

# ABOUT THE ART

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Sculpture  
from Asia

Gallery 2

ACKLAND

## **QUESTIONS?**

Contact us at [acklandlearn@unc.edu](mailto:acklandlearn@unc.edu)

## **ACKLAND ART MUSEUM**

The University of North Carolina  
at Chapel Hill  
101 S. Columbia Street  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514  
Phone: 919-966-5736

## **MUSEUM HOURS**

Wed - Sat 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Sunday 1 - 5 p.m.  
Closed Mondays & Tuesdays.  
Closed July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve,  
Christmas Day, & New Year's Day.



Unidentified artist  
Japanese, Late Heian period (898 – 1185)  
**Standing Buddha**, c. 12th century CE  
wood  
Gift of Ruth and Sherman Lee, 2003.35.4

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### About the Art

- Judging by the placement of the Buddha's left arm, his original left hand was in the boon-granting gesture (or *mudra*) and the missing right hand in the "fear not" mudra. Pegs visible on the right side of the torso indicate where the right arm would have been attached.
- Originally, this standing Buddha was attached to a wooden panel, which may have been a large round or oval mandorla, or frame.
- The artist uses the drapery's curving, nearly parallel lines to define the figure's torso and each limb, so that the clothing seems to cling to his body.



Unidentified artist  
Indian, Gandhara region, Kushan period  
(100 BCE – 300 CE)

**The Offering of Four Bowls to Buddha,**  
2nd century CE  
gray schist  
Gift of Clara T. and Gilbert J. Yager and  
Ackland Fund, 90.35

## About the Art

- In the principal scene on this relief, the Buddha is at the center and looks directly at the viewer. His companions flank him in symmetrical groups arranged in three tiers. On the other side of a standing figure in a niche, the left edge of another narrative scene appears, indicating that this is a fragment cut from a larger whole.
- The Buddha is represented here with characteristic features: the knot on his head representing his infinite wisdom, his elongated earlobes recalling the heavy earrings he wore in his past as a prince, and his hand raised in the teaching mudra, or gesture.
- In the narrative depicted here, four princes present the Buddha with four bowls. They first offered him gold bowls, but the Buddha rejected them as too extravagant. They next offered silver bowls, which he also rejected. Then they gave him four stone bowls, which he considered a more appropriate material for a monk. Before accepting the gift, he miraculously merged the four bowls into one.



Unidentified artist  
Nepalese, Malla dynasty (10th – 18th century)  
**Bhrikuti, the Female Companion of the White  
Avalokiteshvara, Lord of Compassion**, 14th century  
wood with polychrome  
Gift of the Tyche Foundation, 2010.9

## About the Art

- This elegant sculpture was originally covered with gesso and painted. It now has only traces of paint, which may suggest that it was ritually bathed once a year. At other times, it would likely have been covered with ornate textiles and ornaments.
- Bhrikuti was a devout Nepalese Buddhist believed to have married the first emperor of Tibet and to have been an incarnation of the deity Tara.
- This sculpture originally formed part of a group in a Buddhist temple. A figure of the bodhisattva of compassion, known as the White Avalokiteshvara, would have stood at the center. The White Avalokiteshvara (literally, The Lord Who Looks Down from on High) is considered one of the guardian deities of the Kathmandu Valley of the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal. The statue of Bhrikuti and another female figure would have been positioned on either side; together they represented two manifestations of Tara, the Green Tara and the White Tara.
- The figure of Bhrikuti has a fourth arm, now broken but visible in the image below; two of her missing hands would have held a coral tree and prayer beads, while the others formed gestures, including the gesture of reassurance.





Unidentified artist  
Indian, possibly northeastern Rajasthan, southern  
Haryana, or Uttar Pradesh, Mathura region  
**Vishnu in his Boar Incarnation (Varaha)**,  
late 11th century CE  
phyllite  
Gift of Clara T. and Gilbert J. Yager, 82.5.1

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### About the Art

- The smooth black phyllite and fine carving of this sculpture suggest that rather than occupying the exterior walls of a Hindu temple, this representation of Varaha the boar would have been placed in the inner sanctum or a subsidiary shrine inside.
- In his incarnation as Varaha, the god Vishnu fights for a thousand years with Hiranyaksha, a demon who trapped the earth goddess, Bhumidevi, beneath the ocean. Bhumidevi is seated on his left elbow with her hands in a gesture of gratitude to him for saving her.
- Vishnu's left foot rests firmly atop two serpent beings, and one of his right hands grasps a mace. His other attributes, a conch shell and a disc, appear in his two left hands. He is crowned by an umbrella-like lotus.
- Brahma (with three of his heads showing) is at the upper left of the sculpture and Shiva is at the upper right. Together with Vishnu, they represent the cycle of creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe.

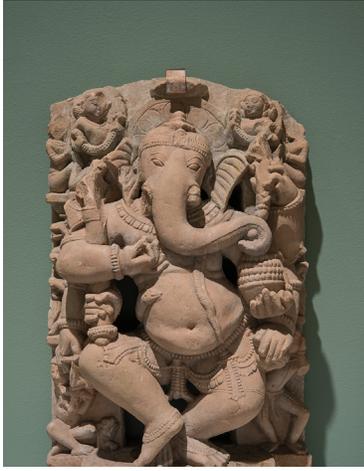


Unidentified artist  
Indian, Tamil Nadu, Kaveri delta region, Chola period  
(880 – 1279 CE)  
**Vishnu or Shiva**, 11th century CE  
granite  
Ackland Fund, 82.6.1

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### About the Art

- The tall crown on this figure's head and the mace he leans on with his left hand indicate that it is one of two Hindu gods, either Vishnu or Shiva. The objects once held in the missing hands – two right hands and one left – would have provided definitive evidence of the figure's identity.
- The stone's surface is weathered and the back is relatively flat, suggesting that it was designed to adorn the exterior of a temple. Most, though not all, Hindu temples built in southern India during the Chola period were dedicated to Shiva.
- In the eleventh century two powerful kings ruled southern India, Rajaraja and his son Rajendra I. Both sponsored Hindu temples that became famous for their elaborate sculpted decoration.



Unidentified artist  
Indian, possibly Madhya Pradesh, active mid-10th to mid-11th century CE  
**Dancing Ganesha**, mid-10th to mid-11th century CE  
sandstone  
Gift of Clara T. and Gilbert J. Yager, 85.2.1

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### About the Art

- Ganesha, one of the most popular Hindu deities, appears here with several of his attributes, including an axe. He holds a bowl of sweets in one of his left hands. He raises his right foot to dance to the music of his attendants. His mode of transportation, a tiny mouse, is in the lower left of the sculpture.
- One of the narratives about Ganesha explains how he got his elephant head: his mother, the goddess Parvati, created him to guard her while she bathed. When her husband Shiva returned home, he saw Ganesha emerging from her doorway, but did not recognize him and decapitated him. To atone, he vowed to give Ganesha the first head he saw – which was an elephant's head.
- Ganesha is called the Lord of Auspicious Beginnings. He is often invoked when initiating a new undertaking to remove any obstacles to success. This carving would have adorned the exterior wall of a northern Indian temple at the place where devotees began their circumambulations of the temple.