

ABOUT THE ART

Arts of Asia

Gallery 4

ACKLAND

QUESTIONS?

Contact us at 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.

Sun 1 – 5 p.m.

Closed Mondays & Tuesdays.

Closed July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve,
Christmas Day, & New Year's Day.

About About the Art

The Ackland's *About the Art* guides offer information about every work of art from the Museum's collection that is on view in galleries 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. All of these galleries are marked on the Gallery Map available at the desk in the Lobby. In the bottom right corner of the label beside each object, there is an open book symbol with a number. You can find the same symbol and number on the top of the corresponding page in *About the Art*.

Within each entry, you can find the following information:

- At the top of the page, you'll see a thumbnail image, the title of the object, who made it and with what materials, and where and when it was made
- Next, you'll see bullet points with information or observations about the object (more or fewer, depending on how much we know about the object so far). There is no standard formula for what kinds of information appears, but you will often find comments on historical context, style, and materials.
- In keeping with the Ackland's tagline, "Look Close, Think Far," the first bullet point will often highlight something visible in the work of art itself.
- You will find names, phrases, and concepts that could be good internet search terms for those who want to learn more
- When specialized terms are used, you'll see a definition, helpful contextual information, or language suitable for an internet search.
- Whenever we know the artist's name, there will be some details about the artist's life, often under the heading "About the Artist," but sometimes as one of the bullet points.

For those visitors who want to engage further with an object, we also suggest other resources to investigate on our website: ackland.org/education/learning-resources.

The authors of *About the Art* include Ackland curators and educators who use a variety of sources. They consult museum records, art historical research, comments from outside specialists, and more.

About Gallery 4: Arts of Asia

The forty-five objects in this gallery come from places in East, Central, South, and Southeast Asia. The oldest object was made sometime during the second millennium BCE and the most recent during the eighteenth century CE, a range of 3,000 to 4,000 years. Many of the objects were made for religious use; some adorned Buddhist stupas and Hindu temples, others were used in private devotional practice in Buddhist and Jain traditions. Ancient Chinese objects in ceramic and metal include several associated with ancient burial sites. Ceramic vessels from China and Japan suggest a range of techniques, decorations, and functions.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Han dynasty
Architectural Panel, 206 BCE-220 CE
earthenware
Spain Purchase Fund and The William
A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund,
2011.2

About the Art

- During the Han dynasty wealthy people were buried in multi-chambered tombs, richly decorated with architectural elements. This brick was possibly a lintel placed above the doorway between rooms.
- In the center of the front panel, there is a *taotie* mask in high relief. It is framed by trellis borders and flanked by wide rows of stylized trees and roundels. There are also human figures, serpents, and a border design of running dragons. On the reverse side, the broad frieze includes more trees, roundels, and triangular foliate motifs within matching trellis borders.
- The decoration includes both hand-molded and stamped decorations. One tree on the front side is double stamped, to correct the placement of the tree form in the overall pattern.
- Because it is hollow, it probably dates from the early Eastern Han dynasty, around the first century CE. Bricks made later were solid.



Unidentified artist
Pakistani, Gandharan region, Kushan period
Figure of Buddha, c. 3rd century CE
schist
Anonymous Loan, L2022.3.1

About the Art

- Schist is a relatively hard gray stone that can be finely carved. It was very commonly used in the ancient region of Gandhara, the northwest part of the Indian subcontinent, for the many Buddhist sculptures created there for temples in the first to fifth centuries CE.
- This figure wears the heavy robes of a monk, but his *urna* (the dot on his forehead) and his extended earlobes denote his status as the Buddha. The sculpture is missing part of its right arm, which would have been carved with the hand in a Buddhist gesture of reassurance and approachability.
- Although an emblem of calm strength, the sculpture subtly implies some naturalistic movement, with the Buddha's left knee bent slightly forward displacing the heavy folds of the garment.
- On the base of the sculpture is a seated figure of Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, who is being venerated by four standing figures.
- The style of Gandharan sculpture combines elements of indigenous Indian traditions with aspects of Greco-Roman styles, the result of influences from Hellenistic culture transmitted in the wake of the military campaigns of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Tang dynasty
Bodhisattva, 7th century
limestone

The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund, 97.17

About the Art

- This sculpture represents a bodhisattva, or someone who has attained enlightenment and decided to stay and help others. Traditionally in Buddhist art there are two bodhisattvas that flank a seated image of the Buddha. The bodhisattvas exemplify two central characteristics of the Buddha: compassion and wisdom.
- This Tang bodhisattva shows the impact of Indian art on Chinese sculpture with its sinuous posture, gracefully curving drapery folds, and long strands of jewels. It is a classic example of Tang dynasty Buddhist sculpture.
- Bodhisattvas are usually depicted adorned with jewels and lavish drapery unlike the Buddha, who is shown without personal adornment.
- There was a major persecution of Buddhism in China in the ninth century because it had originated outside China, and many Buddhist sculptures were damaged or destroyed.



Unidentified artist
Pakistani, Gandharan region, Kushan period
Hand with a Waterpot, 3rd–4th century CE
gray schist
Gift of Charles Millard in honor of Gilbert and Clara
Yager, 2000.9.1

About the Art

- The scale of this fragment suggests that the figure it originally belonged to was life-size.
- The waterpot, or *kundika*, is the major clue to the possible identity of the figure originally represented. The Bodhisatva Maitreya is sometimes represented carrying a waterpot as a symbol of his future role as Buddha on earth, after the current Buddha's teachings have been forgotten. As a traditional symbol of an agreement, the waterpot would allude to the transfer of power from Buddha Shakyamuni to him.
- The bracelet reveals that the statue represented a bodhisatva, a figure with continuing worldly associations who has postponed his own achievement of enlightenment to aid humanity on its journey to the same.



Unidentified artist
Nepalese, Malla dynasty
**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* originally formed part of a group in a Buddhist temple. She would have stood to the left of the bodhisattva of compassion, known as the White Avalokiteshvara, with another female companion, the deity Tara, standing to his right. The White Avalokiteshvara (literally, The Lord Who Looks Down from On High) was considered one of the guardian deities of the Kathmandu Valley of the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal.
- 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
Thai, Sukhothai dynasty
Head of Buddha, 15th century
gilt bronze
Ackland Fund, 91.2

About the Art

- This head is most likely from a very large, seated image. It was fastened to the body with pins through holes visible at the base of the figure's neck.
- The protuberance on his head, called an *ushnisha*, symbolizes the additional knowledge Buddha's acquired following his enlightenment. Here, it is topped by a flame finial.
- Seated images of Buddha constituted a major aspect of Thai artistic production from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Also important were ceramics, textiles, and metalwork, which were produced for domestic use and trade across southeast Asia.



Unidentified artist
Thai, Sukhothai dynasty
Head of Buddha, 15th century
bronze
Gift of Charles Millard, 2019.26.177

About the Art

- Although this beautiful fragment is missing the characteristic elongated ear lobes, the protuberance on top of the head, the remaining hair curls, serene expression, and downcast eyes can securely identify it as an image of the Buddha.



Unidentified artist
Cambodian, Khmer period, style of Koh Ker
Male Figure, 10th century
polished green sandstone or limestone
Gift of Ruth and Sherman Lee, 98.30.1

About the Art

- Projecting from this figure's right shoulder are two arms, suggesting that it may represent a god rather than a mortal. One possibility is Vishnu.
- Hindu and Buddhist traditions traveled from India to Cambodia and other parts of Southeast Asia. This sculpture's broad shoulders and narrow waist are similar to Indian works of the same period, but it also has some distinctively Cambodian elements.
- Stylistic features like the elegantly curving hem of the fabric gathered at the waist and falling down to the knees are consistent with sculptures made in the tenth century for a temple site at Koh Ker in northern Cambodia.



Unidentified artist
Cambodian, Khmer period, style of Baphuon
Torso of Shiva, 11th century
sandstone
Gift of Ruth and Sherman Lee, 2017.38

About the Art

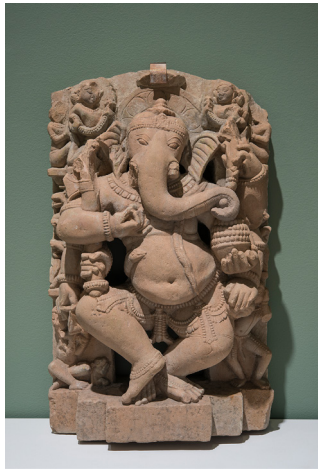
- This torso's graceful features are associated with the eleventh-century temple of Baphuon, a major monument in the Angkor complex.
- The male figure's traditional Khmer wrap falls from high on the back to low on the waist, exposing the navel. The garment is lightly incised and features a low-slung belt with a curved blade.
- Udayadityavarman II, ruler of the Angkor kingdom in Cambodia, commissioned the Baphuon temple to honor the god Shiva. The torso likely represents Shiva or perhaps a royal individual.



Unidentified artist
Indian, north-central India
Vishnu Trimurti Seated on Garuda, late 10th century
sandstone
Gift of Charles Millard, 2019.26.203

About the Art

- This relief sculpture would have adorned an exterior niche of a temple, probably in north central India, dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu.
- This configuration is dubbed “Vishnu Trimurti,” because he has three heads, a boar to our left and a lion to our right, both symbolizing one of the god’s many incarnations.
- Only four of the god’s original twelve arms survive.
- He sits astride the man-bird Garuda.
- The central composition is surrounded by other gods, as well as human, animal, and heavenly devotees.



Unidentified artist
Indian, possibly Madhya Pradesh
Dancing Ganesha, mid-10th - mid-11th century
sandstone
Gift of Clara T. and Gilbert J. Yager in honor of Dr.
Charles Morrow and his wife, Mary Morrow, for their
many contributions to the University and to The Ackland
Art Museum during his term as Provost, 85.2.1

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.



Unidentified artist
Indian, Tamil Nadu, Kaveri delta region, Chola period
Consort Goddess (possibly Parvati), 950-1000
bronze and copper
Gift of F. B. Vanderhoef, Jr. in honor of Charles W.
Millard, 91.23

About the Art

- Nothing about the figure itself conclusively identifies the consort goddess. Worshipers knew who she was because of the god who stood beside her when she appeared during festivals, and because of the clothing, jewelry, and other ornaments adorning her, none of which are present now.
- Since many Chola period temples in south India were dedicated to Shiva, this sculpture may have originally represented his wife, Parvati.
- Workshops in the Kaveri delta region produced sculptures like these both for local temples and for more distant ones. During the Chola period, south India traded extensively with other parts of India and with southeast Asia.



Unidentified artist

Indian, Tamil Nadu, Kaveri delta region, Chola period

Krishna or Saint Sambandar, 1175-1225

bronze

Gift of Clara T. and Gilbert J. Yager in honor of Charles Millard (Museum Director 1986-1993), 97.8

About the Art

- Both the Hindu deity Krishna and the Hindu saint Sambandar were often represented as children, in dancing poses that represented joy or triumph over evil, depending on the context.
- Determining who this sculpture represents depends on its original setting, what the missing hands held, and what the missing foot stood upon.
- This sculpture's style is consistent with twelfth and thirteenth century images from Chola period India. By that date, images of both Krishna and Saint Sambandar were common, making it more difficult to be certain which one this sculpture depicts.



Unidentified artist
Nepalese, Kathmandu Valley, probably Deopatan
Shiva Linga, 12th century
green schist
Gift of Gilbert J. and Clara T. Yager in honor of Dr.
Sherman Lee, our advisor, 95.4.2

About the Art

- This sculpture would have originally appeared in a temple dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, in the innermost sanctum of the temple. There, devotees could walk around the sculpture and rub it with powder made of turmeric and red dye. Traces of this powder remain on this linga.
- In the temple, the columnar linga (representing male creative forces) would have been set in an ovoid yoni (representing female creative forces), suggesting the unification of male and female forces.
- In this type of object, there are four visible faces; a fifth one, understood to be invisible, extends from the rounded top. The faces symbolize the cardinal directions, the five elements associated with five different Hindu deities, and Shiva's roles as a husband, a father, the regulator of nature, and the catalyst of death.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Shang dynasty
Drinking Vessel (Gu), 12th century BCE
bronze
Ackland Fund, 60.13.1

About the Art

- This bronze drinking vessel was likely used for ritual offerings of wine. It dates from the Shang dynasty, the oldest known Chinese dynasty. It was found at Anyang, which was the site of the Shang capital starting in 1100 BCE.
- The decoration suggests a funerary function: the long, leaf-like forms on the upper portion of the vessel are cicadas, which symbolize transformation and rebirth, and the animal masks on the lower portion, known as *taotie*, are tomb guardian spirits.
- Bronze was held in high esteem in the Shang dynasty because it produced harder tools and could take on more complex shapes and decoration than copper alone.
- This was one of the first Asian objects in the Ackland's collection, purchased in 1960 from an auction by the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting. Its sale helped to fund the construction of their current Meeting House.



16

Unidentified artist
Chinese, Gansu province, Majiayao
culture, style of Banshan
Water Jar, c. 2200 BCE
painted earthenware
The William A. Whitaker Foundation
Art Fund, 90.39

About the Art

- This water jar is from the Western Yangshao culture, which thrived in the Yellow River Valley in modern-day Gansu province from 3300 – 1800 BCE. The swirling black lines with red and white details are typical of the Banshan period (2800 – 2300 BCE) of that culture.
- Earthenware is a type of clay made of fine rock sediment that has undergone minimal purification after it has been mined. Its characteristic red color comes from iron oxide impurities in the clay.
- Water jars were made for funerary purposes, and they were decorated only on their top portion because they were partially buried in a tomb. The white dots may represent eggs, symbolizing fertility, and by extension, life after death.
- This jar was made with the coiling method, in which potters layered long coils of clay on top of each other, and then smoothed the joins between the layers before they fired the pots.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Longshan culture
Long-Stemmed Goblet, c. 2500–2000 BCE
earthenware
Gift of the Rubin-Ladd Foundation, 2013.3.1

About the Art

- Black earthenware vessels like this are characteristic of the Longshan culture, centered in what is now Shandong province in China.
- The potter's wheel appeared in China around 3000 BCE (about the same time that it was first used in Egypt). The extremely thin walls of vessels like these probably could not have been achieved without the wheel.
- There are traces of brownish-gray material on the exterior and especially on the interior of this goblet, presumably the result of having been buried in the earth.
- The black color of this piece was achieved by rapidly reducing the levels of oxygen in the kiln, which would cause the clay itself to turn this deep black color. This piece is unglazed.



18

Unidentified artist

Chinese, Shang dynasty

Disc (Bi) with Collared Central Aperture, 13th century BCE

incised, ground, and polished nephrite jade

Spain Purchase Fund and The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund, 2016.9

About the Art

- Nephrite jade tends to be less saturated in color and the surface often has a duller, “greasy” appearance when compared to jadeite, which is deeply colored and highly glassy. Jadeite would later come into favor in China though it is native to Myanmar.
- Bi discs were found in varying numbers in tombs of the Shang, Zhou, and Han dynasties, though some date to the Liangzhu culture (3400 – 2250 BCE). It is thought that the number of discs may have corresponded to wealth or social status, as some more important burial sites appear to contain more discs.
- The bi discs may also have had shamanistic uses as they are also associated with the cosmos and the circular rotations of the heavens.
- Later bi discs can feature ornate surface carving. Neolithic examples, like this one are unadorned. They do still have several distinctive features, however: the off-center and slightly skewed central aperture (made with neolithic tools), the circular grinding marks on the surface of the disc, and perhaps most interesting, a triangular stain on the rear, likely caused by oxidation as a result of abutting another object in the tomb, perhaps a rolled textile.



 19

Unidentified artist
Chinese, Shang dynasty
**Pair of Chariot Axle Hub
Linchpins**, 2nd millennium
BCE
bronze
Gift of Charles Millard,
2019.26.206ab

About the Art

- These pins would have been used to secure a metal cap to the end of a chariot axle. The fixed cap would ensure the wheel stayed on the axle.
- Both pins are decorated with the common “monster face” (*taotie*) design, common especially on Chinese ritual bronze vessels of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. There is no consensus on the meaning of the symbol, which may have played a religious or ceremonial function.



20

Unidentified artist
Chinese, Eastern Zhou dynasty,
Warring States period
Proto-Porcelain Ribbed Jar,
5th–4th century BCE
stoneware with natural ash
glaze
Gift of Smith Freeman and
Austin Scarlett, 2009.26.18

About the Art

- Jars of this type, with an ovoid shape, a short neck, and a wide mouth were produced mostly in regions along the Yangzi River and its tributaries in southern and southeastern China.
- It is decorated with two bands of vertical ribs, formed by a blade. Spiral motifs, reminiscent of traditional shapes indicating clouds, are stamped around the two handles.
- A mottled glaze covers the pot.
- The medium is often termed “proto-porcelain,” as it uses porcelaneous stone, but has not yet achieved the translucence typical of actual porcelains.



21

Unidentified artist

Chinese, Eastern Han dynasty

Taotie Mask with Ring Handle, 25–220 CE

bronze

The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund, 91.11ab

About the Art

- *Taotie* masks are the most important decorative motif in ancient Chinese art. Typically they have large, glaring eyes, fangs, curled lips, and horns.
- Because of the size of this taotie mask (one of a pair in the Ackland's collection) it is likely that it functioned as a handle on the door to a chamber in a tomb, guarding the tomb from intruders.
- The bronze casting in the handle leaves crisp edges in the scrolls around the monsters' eyes, their heads, and the concentric circles in the rings.
- The term taotie was not in use when these objects were made; many centuries later, scholars in the Song dynasty (960 – 1279 CE) who were researching Chinese art of the past gave the name to this type of mask.
- Taotie monsters were thought to be voracious; therefore, the Chinese character for taotie contains the character for the word "eat."
- Originally they were fierce-looking monsters, but over time they lost some of their fierceness and began to look more like dragons with staring, button-like eyes. During the Han dynasty, when this mask was made, *taotie* monsters became friendlier in appearance. They were often used as decorative motifs in bronze funerary art.



22

Unidentified artist
Chinese, Guangdong province, Eastern Han dynasty
Lamp in the Form of a Seated Figure, 25–220 CE
earthenware
Ackland Fund, 93.3.1

About the Art

- This man's heavy eyebrows, big eyes, high nose bridge, and full beard identify him as non-Chinese.
- The protrusion on his forehead and the coiled clay around it may refer to a non-Chinese style of headdress, though this is only speculation.
- His thick legs are awkwardly paced and his right arm doubles as the lamp stand.
- This lamp would have been part of the furnishings of a tomb.



Unidentified artist

Chinese, Han dynasty

Mirror, 2nd or 3rd century CE

bronze

Gift of Clara T. and Gilbert J. Yager in honor of
Timothy A. Riggs, 2007.8.7

About the Art

- Ancient Chinese mirrors were cast in bronze alloy that appeared silver when polished. The smooth side was polished until it gave a clear reflection; the back was elaborately decorated. At the center of the back a cord was strung through the knob in the center, so that the mirror could be handled without touching and tarnishing its surface.
- Mirrors were associated with courtship, marriage, and family life, but also with the presentation of the cosmic order.
- The imagery on this mirror includes Daoist divinities: Xi Wangmu, Queen Mother of the West (left); Dong Wangfu, King Father of the East (right); Boya the Musician (top); and Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor (bottom). Each figure rides on a dragonlike beast that turns its head to grasp a bar attached to the central part of the mirror.



24

Unidentified artist
Chinese, Han dynasty
Cocoon-Shaped Storage Vessel,
206 BCE–220 CE
stoneware with painted
decoration
Gift of Smith Freeman and Austin
Scarlett, 2009.26.7

About the Art

- This object was originally part of a Han dynasty tomb and would have been accompanied by many other ceramics, especially models of houses, guard towers, and vessels for food and drink.
- The shape of the vessel is meant to recall the cocoon of the silkworm; During the Han dynasty the silk trade served as one of the principal sources of wealth.
- The decorative motif is called a *yunwen* or “cloud scroll” and refers to the mystical celestial realms of the afterlife.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Eastern Han dynasty
Sichuan Lifan Amphora, 25 CE-220 CE
black earthenware with incised and
burnished décor and bronze appliques
Gift of Smith Freeman and Austin
Scarlett, 2009.26.10

About the Art

- Amphoras like this one, known as *lifan*, are unique in the history of Chinese ceramics, with forms and decoration distinct from other types of pottery. Very few lifan amphoras are on public display.
- The name lifan derives from the district of Sichuan province, Lifan, where archeologists discovered ceramics of this type.
- The geometric forms may have been designed to recall metalware; the sixteen studs decorating the surface show traces of a thin bronze overlay, which would have shone brightly against the black surface of the vessel. The studs at the center of the circular designs on the belly resemble eyes.
- The practical, sturdy handles suggest that this amphora was used in everyday life, perhaps as a pouring vessel for fine grains.



26

Unidentified artist
Chinese, Tang dynasty
Tripod Vessel (*Fu*), 8th century
earthenware with three-color
lead glaze
The William A. Whitaker
Foundation Art Fund, 90.38

About the Art

- The glaze on this vessel is called *sancai*, which means “three color” in Chinese. Ceramics with *sancai* glaze were highly fashionable during the Tang dynasty and used by the elite families as funerary objects to emulate items used in their daily lives.
- The distinctive coloring results in part from the clay, which has a very low iron content and turns white instead of red after firing. The iron oxide and copper oxide in the glazes fire red and green, respectively. Potters splashed the two glazes on the vessel knowing that they would run and blend to produce a range of hues.
- This new pattern was inspired by the textiles of central Asia, which gained favor in Chinese cities as the rulers of the Tang dynasty expanded their empire westward and developed trade relationships with other countries.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Jin (Golden Tartars)
dynasty
Pillow, 12th-early 13th century
ceramic
Gift of Lena J. Stewart,
2000.22.1

About the Art

- The glaze colors on this pillow are used carefully and descriptively, to match the image.
- Mandarin ducks are thought to mate for life and die if separated. They are therefore symbols of marital fidelity and often decorate wedding gifts.
- On this pillow, the ducks walk along near auspicious lotus flowers.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Jin (Golden
Tartars) dynasty
Pair of Square Dishes,
12th-early 13th century
ceramic with white,
brown, and green
glaze
Gift of Lena J. Stewart,
2000.22.2-.3

About the Art

- Symmetrically placed and stylized chrysanthemum blossoms and leaves dominate the molded decoration of this pair of dishes with barbed foliate rims.
- The floral motifs, except for the leaves at the corners, are picked out in amber and green glazes on a cream ground, a combination often referred to as *sancai*, Chinese for “three colors.”



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Liao dynasty
Foliate Bowl, 10th–11th century
earthenware with lead oxide glazes
over a white slip
Gift of Austin Scarlett and Smith
Freeman in honor of the Museum's
60th Anniversary, 2018.18.4

About the Art

- The molded and stamped decoration on the interior of this bowl shows leaves, flowers, and repeating, overlapping semicircles, an encompassing pattern of clouds and mist.
- The potters of the Liao dynasty inherited from the preceding Tang dynasty a delight in the use of *sancal*, or three-color, lead-fluxed glazes.
- Tang sancal wares tend to employ the bright colors in a random, splashed manner; Liao wares use the color in a more descriptive, careful manner, as seen in this fine bowl with its beautiful rhythmical, raised surface pattern.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Southern Song dynasty
Tea Bowl and Stand, 11th century
Cizhou ware: stoneware with black
glaze
Gift of F. Eunice and Herbert F.
Shatzman, 2003.28.2ab

About the Art

- As early as the Tang dynasty (618 – 907 CE), potters paired tea bowls with stands, which allowed tea drinkers to hold a vessel filled with hot tea more easily. It is rare, however, for a pair to have survived intact.
- This tea bowl and stand are made of stoneware, which is sturdier than fine porcelain ceramics. The reddish-brown color of the clay is visible along the rim of the cup and at the base of the stand, where the glaze has pulled away.
- The subtle, mottled silver pattern on the surface of these two objects was probably caused by excess iron oxide in the glaze, which crystallized on the surface during firing.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Jiangxi province, Southern Song dynasty
Stem Cup and Stand, 12th–13th century
Jingdezhen ware: porcelain
Gift of Smith Freeman and Austin Scarlett, 2009.26.2

About the Art

- To prevent the delicate walls of these vessels from warping during firing, they were fired upside down in the kilns. This practice explains the slightly rough quality of the cup's rim.
- The subtle blue undertone of the glaze on this stem cup and stand was intended to mimic the color and texture of bluish-white jade. The term for this type of object is *qingbai*, later called *yingqing*, which translates as shadow-blue.
- To achieve this effect, potters added a small amount of ferrous oxide to the glaze and then fired the ceramics in a reduction (oxygen-starved) atmosphere.
- Qingbai wares were made at the Jingdezhen dragon kilns in southern China's Jiangxi province, so called because the long kilns snaked over hillsides like dragons' bodies. Large dragon kilns could fire nearly 10,000 vessels at one time.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Southern Song dynasty
Gourd-Shaped Ewer, 12th or 13th century
porcelain
Gift of Smith Freeman and Austin Scarlett, 2009.26.16

About the Art

- *Yingqing* translates literally to “shadow blue” and refers specifically to this kind of glaze, which varies in color from a crisp sky blue to pale green to the almost white hue seen here. These variations are a result of glaze composition and quality, the color of the vessel’s clay body, and the conditions of firing (including time, temperature, and oxygen levels in the kiln). The term *qingbai* is also used.
- Ewers like this were most often used for wine. This ewer would have originally had a lid, which may have been porcelain or metal, and would have been secured to the ewer via the small loop seen at the top of the handle.



Unidentified artist
Chinese, Jin (Golden Tartars) dynasty
Bowl with Russet Markings, 12th or
early 13th century
Cizhou ware: glazed stoneware
Gift of F. Eunice and Herbert F.
Shatzman, 2003.28.57

About the Art

- The lustrous greenish-black glaze on this bowl is enlivened by three primary russet splashes of varying intensity, descending from the rim at evenly spaced intervals.
- The russet markings are made with a glaze with an even higher iron oxide percentage than the black glaze, itself already iron oxide rich.



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Unidentified artist
Chinese, Southern Song dynasty
Tea Bowl with Design of Plum Blossoms and Phoenixes, 12th or 13th century
Jizhou ware: glazed stoneware
Gift of F. Eunice and Herbert F. Shatzman, 2003.28.40

About the Art

- The design on the interior of this bowl was created by placing paper-cut plum blossoms and flying phoenixes on to the initial black glaze layer. These were then covered in brown glaze (probably a mix of wood and bamboo ash, mixed with slip). The paper was destroyed during the firing, leaving the designs in black visible.
- This innovative stencil technique is characteristic of the Jizhou kilns in Jiangxi province, which were the most daring and creative in the Song dynasty.
- Tea bowls with predominantly black and brown glazes became increasingly popular from the 11th century, as their color offered a pleasing contrast to the pale foam of the whisked tea.



36

Unidentified artist

Japanese, Edo period

Tea Dish, late 17th century

Oribe ware: glazed earthenware with
iron wash and green glaze decoration

The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art
Fund, 90.57

About the Art

- This dish is decorated with pampas grasses rendered in loose, elegant brushstrokes. In Japanese tradition, pampas grass is a symbol of autumn. Dishes with this decoration, then, would have been used for the tea ceremony during the autumn months.
- The term Oribe ware comes from the tea master Furuta Oribe (1544 - 1615), who refined the tea ceremony and expressed a preference for a warped appearance, called *wabi*, in tea wares.
- The bold surface decoration associated with Oribe wares may have come from designs on a type of cloth popular with the military class.



Unidentified artist
Japanese, Muromachi period
Storage Jar, 15th century
Tamba ware: stoneware with natural ash glaze
The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund, 91.82

About the Art

- This storage jar is a type of object that modern ceramic artists consider models for their own work. It is appreciated today – as it was in its own day – for its rugged form and the glaze effects, which result from varying the kiln temperature during firing.
- Originally it may have been used to hold grain or, because of the intriguing markings on its surface from the wood ash fire, it may have been appropriate for use as a water holder in the tea ceremony.
- Tamba is a term that refers to one of six ancient kilns in Japan: Seto, Tokoname, Shigaraki, Bizan, Echizen, and Tamba. The green glaze streak down the center of the jar is characteristic of Tamba wares.



Unidentified artist

Japanese, Heian period

Narrow-Necked Vase, 794-1185

Sueki ware: stoneware with wood ash glaze

The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund, 91.83

About the Art

- Sueki ware is a term that refers to the first high-fired pottery produced in Japan, probably by Korean immigrants, beginning in the fifth century.
- Innovations achieved by Sueki ware led to the construction of kilns in many parts of the country. In addition, potters discovered that wood ash in a hot kiln reacted with the clay to make a natural glaze. This prompted them to sprinkle ash from burned plant material intentionally on the clay before firing.
- This vase, with its round bottom and silkworm pod-shaped body (with linear engraving), represents some basic features and techniques of Sueki ware.
- Later periods admired the irregularity of these wares, a characteristic that was seen as reflecting natural processes and forces.



Unidentified artist
Sino-Tibetan, Qing dynasty
Amitāyus, 1770
gilt bronze
Gift of Susan and Robert Otterbourg, 2007.20.2

About the Art

- The richly adorned buddha is shown in meditation. Traces of blue lapis lazuli may still be seen in the hair.
- The inscription along the front of the base gives the year this sculpture was made. It was probably one of many similar pieces commissioned for the mother of the Qianlong emperor on the occasion of her 80th birthday.
- The object that the figure held in its palms is now missing. It was probably a vase, the symbol of longevity as it held the nectar of immortality. The cult of Amitāyus, the Buddha of Eternal Life, was popular in Tibet, where his followers believed that devotion to this buddha would prolong life.



Unidentified artist
Sino-Tibetan, Ming dynasty
White Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, 15th century
gilt bronze
The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund, 2004.9

About the Art

- When the Ackland acquired this sculpture, the identity of the two figures was not specified. The combination of their distinctive pose and the objects they hold identifies this as an image of the White Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi.
- For practitioners of the Vajrayana school of Buddhism, the figures' physical embrace symbolizes the bliss that accompanies the complete union of wisdom and compassion.
- Chinese Buddhist art made during the early fifteenth century often shows the influence of Tibetan art.
- In Tibetan Buddhism, sculptures and paintings guide practitioners in their meditation, helping them to more fully visualize each aspect of the deity.



41

Unidentified artist

Indian, Gujarat

Twenty-Four Jina Icon of Śāntinātha, 1511

copper alloy

Gift of the Rubin-Ladd Foundation, 2011.34.1

About the Art

- An inscription on the back of this shrine gives information about its dedication to the Jina Santi, the central figure seated in a meditating position. He is especially revered in the Jain pantheon. The inscription identifies the date the shrine was made, the names of the lay patron and his family, and that of the religious leader who consecrated it.
- This type of portable shrine, with all twenty-four Jinas (or conquerors) represented together, is known as a chauvisi. The nakedness of the Jinas indicates that the piece belongs to the Digambara tradition of Jainism.
- The work was either made for use in a domestic shrine or placed in a temple, where it would have been honored with offerings, hymns, and other ritual engagements.
- The surface is worn, evidence of long and intense worship. This patina of use and age both enhances the aesthetic effects of the work and diminishes our ability to perceive some of the details of the original casting.



42

Unidentified artist

Indian, south Maharashtra or north Karnataka

Icon of a Jain Goddess, probably Jwālāmālīnī, c. 17th–

19th century

copper alloy

Gift of the Rubin-Ladd Foundation, 2011.34.2a–c

About the Art

- There is no inscription on this object and it has not been possible to narrow the date down from the broad range of several centuries. The workmanship is not outstanding, as can be seen in the indistinctness of the objects carried by the central figure.
- The icon is made of three separable parts, which would have been joined together for worship. Differences in style and metal color between the central body and the back-arch surround and the base may mean that more attention was paid to the goddess or that the elements were cast at different times. The base and surround may even have been intended for a different deity, not even necessarily a Jain one.
- It has not been possible to definitively identify the deity represented, though most iconographic elements point to Jwālāmālīnī, one of the most popular deities amongst the Digambar sect of Jains.



Unidentified artist
Nepalese
Shrine to Shrikantha, 1818
gilt copper
Anonymous Loan, L2022.3.2

About the Art

- Shrikantha, “the one with the beautiful throat”, is a rarely found form of the Hindu god, Shiva. Here he dances with his consort Guhyakali, their bodies combined in an erotic, cosmic union, forming an image known as *kamakala* in Nepal.
- Some elements of the shrine point to Shiva’s role as the god of destruction, like the skulls around the madorla, his weapons, and the supine figures being crushed underfoot.
- The five figures seated on the base personify the five elements in Hindu cosmology: earth, fire, water, air, and space.
- The extensive inscription around the base gives the date, the names of those who commissioned the work, the priests who consecrated it, and the person who supervised the project:

In the year of 938 [Samvat] [1818 CE], on the second day of the dark half of the Vaishakha month, Anuradha nashatra, Friday, Bhaju Dham, Bajju Narasim, and Tejanaram commissioned and perfected this image of their tutelary deities [Siva and his consort]. Two priests Kureshvara and Acarya consecrated the image. Jasadhana was in charge of all these activities.



Unidentified artist

Chinese, Qing dynasty

Bottle in the Shape of a Double Gourd, 1650–1700

cast bronze with cloisonné enamel decoration

Spain Purchase Fund, 2022.45.1

About the Art

- The decoration on this elegant object consists of multi-colored lotus blossoms on vine scrolls of gilt wire, with pendant chains around the neck and textile-like forms around the base.
- Cloisonné is the technique of creating designs on metal vessels. It uses colored-glass paste placed within enclosures ("cloisons" in French) made of copper or bronze wires, which have been shaped into the desired pattern. After firing, the vessel is rubbed until the edges of the enclosures are visible. Gilding is then added.
- In addition to its visual interest as an appealing and decorative shape, the double-gourd form has a long tradition and special significance in Chinese art. It can stand for medicine and healing, as it is the Buddhist emblem of Li T'ieh-kuai, one of the eight immortals who, when embodied as a beggar, carried the gourd to contain medicine that he administered to the sick. It has also been thought to represent the union of heaven and earth.



45

Unidentified artist
Chinese, Qing dynasty
Covered Box, 18th century
cast bronze with cloisonné enamel
decoration
Gift of Smith Freeman and Austin
Scarlett to honor Katharine Lee Reid,
2022.45.2ab

About the Art

- The surface of this box is slightly pitted, which may be the result of the firing process or impurities in the glass used for the enamel.
- The decoration is dominated by flowers, from the red and green blossom encircled by lime green leaves at the center of the lid through the lotus flowers on the lid and the container to the four-petalled red ones around the base. The dark blue elements, mirrored around the edge of lid and container, evoke the “rui” symbol which carries associations of good wishes in China.
- The combination of colors and the stylization of the designs help to date this box to the eighteenth century.