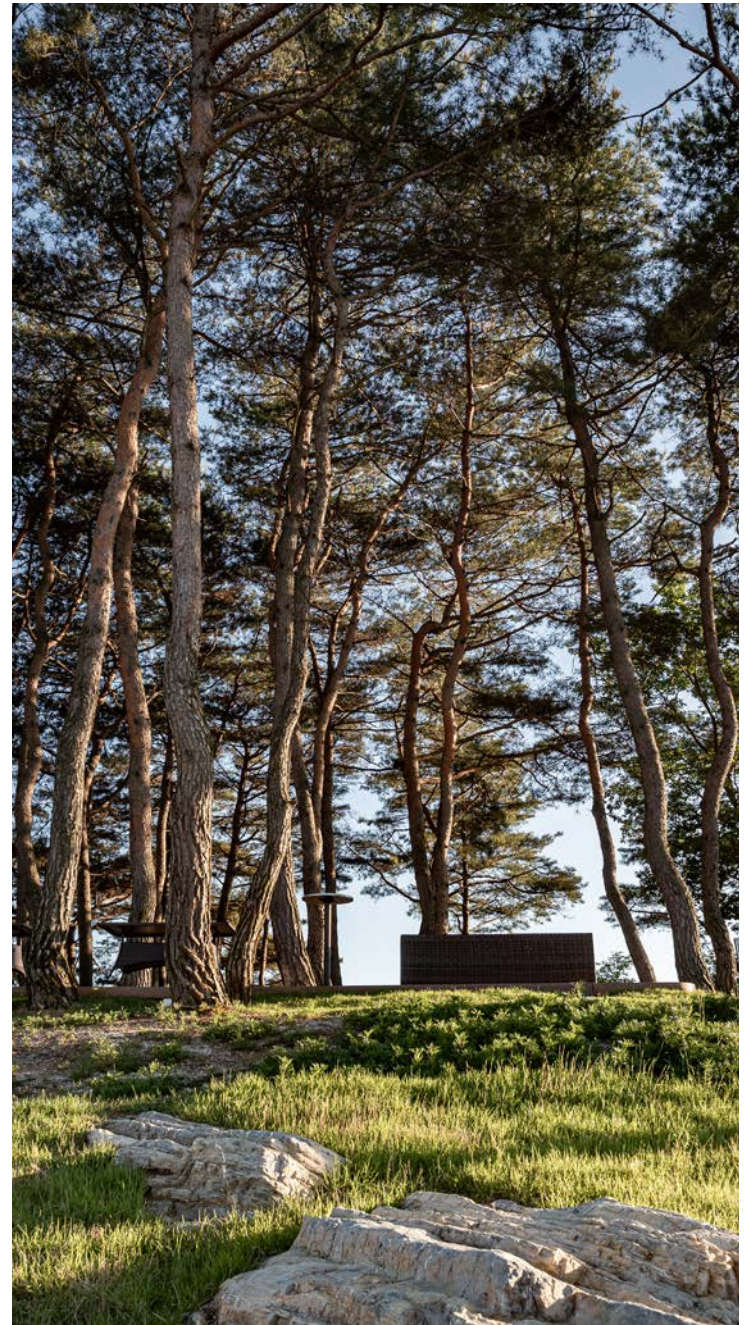


I eventually found the perfect spot in Yeongwol, where nature unfolds in layers—each view offering a distinct yet harmonious landscape. The hanok is nestled in the gentle embrace of mountains that cascade like soft folds, while a river gracefully curves around the land in a 300-degree arc. This site embodies the traditional concept of *baesanim*, where a home is protected by mountains and faces water—a prime condition in Korean geomancy.

This location was chosen not just for its beauty but for its deep connection to the core principles of hanok architecture. It reflects the belief that nature and human dwellings should coexist in perfect balance, with the landscape enhancing the comfort and tranquility of the home.

At the center of this land lies a beautiful pine forest, left untouched to preserve its natural beauty as a defining feature of the space. Instead of reshaping the landscape, we allowed the forest to guide the design of the hanok, making it the focal point. This approach ensures that the breeze flows freely through the trees, allowing visitors to experience the changing beauty of each season in harmony with nature.

Here, the landscape reveals itself in layers: the mountains, like a painting, form the backdrop; the Seondol scenic spot unfolds like a folding screen in the middle ground; and the pine forest and hanok come together in the foreground. These three layers—foreground, middle ground, and background—merge to create a unique visual composition that can only be fully appreciated in this special place.





Finding Master Craftsmen and Creating a Sustainable Ecosystem

To create an exceptional hanok, skilled carpenters are not just important—they are essential. The delicate art of traditional hanok construction, passed down through generations, requires expertise and dedication. I knew that to bring my vision to life, I needed master carpenters who could not only execute my ideas but also collaborate in refining construction methods and materials.

At first, there were challenges. These craftsmen, having devoted their lives to their craft, held strong convictions about how things should be done. Naturally, we had differences in approach, leading to moments of conflict.

However, I understood the value of their experience and remained committed to learning from them.

Over time, through continuous collaboration, sharing knowledge, and pushing boundaries together, we built mutual respect. We found a balance between tradition and innovation, and with trust, our work became more seamless.

This collaboration did more than produce beautiful hanok structures—it created a sustainable ecosystem of craftsmanship. By blending ancient wisdom with modern possibilities, we not only preserved traditional skills but also evolved them. This ensures that the legacy of hanok construction will continue to thrive for generations to come.

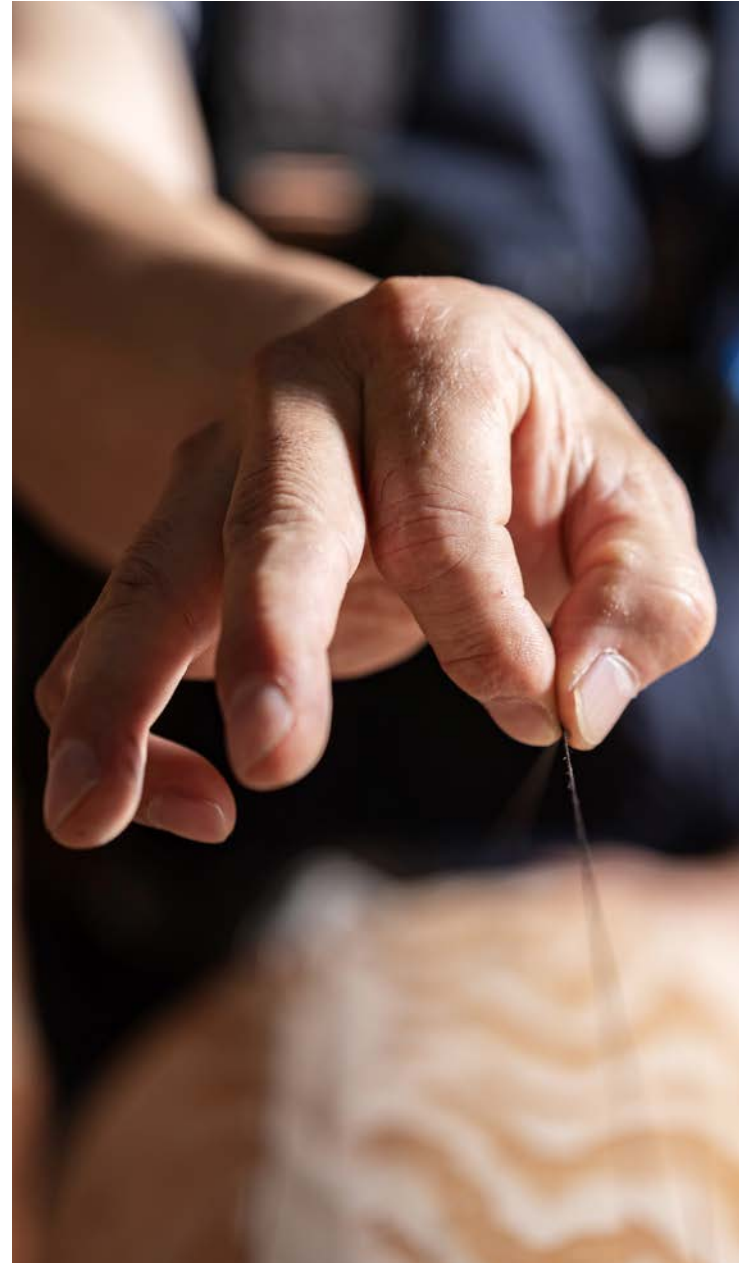
Here, the master carpenters take full responsibility for the wood, overseeing every step of the process with meticulous care. From laying the foundation stone to placing the final roof tile, their hands guide each phase of construction. With a deep sense of craftsmanship and pride, they treat each hanok as a unique masterpiece, building one structure at a time.

Their involvement goes far beyond simple construction—it's a thoughtful, precise process that reflects their dedication to preserving traditional techniques while ensuring every detail is perfect. Every timber is carefully selected, each joint crafted by hand, and every angle measured with precision. The result is a home that not only honors the timeless principles of hanok architecture but also embodies the spirit and expertise of these artisans.

The color of the roof tiles is created by the firing time and temperature.



The process of chimok—carving and refining wood into timber—begins by placing an ink line along the center of the wood.





Revitalizing Tradition Through Innovative, Sustainable Design

While hanok are naturally eco-friendly, they have historically presented challenges such as external noise, drafts, and susceptibility to cold. To create a more comfortable and sustainable living environment, we integrated modern technology to address these issues without compromising the traditional essence of the hanok.

To improve insulation and soundproofing, particularly in the traditional windows and doors (changho), we developed double-glazed windows. These upgrades not only boosted energy efficiency but also preserved the delicate aesthetics of the original hanok. We also sourced special metal hinges from Germany to ensure durability, given the added weight of the double-glazed windows.

For modern convenience, we installed transparent insect screens made from advanced fibers in the windows and doors. These screens not only offer protection but also maintain the concept of chagyeong—the “borrowed scenery”—a key feature of hanok design. These innovations allow the beauty of the natural surroundings to be fully enjoyed from within, without interruption, while adding practical benefits.

We further enhanced insulation by converting the dangolmagi—the traditional open spaces between rafters—into dangolbyeok (solid walls). This reinforced insulation maintains the architectural integrity of the hanok while making it more suitable for year-round living.



The angle and length of the eaves are designed to maximize the hanok's sense of proportion and capture natural light to the fullest.



Walls that utilize durable building materials while preserving the texture of Jeonju hanji (traditional Korean paper).



Marble that retains its natural patterns and textures, allowing light to pass through.

In addition to innovating traditional hanok structures, we continuously research materials that naturally harmonize with wood, crafting interiors that complement and enhance the beauty of hanok architecture. By experimenting with combinations like stone and wood, or marble and wood, we are exploring new possibilities for the aesthetic evolution of hanok design.

The aesthetic of hanok is so powerful that it can easily overshadow modern interior elements. With this in mind, my goal was to reveal the essence of the hanok by minimizing interior decoration and embracing simplicity. All functional elements are discreetly hidden, allowing the natural beauty of the architecture to stand out.

Through these design choices, we aim to create interiors that are visually stunning while also respecting and amplifying the core values of hanok—simplicity, harmony with nature, and understated elegance. This fusion of materials and minimalist design highlights the timeless beauty of hanok, while welcoming modern possibilities.



Stone, a traditional building material in hanok architecture, is softly crafted with an artisanal wave-like texture.

A Space of Ultimate Comfort for Humans

Together with master craftsmen, I am creating spaces that are not only beautiful but also provide the ultimate comfort and inspiration for people to live and thrive. The Hanok Heritage is built on the philosophy of “sky, earth, and people,” embodying the harmony between nature and humanity. While nature forms the foundation of the space, it is people who complete it. Our design ensures that nature embraces the hanok, the hanok embraces the people, and within these layers, human life unfolds.

In this space, where humans and nature are deeply connected, I have included welcoming and unexpected areas that encourage people to come together. While bedrooms remain private sanctuaries, we expanded beyond traditional hanok design to incorporate large dining rooms, outdoor courtyards, and media rooms. These shared spaces invite connection and create opportunities for meaningful interaction—experiences often lost in the fast pace of modern life.

My hope is that in this environment, where nature and humanity intertwine, new relationships will blossom and existing bonds will grow stronger. At The Hanok Heritage, the connection between nature, architecture, and people creates a setting for new beginnings, memorable experiences, and lasting relationships.





Humble and Warm Hospitality

At The Hanok Heritage, we aim to offer an experience that feels like coming home—a place that warmly welcomes each guest. Rather than providing standardized, impersonal services, we approach hospitality with the same genuine care that a hostess shows to her visitors, ensuring that everyone feels personally cared for.

Just as the hanok reflects Korea's timeless aesthetic—simple yet dignified, splendid yet understated—our hospitality mirrors these same values. The ancient Korean phrase from the Samguk Sagi, “Geomibullu, Hwaibulchi,” meaning “simple but elegant, splendid but not ostentatious,” embodies both the architecture and the spirit of our hospitality. Our hanok is designed to be both serene and magnificent, where beauty is subtle but ever-present, just as our hospitality is humble yet filled with warmth.



The comfort we provide comes from the harmony between nature, space, and humans. Just as the hanok embraces the ever-changing beauty of nature through chagyeong (borrowed scenery), we aim to create experiences that evolve with each moment, reflecting the subtle shifts of the natural world.

At The Hanok Heritage, we invite you to let go of the pursuit of a “perfect trip” and instead embrace the gift of true rest—rest that empties and replenishes. Here, you can find serenity in the simplicity of nature, the elegance of the space, and the peaceful connection between them.



A New Heritage That Will Become a Cultural Asset for the Next Millennium

For a thousand years, hanok architecture has remained largely unchanged, frozen in time. While we began our journey deeply rooted in this tradition, we have pushed beyond the limits of the past, creating new standards and visions that surpass what came before. We haven't imitated—we have reimagined the hanok for a new era, proudly calling The Hanok Heritage a “New Heritage.”

This “New Heritage” marks the transformation of the traditional hanok into a modern cultural legacy. Alongside master craftsmen who share this vision, we are creating spaces and experiences that embody the highest levels of artistry and aesthetic value, blending Korea's traditional architectural philosophy with innovative craftsmanship and modern technology.

The Hanok Heritage is only the beginning. I envision taking hanok architecture to new heights—building hanok in New York, Paris, and beyond. My goal is to recreate our traditional hanok, a cultural heritage that has endured for a millennium, with such excellence that they become cherished monuments for the next thousand years. Each structure will serve as a lasting testament to the enduring beauty and wisdom of Korean architecture.

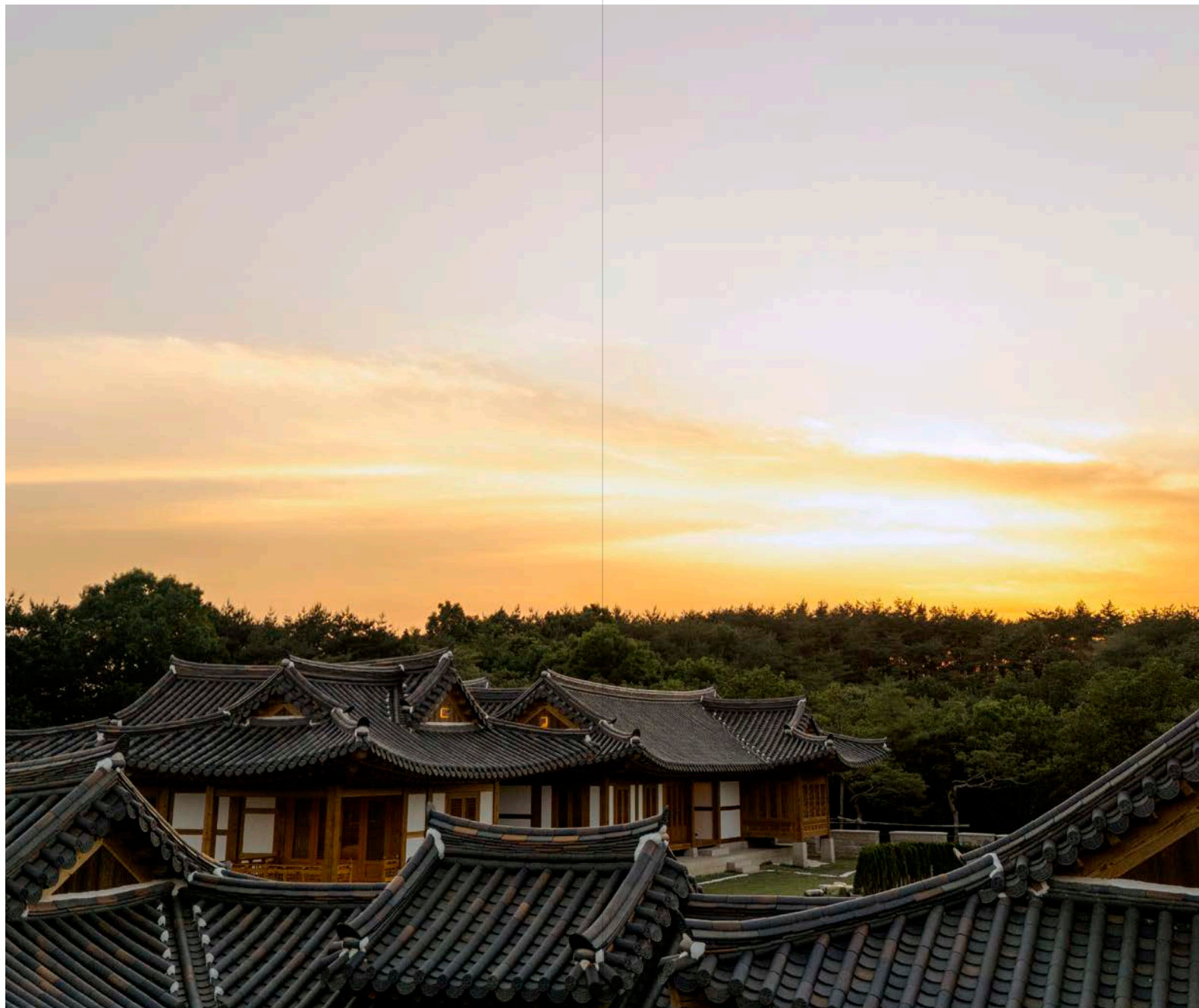
As Korea's representative K-Architecture, I hope that the hanok we build today will spread globally, becoming a world-class cultural asset that shines for generations to come. Through this bold vision, I aim to ensure that hanok not only remains relevant but evolves into a new form of cultural heritage—one that transcends borders and is celebrated worldwide as an architectural treasure for the next millennium.















The Hanok Heritage

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