

China Art Cart Materials

June 2009

“Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember.
Involve me, and I will understand.”

–Confucius, c. 450 BCE

Art Cart Inventory

Art Cart Interpreters:

The docents/guides for each Art Cart shift should inventory the contents of the cart **before and** after the shift. If this is not done and objects are missing or damaged, the lead guide may be held responsible. (The lead guide is the first guide listed on the tour confirmation form.)

If an object is missing or damaged, make a notation on the inventory and report it to the Tour Office.

If an object is suddenly missing during your shift, notify security immediately by alerting the guard in the gallery or by calling x3225.

INVENTORY SHEET: CHINA ART CART

Date:

Guides/Docents:

Objects	Comments			
	In	Beginning of Shift	In	End of Shift
Ceramic horse's head				
Brown stoneware bowl				
Celadon bowl				
Porcelain bowl				
Blue and white vase				
Pair of jade ducks				
"Raw" jade				
Bronze vessel				
Round lacquered box				
Calligraphy samples (4) with stands				
Calligraphy practice boards (4) with stands (2)				
Brushes, Inkstone & Brushrest				
Chop(s), stamps, ink stick(s)				
Hand exercisers				
Table				
Child's dragon robe				
Embroidered Silk Square				
Birdcage (with blue cover)				
Silkworm cocoons				
Round Lacquer Box				
Peaches and Peonies Export Vase				

Check to see if you are low on any supplies (paper, pencils, etc.). Let the Tour office know if you need anything replenished.

Please share! Record visitor questions that “stumped” you and comments or observations you would like to share with fellow guides and staff. If you know the answer to someone's question, please record the answer! Staff will also periodically review questions and try to assist with finding answers.

INTRODUCTION TO ART CARTS

INTRODUCTION

The MIA's Art Carts are hands-on gallery stations outfitted with art objects, props and visual aids related to the museum's permanent collection.

Staffed by Museum Guide Programs volunteers, Art Carts provide visitors with a unique art museum experience where **“Do touch!”** is the rule. Guides use the objects on the Art Carts as tools for facilitating learning experiences that encourage careful looking, thoughtful conversation, critical thinking skills, and further exploration of the Institute's permanent collections. And, they are lots of fun for all ages!

ART CART GOALS

The goal of each Art Cart experience is to provide a multi-sensory interaction with art objects during which guides help visitors deepen their interest in and experience with the museum's permanent collection. Each object on the Art Carts is thoughtfully selected for its connections to the collection and its ability to engage the senses and inspire questions and observations. Although there are limitless possibilities for each Art Cart, we are constrained by several factors including cost, availability, durability/fragility, and safety and security of art and visitors in the galleries (i.e. most paint/ink are not allowed, nor are sharp objects).

Each cart also has a general theme or focus to tie the selected objects together (e.g. Africa – pattern and decoration of everyday objects; China – artist as master craftsperson; Americas – adornment and dress; Japan – tea ceremony; South and Southeast Asia – symbolism; Pacific Islands – relationship to the natural world).

BEST PRACTICES

A successful Art Cart-visitor interaction:

- Sparks curiosity and inspires exploration in visitors of all ages
- Involves the visitor in conversation about the objects on the Art Cart
- Allows the visitor to direct the discussion/discovery and explore those things of interest to the individual
- Provides opportunities for visitors to handle art objects with care and to learn about the museum's role in preserving and protecting the world's rich artistic heritage
- Stimulates as many of the five senses as possible/practical
- Encourages visitor exploration in the surrounding galleries to seek out related objects (ideas provided in the “Collection Connections” section of each Art Cart object entry)

BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

Each docent or guide is expected to:

- Study the written Art Cart materials before *each* shift and be prepared to discuss *all* objects on the Art Cart
- Arrive on time (20 minutes before the shift begins) and insure the cart is ready for visitors at the appointed time
- Exhibit an outgoing, friendly and welcoming attitude while staffing the

Art Cart

- Be proactive and invite visitors to explore the Art Cart
- Engage visitors in open-ended discussions about Art Cart objects rather than lecturing to them
- Stress the fragility and authenticity of objects, where appropriate
- Assist visitors in establishing connections between the objects on the Art Cart and the permanent collection

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Refer to the *Handbook for Collection in Focus Guides* for detailed information concerning Art Cart assignments, arrival times and responsibilities.

OBJECT STORAGE, HANDLING AND SECURITY

Each Art Cart includes items that can be divided into two main categories:

1. Art objects
2. Props, visual aids and general supplies

The art objects themselves are the main focus of each Art Cart. They are generally the most fragile, costly and difficult to replace items. To protect these objects, each is assigned a designated storage container or space, usually on the top shelf of the cart. It is essential each object is returned to its appropriate storage place at the end of each Art Cart shift.

The props, visual aids and other supplies are intended to support the art objects on each Art Cart, helping volunteers and visitors to understand or explore certain aspects of the art objects. These ancillary items are usually more easily replaced or repaired than the art objects themselves.

All items (art objects and supporting materials) must stay on or near the Art Cart at all times. Visitors and volunteers are not allowed to walk away from the Art Cart with objects and props. (Art Cart items are not to be used as tour props.) It is imperative that one docent or guide on duty is present at the Art Cart at all times to assist visitors in carefully handling the objects to insure object and visitor safety.

Should a visitor intentionally or unintentionally leave the Art Cart with art objects, props, or visual aids and the volunteers on duty are unable to recover these items from the visitor themselves, security should be notified immediately. (Locate the nearest guard or call Security Control via a gallery phone at x3225.)

BRINGING PERSONAL OBJECTS Guides must refrain from bringing personal items from home to use on the Art Carts. All objects used on the carts a) must be vetted by Museum Guide Programs staff to insure they are appropriate for the Art Cart and b) need to remain on the cart/in the museum, so that Security is not put in the position of having to judge whether or not items are guides' personal property or the museum's property. Additionally, the museum cannot assume responsibility for the loss or damage of guides' personal property.

Museum Guide Programs is happy to consider your suggestions for possible additions to any of the Art Carts.

ART CART INVENTORY Each Art Cart is stocked with a binder containing inventory worksheets listing each of the *art objects* on the cart. (Not all supporting props, visual aids and general supplies are listed on the inventory.) A thorough inventory of the Art Cart should be conducted at the beginning and end of each shift.

At the end of each shift, any damaged or missing objects and/or depleted supplies should be recorded on the inventory *and* reported to a staff member in the Tour Office.

There is also space on the back of each day's inventory sheet to record any questions, comments or suggestions docents, guides or museum visitors may have about the Art Cart. Please take a moment to share your experience with fellow volunteers and staff!

Ceramics

The four ceramics on the China Art Cart show the full range of ceramic body types, from low-fired earthenware (700-1200° C) to high-fired stoneware (1200-1300° C) and porcelain (1250-1450° C). They also show painted, glazed, and underglazed ceramics.

The ceramics are securely mounted on boards that can be set out on the Art Cart. When placed end-to-end with the horse head at one end and the under/overglazed porcelain bowl at the opposite end, they are in chronological and firing temperature order (earthenware through porcelain).

EARTHENWARE HORSE'S HEAD

WHAT IS IT?

This object is an earthenware horse's head. It was likely made during the Han dynasty (206 B.C. – 221 A.D.)

WHY WAS IT MADE?

This object is a ming-ch'i (pronounced ming- — chee, a "spirit article" or "bright object," that was made solely for burial. It was one of dozens, perhaps hundreds of objects that would have been placed in a multi-chambered tomb.

Although some ming-ch'i were made for specific burials, many were mass-produced and could be purchased on a retail basis.

HOW WAS IT MADE?

The horse's head was made in a mold out of grayish-colored clay. The molds were carved out of clay and fired at a high temperature. Once cooled, the mold was coated with a parting compound to prevent the clay from sticking.

Wet, unfired clay was then pressed into the mold. The potter would scrape down the object's walls so that the final object would be hollow and relatively lightweight.

The mold with the clay inside would then be fired, but at a lower temperature than that at which the mold itself was originally fired.

To create more complex pieces, an entire horse, for example, several molds would have been used. The pieces would have been assembled before firing by attaching the mold pieces containing the unfired clay.

After firing and cooling the mold would be removed. Imperfections were filed off and the object could be decorated with paint. Many traces of pigment remain on this horse's head.

**WHAT AESTHETIC
OR CULTURAL
VALUES DOES THIS
OBJECT REFLECT?**

This object reflects the Chinese reverence for the ancestors. By the Han dynasty, the Chinese had already been burying goods with their dead for thousands of years. This practice reached a highpoint in the Shang dynasty when elaborate bronze vessels, along with carved jade, silk, foodstuffs and live human and animal sacrifices were buried in royal tombs. By the Han dynasty, burial of ceramic ware replaced the practice of human and animal sacrifice and the production of ming-ch'i, items specifically intended for burial, was greatly expanded.

Many ceramic ming-ch'i made during the Han dynasty recreated the form of the Shang dynasty bronzes. Most of those bronzes were vessels that had been used for ritual purposes before being buried. The horse's head represents the second type of ming-ch'i and reflects a trend toward naturalism that prevailed during the Han dynasty. Ming-ch'i of this type might include replicas of the deceased's home or farm, servants, guards, musicians, jugglers, and a variety of animals—anything that might bring comfort in the afterlife.

By burying objects with the dead, family members expressed their respect for the deceased and fulfilled the Confucian obligation of filial piety.

This object also reflects the importance of horses in Chinese society. The Han dynasty was founded on rebellion against the harsh rule of the previous rulers, the Ch'in. Horses were essential to the Han rulers establishing and exerting control. As such they were symbols of power and prestige. In addition to their military significance, horses were also used on the trade routes, which extended west to the Middle East and even to ancient Rome, and southward into India. The Chinese exported silk and received horses and other goods in return.

**QUESTIONS
AND ACTIVITIES**

What do you see? What does it feel like?

What other images of horses and other animals can be found in the Chinese galleries?

What traits, characteristics, or symbolic meaning do you associate with horses? With those qualities in mind, why might someone want a horse (real or clay sculpture) buried with them in their tomb?

What important item(s) would you like to have buried in your tomb?

What are some reasons why ancient and modern peoples around the world bury significant objects, images, or symbols with their dead?

COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS

HORSES

- Japan, *Haniwa Horse*, 83.130
- Charles Caryl Coleman, American, *The Bronze Horses of San Marco*, Venice, 79.13
- Mali, *Equestrian Figure*, 83.168
- Attributed to the Painter of Vatican 359, Greece, *Black-Figure Neck Amphora*, 57.1
- Japan, *A Show of Horsemanship* (screen), 62.77
- Sung Dynasty, *Zodiac Funerary Jar*, 2004.48a,b
- Tuan Dynasty, *Zodiac Animals*, 99.178.3.1
- Han Dynasty, *Celestial Horse*, 2002.45
- T'ang Dynasty, *Tomb Retinue*, 49.1.1-10
- Eastern Han, *Prancing Horse*, 98.19
- Han Dynasty, *Horse and Rider*, 2001.205a-c
- Northern Ch'i Dynasty, *Striding Horse*, 2004.205.2
- Greece, *Horse*, 69.35
- Bhavani Das, India, *The Stallion Judáldan Ayragi*, 92.115
- Cadzi Cody, *Scenes of Plains India Life* (Elk Hide), 85.92
- One Bull, Dakota, *Custer's War*, 94.47.1

FUNERARY OBJECTS

- Han Dynasty, *Figure of a Squatting Drummer*, 2003.101
- Han Dynasty, *Watchtower, Pavilion and Pigsty*, 98.69 a,b; 88.77.1-5; 95.118.1
- Han Dynasty, *Cart with Ox and Farmer*, 2002.217.7a-m
- T'ang dynasty, *Tomb Retinue*, 49.1.1-10 (Especially the horses!)
- Egypt, *Mummy, Coffin, and Cartonnage of Lady Teshat*, 16.414
- Shang and Chou Dynasty, *Bronzes*, G214
- Mexico, Nayarit, *Horse Group*, 47.2.37
- Mexico, Olmec, *Mask*, 2002.127
- Peru, Chimu, *Earspools*, 43.4.1,2
- Peru, Nazca, *Fish*, 44.3.59
- Nigeria, Ijo/Ijaw, *Memorial Screen*
- Italy, Etruscan, *Cinerary Urn and Lid*, 70.8a,b
- Italy, *Reliquary Head of St. Theobald*, 83.73a-c
- Japan, *Haniwa Figures*, G205
- Egypt, *Funerary Mask of a Young Woman*, 16.572

GLAZED STONEWARE BOWL

- WHAT IS IT?** This is a ceramic stoneware bowl covered with a rich brown glaze. It was probably made at the Huang-t'ao (pronounced wong-dow) kilns near Honan province during the T'ang dynasty (618 – 906 A.D.).
- HOW WAS IT MADE?** This bowl was made by the coil method, meaning the potter built up the walls of the vessel by hand wrapping successive ropes of clay. The individual coils would be thoroughly attached to one another and often the sides of the vessel would be smoothed inside and out. In this bowl the edges of the coils remain visible on the bowl's interior.
- WHY WAS IT MADE?** As in the Han dynasty, a sizable segment a ceramic output during the T'ang dynasty was for ming-ch'i, or tomb objects. During the T'ang, potters used earthenware, stoneware and ultimately porcelain to produce ming-ch'i of various sizes, quality and decorative motifs. A variety of glazes and glazing techniques were also used, from the famous "three-color" glazes (visible on the MIA's tomb retinue), to underglaze painting, to clear glazes over high-fired porcelain. Of course, ceramics of a range of quality, durability, and costliness were also produced for daily in-home use as well as ceremonial and imperial wares.
- WHAT AESTHETIC OR CULTURAL VALUES DOES THIS OBJECT REFLECT?** The T'ang dynasty was a time of trade and commerce, when China was absorbing influences from far-flung places to the west and south. Those influences can be seen in specific shapes of some Tang dynasty ceramics, in the use of cobalt blue (from Persia) glaze and in the wide variety of styles and motifs produced during this period.
- The dark monochromatic glazed Huang-tao pottery expressed strength and vigor in design, much as Tang society reflected the vigor of China's military and commercial power. Huang-tao ceramics were frequently decorated with bluish white splashes created with a phosphoric glaze. This "splash-ware" was a precursor to the splashed Chun wares of the northern Sung dynasty.
- The heavier texture, naturalistic feel and the random decorative motif of Huang-tao ware also presaged the ceramics produced for tea drinking during the Sung dynasty. Drinking tea evolved out of the practice of Zen Buddhism and meditation. In contrast to the high-fired porcelains and translucent celadon glazes being produced during that period, Zen practitioners favored heavier ceramic ware with a more naturalistic texture and design. This aesthetic made its way to Japan, where it greatly influenced ceramics used for the Japanese tea ceremony.
- QUESTIONS** What do you see? What do you feel?

AND ACTIVITIES

How does it feel? On the inside? On the outside? How does this bowl compare with the other ceramic examples on the Art Cart?

What would you use this bowl for? Why?

What would you do with it if you could take it home with you? Why?

What similar and different ceramic objects are on view in the galleries?

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

HUANG-T'AO WARE

- T'ang Dynasty, Jar, 96.51

CELADON BOWL WITH MOLDED DESIGN

WHAT IS IT?

This object is a small bowl made of light grey stoneware with a celadon glaze. It is a modern reproduction of a type of ceramic ware produced during the Northern Sung dynasty called Yao-chou (pronounced yow-joe) ware.

HOW WAS IT MADE?

The clay was thrown on a potter's wheel to shape the bowl. The decoration was then achieved by molding: the bowl would have been placed upside down over a carved mold. The bowl and mold would then have been placed on a turntable. The potter would then spin the turntable while using a paddle to beat the clay over the mold to impress the designs into the clay, and would also pare down the clay on the wheel to the thinness we see in the example on the Art Cart and elsewhere in the gallery.

Celadon glaze was then applied, and the piece was fired in a reducing atmosphere (deprived of oxygen) at a kiln temperature higher than 1100°. Instead of allowing oxygen to circulate through the kiln, the atmosphere remained laden with smoke, containing carbon monoxide. In this type of atmosphere, the iron compounds in the celadon glaze react chemically to result in beautiful translucent green colors.

Carving, rather than impressing the object over a mold, was also used to decorate Yao-chou ware. The carvings were deep, usually done with a small bamboo scalpel, and allowed the glaze to collect in the hollows.

WHAT IS CELADON?

Celadon refers to ceramic wares with a glaze ranging in color from light blue to olive or greyish green.

Though occasionally applied over porcelain (during the later Ming and Ch'ing dynasties), celadon was typically applied over light grey stoneware bodies during the Sung. The opaque stoneware reflects a portion of the light passing through the translucent glaze, enriching the overall effect, and the grey stoneware ground also deepens the tonality of the glaze.

Celadon glaze was invented in China during the Shang dynasty and has been used almost continuously since then.

One reason it is valued is because its color and sheen is similar to jade.

While commonly used in the West, the term "celadon," is not used by the Chinese, who prefer "greenware," or "quinci" (literally pale bluish-green ware). The origin of the word "celadon" in the West is not

**WHAT IS CELADON
(CONTINUED)?**

entirely clear, but it may come from the name Saladin, Sultan of Egypt and Syria, who lived from 1138-1193 and collected and admired such wares; from the River Celadon in Homer's Iliad (associated with water and its sea green color); or from a 17th century French play featuring a shepherd named Celadon, who always wore greyish-green clothing.

**WHERE DOES THIS
BOWL COME FROM?**

Yao-chao ware is named for the kilns at Yao-chou in Shensi province, about 70 miles northeast of Ch'ang-an. Ch'ang-an was the capital of the T'ang dynasty.

Yao-chao ware dates primarily from the Northern Sung dynasty, 960 – 1125 A.D.

**WHAT AESTHETIC
OR CULTURAL
VALUES DOES THIS
BOWL REFLECT?**

The impressed chrysanthemum design in the center represents a flower that blooms in autumn, and may symbolize the wisdom that flowers in old age, and the life of ease that follows retirement from public office.

Sung dynasty ceramics were generally valued for their simplicity, elegance and purity of color and form. Where the previous T'ang dynasty had been a time of opulence and splendor, the Sung dynasty was a more reflective age, where learning and philosophy were valued more highly than wealth or military power.

**QUESTIONS
AND ACTIVITIES**

What do you see? How does it feel?

Describe the decoration of this bowl. How does its decoration compare to that of the other ceramics on the Cart?

The 4 ceramic objects mounted on the Chinese Art Cart can be lined-up in the order of hardness (the harder the ware, the higher the firing temperature) from earthenware (horse's head) to porcelain (Ch'ing bowl). When ordered according to hardness, they are also in chronological order. Ask visitors to feel each of the 4 ceramic objects, comparing and contrasting their surface texture, thickness, shape, etc.

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

YAO-CHOU WARE

- Northern Sung Dynasty, *Bowls*, 85.32, 2003.9.2, 2000.39.2, 2000.89.3a,b, 2001.135.4
- Northern Sung Dynasty, *Ewer*, 98.126
- Northern Sung Dynasty, *Tripod Censer*, 2004.132.2

COLLECTION

CHRYSANTHEMUMS

CONNECTIONS
(CONTINUED)

- Southern Sung Dynasty, *Round Covered Box*, 2001.73.1a,b
- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Jadeite Plate*, 34.21.1
- Southern Sung Dynasty, *Ewer and Cover*, 2000.83.2a,b
- Charles T. Grosjean/Tiffany & Co., American, *Chrysanthemum Candelabrum*, 62.80.1a,b
- Nagata Yu-ji, Japan, *Takatsuki*, 2001.206.1
- Japan, *Box with Chrysanthemum Designs*, 89.69a,b
- Shibata Zeshin, Japan, *Birds and Plants of the Four Seasons*, 81.113.2.1
- John Bradstreet, American, *Chrysanthemum Sconce from the Prindle House*, 82.42.17.1a-f

PORCELAIN BOWL WITH UNDERGLAZE AND OVERGLAZE DESIGN

WHAT IS IT? This is a porcelain bowl with underglaze painting and overglaze enamel design. It was made during the reign of the Tao-Kuang emperor (1821-50) of the Ch'ing Dynasty. It bears his reign mark on the bottom.

HOW WAS IT MADE? Porcelain clay is made by mixing specific quantities of kaolin (pronounced KAY-uh-lin) and petuntse (pi-TOON-tse) with water and sometimes other substances, then allowing the mixture to age, sometimes for several years. The aging process allows greater plasticity to develop in the clay. The clay is then kneaded to eliminate all the air bubbles, which could expand under the heat of firing. The clay could then be molded or turned on a wheel. After drying it would be painted and glazed and then fired at extremely high temperatures, in excess of 1250 degrees Centigrade. The glaze, also containing petuntse, would fuse to the body of the object, creating an extremely hard, non-porous finish.

Porcelain clay would first be shaped on a potter's wheel. After the basic shape was formed and partially dried, it might be pared down by hand to make the walls of the vessel finer.

Some of the decoration was then painted on, specifically, the various underglaze motifs would be outlined in pale cobalt blue. The vessel was then covered with a clear glaze and fired at a high temperature (1250-1450° C).

The outlines were then filled in with translucent enamels of various colors. The enamels were composed of pigments suspended in lead-silica glass. They would be painted on after the first firing, and then the vessel would be fired again at a lower temperature. (The enamels cannot withstand the heat of the first firing.)

The underglaze outlines fit so perfectly with the overglaze enamels that the technique became known as "doucai," (dew-sigh) or "joined colors," a reference to the complex joinery used in wood furniture and architecture.

WHAT IS PORCELAIN? Porcelain is a high-fired, white paste translucent ceramic ware that was developed during the T'ang dynasty. Western and Chinese definitions of porcelain are not always in agreement. While Westerners often consider translucence an essential porcelain property, the Chinese generally term any fine, high-fired ceramic that rings a clear note when struck (no matter how opaque) to be porcelain.

**WHAT IS
PORCELAIN?
(CONTINUED)**

It is made from kaolin/gaoling, a clay containing feldspar, granite and pegmatite that remains white when fired; combined with petuntse/baidunzi, a clay of similar composition in which the feldspar is less decomposed. When fired, the petuntse vitrifies, holding the less fusible kaolin together and resulting in an extremely hard, translucent ceramic. Kaolin is sometimes referred to as the bones of the porcelain, and petuntse as the flesh.

The name kaolin refers to the hills near Ching-te Chen (CHING-duh-ZHUHN) where the clay was first discovered. The name porcelain derives from the Portuguese word “porcellana,” meaning cowrie shell, which 16th century traders thought the porcelain ceramics resembled in color and texture.

Ching-te Chen became a center of the Chinese ceramics industry. The kilns there were destroyed by rebel forces in 1675 (early in the dynasty’s reign) and rebuilt in 1677. The majority of the fine ceramics produced during the Ch’ing dynasty came from the Ching-te Chen kilns.

**WHAT AESTHETIC
OR CULTURAL
VALUES DOES THIS
OBJECT REFLECT?**

The Ch’ing dynasty can be thought of as the grand finale in the development of Chinese ceramics with a flourishing industry supplying the royal court, the everyday needs of the common people and increasing demands for export. Porcelain became the dominant type of ware produced, and ceramics therefore came to be distinguished primarily on the basis of their decoration.

Monochrome wares were still produced, many specifically imitating Sung dynasty styles. These appealed to a highly cultivated segment of society and in fact were reserved for the highest echelons of the royal family. Diversity of color increased as rank within the imperial hierarchy decreased. Technically magnificent and visually luxurious, highly decorated bowls such as this one were considered relatively informal. They were in huge demand both in China and overseas.

The underglaze/overglaze technique of this bowl creates a sparkling brilliance of color. The metallic oxide pigments painted directly on the porcelain body borrow the sheen of the glaze applied over them; the enamel pigments turn to glass and adhere to the vessel surface. The colors do not become dull over the course of time—indeed the longevity of the colors themselves mirrors the wishes for long life and good fortune conveyed in the auspicious symbols used to decorate the vessel.

Some of the auspicious symbols in this bowl include the peony, a

**WHAT AESTHETIC
OR CULTURAL
VALUES DOES THIS
OBJECT REFLECT
(CONTINUED)?**

symbol of spring and of prosperity; the orchid a symbol of love, and of numerous progeny; the ling-chih (ling-jur), or fungus of immortality; clouds, an ancient symbol representing the vehicle of the immortals and a good omen; the lotus, associated with Buddhism, purity, and representing summer and fertility, and the chrysanthemum, a symbol of autumn and a life of ease. (See illustrations.)

By the end of the 18th century, Europe had uncovered the secret “recipe” and was producing its own porcelain and demand for Chinese ceramics decreased. Although some wares of outstanding quality were still produced, a gradual decline ensued, culminating in 1853 when the Taiping rebels sacked the kilns at Ching-te Chen.

**QUESTIONS
AND ACTIVITIES**

What do you see? How does it feel?

How would you describe the decoration?

How does it look and feel in comparison to the other ceramic objects on the China Art Cart?

Compare the bowl to the small blue and white vase on the China Art Cart. How are the decorations similar or different? (The small vase is decorated only with blue underglaze while the bowl employs underglaze applied before firing and colored enamels applied after firing.)

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

UNDERGLAZE DECORATION

- Yuan Dynasty, *Dish*, 87.62
- Yuan Dynasty, *Pear-Shaped Vase (Ping)*, 84.116.5
- T'ang Dynasty, *Ewer*, 91.9
- Korea, Choson Dynasty, *Dragon Jars*, 81.113.6; 99.168
- Persia (Iran), Seljuk Period, *Bowl*, 50.46.431
- Syria, Ottoman Period, *Hexagonal/Wall Tile*, 17.55

OVERGLAZE DECORATION

- Sung-Ch'in Dynasty, *Figure of Kuan Chung*, 2000.158.1
- Persia (Iran), Seljuk Period, *Bowl*, 32.32.7
- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Peach Dish*, 2001.134
- Ming Dynasty, *Three Dragon Brushrest*, 2000.147.1

PORCELAIN (WHITE CLAY BODY VISIBLE UNDER CLEAR
GLAZE)

- T'ang Dynasty, *Ewer with Pheasant Head Stopper*, 50.1a,b (early porcelain)
- T'ang Dynasty, *Cup*, 97.50.3



RAW JADE AND PAIR OF JADE DUCKS

WHAT IS JADE?

The term “jade” (in Chinese *yu*) refers collectively to a number of semiprecious stones that occur naturally around the world and have been used throughout history. The most common kinds of jade are jadeite and nephrite, which differ slightly in appearance and origin, though both come in a variety of colors from pink to green. Nephrite, a slightly more expensive stone, comes from Central Asia and has been worked in China since the Neolithic period. Jadeite has a shinier surface than nephrite, comes mainly from Burma and was mostly unknown in China until the 18th century. The piece of raw jade on our Art Cart is nephrite. The pair of ducks discussed below is jadeite.

Jade goes through a remarkable transformation from “raw” when it comes out of the earth to “refined” after it is worked and polished. As you can see on the piece of raw jade, jade naturally forms a skin on the outside hiding its beautiful interior. The highly refined jade objects in the galleries and on the China Art Cart have been carefully worked by skilled craftspeople.

The piece of raw jade on the Art Cart was purchased in Hong Kong by a museum guide to replace the T.B. Walker piece formerly on the Art Cart.

HOW IS RAW JADE SCULPTED?

It is not really accurate to talk about “carving” jade. Because of its extreme hardness, 6.5-7.0 (talc is 1.0, diamond is 10.0) on Moh’s hardness scale, jade cannot be carved like many other, softer stones. If chiseled, the brittle stone will shatter.

Instead, jade is abraded using a paste of minerals harder than jade such as garnet and quartz. The paste is rubbed against the jade using bamboo or wood sticks and strings or steel cords to incise the jade surface or saw through it completely. As many as ten specialists are required to produce one piece of worked jade.

WHAT IS THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JADE IN CHINA?

Jade is admired for its hardness, translucency, smoothness and rarity. To many Chinese, it is emblematic of virtue, protection, and wealth, among other things.

Han scholar Xu Shen summarizes jade’s properties and is now memorized by many students of art history in China:

“Jade is the fairest of stones. It is endowed with five virtues. Charity is typified by its luster, bright yet warm; rectitude by its translucency, revealing the color and markings within; wisdom by the purity and penetrating quality of its note when the stone is struck; courage, in that it may be broken, but cannot be bent; equity, in that it has sharp angles, which yet injure none.”

Jade has been used in China since Neolithic times, and has retained its value over time. Patronage by the Ch’ien-lung emperor during the 18th century took

**WHAT IS THE CULTURAL
SIGNIFICANCE OF JADE IN
CHINA?, CONTINUED**

the jade industry to new heights, especially in the manufacture of decorative objects as symbols of status and wealth. It was during Ch'ien-lung's reign that our own *Jade Mountain* was made in the imperial jade workshop, as well as the majority of our jade objects from the Thomas B. Walker Collection. Jade continues to be a precious material emblematic of China-- the medals for the 2008 Beijing Olympics were enhanced with white jade.

**WHAT OTHER CULTURES
VALUE JADE?**

Jade has been and continues to be considered valuable in many different cultures including ancient Mesoamerican cultures such as the Olmec, Maya and Aztec, the Māori of New Zealand, and others. Jade is the official state gemstone of both Wyoming and Alaska.

PAIR OF JADE DUCKS

**WHAT ARE THEY MADE
OF?**

This pair of ducks from the late 19th or early 20th century are made of jadeite, as indicated by their extremely shiny surface. To see the difference in surface quality, compare these ducks with the *Jade Mountain*, which is made of nephrite.

**WHAT DO THE DUCKS
AND LOTUS FLOWERS
REPRESENT?**

Ducks mate for life, so this pair is an ideal symbol of conjugal happiness and fidelity. Mandarin ducks are considered superior to other duck species and are distinguished by a tuft of feathers on the back of their heads, as can be seen in this pair on the Art Cart. They are often shown holding lotus flowers in their beaks.

In our pair, the ducks grasp the stem of a lotus while blossoms and leaves trail gracefully onto each duck's back. Since a lotus pod contains many seeds and its prolific flowering is symbolic of the fruits of summer, their presence suggests the early and abundant arrival of children.

In addition, one of many Chinese words for lotus is a homonym for harmony (*he*), perhaps connected to the lotus' importance as a Buddhist symbol. The lotus is a Buddhist symbol of purity and human potential, as the pure white lotus flower grows out of mud just as the Buddha is born into the world but lives above it. The fruits of the lotus are said to be ripe when the flower blooms, just as the Buddha's teachings immediately bear the fruit of enlightenment.

This pair of ducks holding lotus flowers might represent familial happiness and harmony in conjunction with human potential for enlightenment. They would be an appropriate gift for a newly married couple.

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

Raw Jade:

Pick up, turn over, and examine this rock. What do you observe? What questions do you have? What surprises you about this object? What do you see that makes you say that?

Based on its size and shape, what would you make/have made out of this piece of jade?

Jade is even more precious and valuable than gold in China. Looking at the jades on the Art Cart and in the galleries, what characteristics and properties do you think might be most admired?

Find an object on the China Art Cart that is made from jade. How does it compare to the piece of raw jade?

What other kinds of objects do you see in the galleries made of jade?

How many other colors of jade can you find in the galleries?

Pair of Ducks:

What do you see? How would you describe these figures? How does the jade look and feel?

How does this pair of jade ducks compare to other jade objects in the galleries? What do you see that makes you say that?

If you were a jade artist, what jade image would you like to make? Why?

To see the difference between nephrite and jadeite, compare these ducks with the *Jade Mountain*. What do you see in the stones that make them similar? Different?

The duck in Chinese symbolism represents familial happiness and the lotus represents purity and human potential. What animals or plants in your culture have special meaning? Where do you see artistic examples of those symbols in the museum or in your experience?

COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS

JADES

- China, Neolithic jades, G215
- China, Ming and Ch'ing jades, G210
- New Zealand, Māori, *Mere Pounamu*, no date, 99.101.3
- Mesoamerica, Maya, *Maskette*, 550-900, 2004.104.1
- Mesoamerica, Olmec, *Mask*, 900-300 B.C.E., 2002.127

Birds in Chinese Art

- T'ang Dynasty, *Ewer with Pheasant's-Head Stopper*, 50.1a,b
- Yuan Dynasty, *Blue and White Dish with Peahen (female counterpart to a peacock)*, 87.62

BIRDS IN WORLD ART

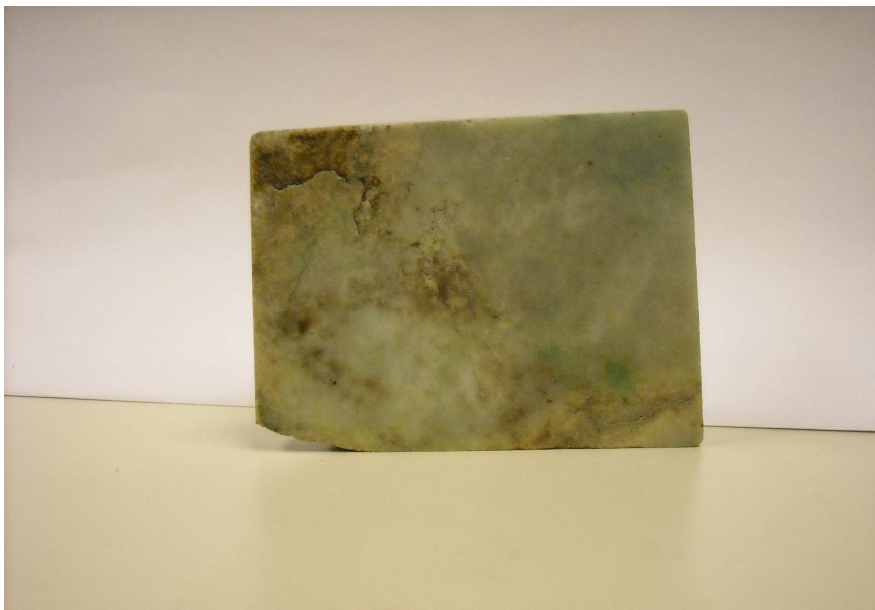
- West Africa, Yoruba, *Crown*, c.1920, 76.29
- New Ireland, *Malagan Frieze*, 19th century, 85.94
- Richard Hunt, *Transformation Mask*, 1993, 93.42
- Andes Region, Nazca, *Double Spout Jar (with Pelican)*, 77.56.6
- Constantin Brancusi, Italian, *Golden Bird*, c. 1929, 55.39

SYMBOLIC PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN WORLD ART

- Sir John Everett Millais, England, *Peace Concluded*, 1856, 69.48
Dove of peace, toy animals representing warring countries of Europe, dog of fidelity.
- Papua New Guinea, *Dance Mask with Bird Totem*, Ngavimeli. 20th century, 73.3 – Bird on top of mask is an intermediary between the living world and realm of ancestors.
- Indonesia, *Ganesh*, Sailendra dynasty, 2003.198 – Ganesha, the Hindu elephant-headed god, is the destroyer of obstacles and giver of earthly prosperity and well-being. He holds a rosary topped with a pomegranate, a symbol of abundance.
- Belgium, *Allegorical "Millefleurs" Tapestry with Animals*, 1530-45, 34.4
Unicorn represents Christ or Virgin Mary, three clumps of rosebushes forming triangle are holy trinity, barking hound and wild falcon are Devil or other evil forces.
- Master of the Embroidered Foliage, Netherlands, *Virgin and Child in a Landscape*, c. 1492-1498, 90.7 – symbols of Mary: blue iris for her sorrows, violets for humility, strawberry plant for her righteousness.



Rough Jade



Cut Jade



ANCIENT BRONZE VESSEL

WHEN & WHY WERE BRONZE OBJECTS FIRST MADE IN CHINA?

The Bronze Age in China was from about 1700 through 221 BCE, primarily during the Shang and Chou dynasties.

During this early period, the Chinese experimented with and developed bronze casting techniques.

As in many other Bronze Age cultures worldwide, the initial motivation for creating bronze objects in ancient China was to produce stronger weaponry and tools, which had been made of stone in the past.

In addition to weapons and tools, bronze vessels like this one were produced in great quantities for ceremonial purposes, including ancestor worship rituals, during which bronze vessels were used to hold wine, water, and food in honor of the ancestors.

Bronze vessels were also often buried in tombs. Chinese belief held that the deceased continue to live on as spirits and needed to take along worldly possessions for the afterlife (not unlike the ancient Egyptians).

Elaborate bronzes like those in the galleries were very costly prestige items. Wealthy people and royalty had a number of bronze vessels in their tombs—some even had hundreds or thousands! The less wealthy would have had fewer and smaller bronzes and/or ceramic vessels (a less expensive alternative). Some particularly lavish tombs even contained chariots and life-sized ceramic sculptures of the tomb occupant's army and servants.

HOW WAS IT MADE?

Bronze is an alloy of copper (usually about 90%) and tin.

The color of bronze is affected by the amount of copper, tin, and impurities, but it is generally reddish-gold. Over time, oxidization causes bronze to develop a typically greenish outer crust called a *patina*.

Although the Shang and Chou dynasty Chinese were familiar with the common practice of crafting bronzes by lost wax casting (also used by other Bronze Age cultures), they instead chose to use a much more complex, refined technique called *piece-mold casting*.

Piece-mold casting consists of a number of steps, summarized below. Illustrations of this process are available on the Chinese Art Cart as a visual aid for visitors.

**HOW WAS
IT MADE?
CONT.**

1. A simple clay model (without decoration) of the vessel shape is made and partially dried.
2. A second layer of clay is shaped over the model and allowed to dry.
3. The second layer is cut away from the model in sections. The inside walls of these sections are decorated by carving designs into the clay.
4. After wearing down the original model a few millimeters, the outer sections are re-assembled around the model, leaving an empty space between the two.
5. Molten bronze is poured between into the empty space.
6. After cooling, the inner and outer molds are broken away and the finished vessel is cleaned and polished.

The repeated pattern on this small vessel is referred to as “interlocking T’s.” This pattern is common in Shang and Early Chou dynasty bronze decoration. The motif may have been borrowed/adapted from Shang or Chou textile designs.

**QUESTIONS
& ACTIVITIES**

What do you see? Find other objects similar to this one in the galleries.

How might it have been used? What do you see that makes you think so?

Why might bronze have been such an important and expensive material?

If you owned this vessel, what would you do with it? Where would you keep it? What would you put in it? Why?

Draw the pattern on the vessel. Find other bronze vessels with similar and different patterns on them. Draw your favorites. What do you like best about them? What did you learn about the bronzes from drawing them?

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

- The ancient bronze gallery (Shang/Chou dynasties)
- Ancient bronzes in the Scholar's Studio and illustrated in paintings such as the *Portrait of the Wang Shih-Min* (corridor near Scholar's Studio) and the new album leaf of a scholar in his studio (not on view yet as of 4/3/00)
- Later vessels that imitate bronze patina and/or form (e.g. Han dynasty ceramic lien, Sung dynasty celadon tripod vessel, various Ming and Ch'ing jades imitating ancient bronze vessel shapes)

LACQUER VASE IN THE SHAPE OF A DOUBLE-GOURD

WHAT IS IT? This red-carved lacquer vessel in the form of a double-gourd was made in about 1850.

WHAT IS LACQUER? Lacquer is the hardened sap of the sumac tree (*rhus vernicifera*, or ch'i-shu in Chinese). Decorative lacquer like this vase is applied in many thin layers and cut or carved away to create elaborate designs.

WHERE DOES LACQUER COME FROM? The Chinese are considered the inventors of lacquer. The earliest evidence of the use of lacquer in China comes from the Shang dynasty. Lacquerware is waterproof and has a high resistance to intense heat and strong acids. Since ancient times the durability and beauty of lacquerware made it a desirable and valuable trade item. Lacquerware was exported to and copied at an early date in Korea and Japan.

HOW IS IT MADE? The sumac tree is tapped, notches are cut into the growing bark and the sap oozes out into containers. The quality of the sap depends on the type of soil, the climatic conditions during the growing period, the age of the tree and the time of year the sap is gathered. Sumac tree farms were developed to meet the demand for quality sap for highly desirable lacquered objects.

After the sap has been gathered, straining and heating it for several hours purify it. At this point lacquer will dry to a matte black. The coloring process of lacquer occurs during the heating process with vegetable and mineral dyes being added to produce the desired color. Red, the Chinese color of celebration, is created with either mercury sulfide or iron oxide being added to the lacquer. Adding cadmium creates yellow, and a rich lustrous black is achieved by adding iron. (To see various colors, direct visitors to the many lacquer objects in the Jade Corridor.)

The basic shape of the lacquer ware object is created out of paper, cloth, leather, shell, bamboo, or the most frequently used material, wood (as in this vase). Highly toxic in its liquid state, lacquer is applied in thin layers to the foundation material. It can take weeks for each layer to dry and harden thoroughly. Each layer is polished before the next layer is applied. Polishing provided the next layer of lacquer a proper surface to adhere to and ensured that the finished top surface was smooth. A layer of lacquer is approximately 0.05 mm thick. During this process different colors of lacquer could be applied. These different layers of color would be exposed during the carving process. Chinese lacquer objects have from thirty to three hundred layers.

**WHY DOES IT LOOK
THE WAY IT DOES?**

The shape of this container is a double gourd, identified with long life; it appears as a motif on many decorative objects such as ceramics and textiles. The double gourd and crutch are the attributes of Li T'ieh-kuai (Li Tie Gwai), one of the Eight Taoist Immortals. He is often pictured holding a double gourd from which spirals of smoke ascend, denoting his power of setting his spirit free from his body as an immortal being. When his spirit ventured outside of his body, a follower was left to care for his physical body. On one occasion, his body disappeared while Li T'ieh-kuai's spirit was away. When his spirit returned he took over the body of a dying beggar, referenced by the crutch Li T'ieh-kuai always carries.



**WHAT ARE SOME OF
THE SYMBOLS AND
DESIGNS DEPICTED?**

The upper rim and neck of the double gourd has a meander or key-pattern. This border design is called a thunder pattern and is a stylization based on ancient design patterns from Shang dynasty bronzes. Thunder (and the rain that accompanied it) was a very important natural phenomenon to the primarily agricultural society of ancient China.

The perpendicular oval shapes around the neck of the container represent the cicada. The cicada is an insect that during its development burrows

into the ground only to emerge full-grown four years later; it symbolizes resurrection and immortality. This symbol can be traced back to the Shang dynasty and may be found on many bronzes from that time. Over time the cicada has also come to symbolize happiness and eternal youth.

Placed between the cicada forms are numerous small ju-i (pronounced — — roo-ee) scepter heads. The scepter represents the bearer's ability to grant wishes or desires. Examples of ju-i scepters can be found in the Jade Corridor. The shape that forms the head of the ju-i scepter references the Taoist ling-chih or "fungus of immortality."

The ling-chih symbol appears on many objects such as ceramics, furniture and textiles.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF
THE SYMBOLS AND
DESIGNS DEPICTED
(CONTINUED)?**

The eight window-like scenes around the vase body show humans out in nature. The activities pictured such as viewing a waterfall, playing the ch'in (zither), walking in the landscape with books and conversing with friends, all reflect a harmonious relationship with nature. The figures are not dominating the mountainous landscape. The clouds that float in the sky suggest the imminent appearance of dragons.

The trees in the landscape may be identified as pine, willow and prunus (plum). Each tree has a symbolic meaning that would be recognized and understood by a Chinese person of the Ming dynasty. (See illustrations.)

The pine is a symbol of friends who are constant and true through thick and thin. Since the pine is evergreen it also symbolizes long life.

The prunus or plum is a symbol of winter and represents the promise of spring and long life as the blossoms appear on leafless branches.

The willow is regarded as a symbol of spring and summer is often used in poetry to suggest the beautiful woman. The willow is thought to possess power over the malignant forces of the world. Willow branches are used to sweep tomb and altar areas clean. Willow trees planted near homes are thought to offer protection for the inhabitants.

The background motifs surrounding the eight window views include stylized lotus and foliate tendrils. The lotus is a Buddhist symbol representing purity and human potential. The lotus growing in muck and mire sends out a stalk on which a pure white flower appears. The foliate tendrils reflecting the lushness of the natural world also create a decorative surface to engage and please the eye.

The base of the vessel is completed with a border of artemisia leaves that are part of the group of Eight Treasures. A bunch of artemisia leaves when placed by a doorway are thought to disperse evil influences from around a house.

**QUESTIONS
AND ACTIVITIES**

What do you see?

How would you describe the shape of the vessel?

How does it feel?

What is going on in the eight scenes around the vase? What do you see that makes you say that?

What kinds of things do you enjoy doing outside in nature? What is your favorite season of the year to be outside? What kinds of activities do you do?

Where do you spend your “me time”—time to think, reflect, contemplate, escape, etc.?

Design your very own illustration of yourself and/or friends and family out in nature! What are you doing? What do your surroundings look like? What is the weather like?

Find symbols like those on this vessel on other objects in the Chinese galleries.

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

LACQUER

- China, G210, G215
- Japan, G221 G224, G219
- Korea, G206
- Burma, G213
- Claude Charles Saunier, French, *Cabinet*, 77.30
- Attributed to Victor Smith, National Guitar Company, “*New Yorker*” *Electric Guitar*, 98.276.287.1

OBJECTS WITH SIMILAR MOTIFS/SYMBOLS

Taoist Immortals

- Ch’ing Dynasty, *Presentation Boxes*, 41.57.2, 43.26.2a,b, 43.26.1a,b
- China, *Vase with Eight Taoist Immortals*, 2000.155.2
- Kano Sansetsu, Japan, *Taoist Immortals Screens*, 63.37.1-4
- China, *Figure of Li T’ieh-Kuai (Li Tie Gwai)*, 99.217.413

COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS
(CONTINUED)

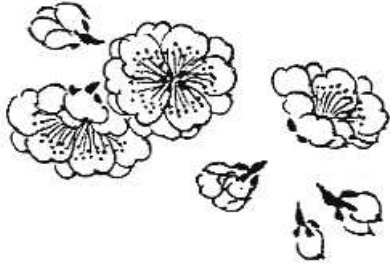
Cicadas

- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Cicada Brooch*, 51.27.130
- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Imperial Garnature Set*, 99.121.1.1-5
- Han Dynasty, *Amulet in the Form of a Cicada*, 50.46.289
- Han Dynasty, *Gilt Bronze Plaques*, 2003.137.1-26
- Shang Dynasty, *Kuei*, 50.46.121

GOURDS

- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Water Basin*, 33.38.1a,b
- Cameroon, *Beaded Bottle and Stopper*, 2001.272.26
- Korea, *Double-Gourd Ewer*, 99.41a,b
- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Gourd Cricket Containers*, 96.69.1a,b, 98.220.1a,b, 98.220.3a,b, 98.220.6a,b
- Democratic Republic of Congo, Luba, *Power Figure*, 96.42
- Liao Dynasty, *Gourd-Shaped Vase*, 2001.5.2
- Japan, *Tobacco Tray*, 2002.141.4
- Sung Dynasty, *Double-Gourd Ewer*, 84.115.1
- Graham Vivian Sutherland, *Three Standing Forms in a Garden*, 63.73
- Japan, *Cat and Mouse*, 99.59.7
- Richard Bresnahan, American, *Double-Gourd Teapot*, 96.25.2a,b





plum (prunus) blossoms



pine needles



peony



willow tree



chrysanthemum



lotus blossom

CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY AND RELATED OBJECTS

WHAT IS CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY?

Calligraphy is very simply beautiful writing. In China it is Chinese characters written using a brush and ink. Along with painting and poetry, calligraphy is considered one of the “Three Perfections” in Chinese art.

WHERE DID IT ORIGINATE?

The basis for Chinese calligraphy lies in the various styles of script developed beginning with pictographs and oracle bone inscriptions (ca. 2700-1300 BCE).

Chinese oral tradition says that calligraphy began when a four-eyed man was inspired to imitate the beautiful and natural shapes of the footprints of birds and animals and the shadows cast by trees. The interpretation of the god of heaven’s reaction to this act varies. Some say that the god was very impressed and happy, and that he showered the people with grain from the sky. Other interpretations say that the god became very angry at humans for deciphering one of the great mysteries of the universe.

The first standardized written script in China was developed and implemented during the Ch’in (Qin) dynasty (221-206 BCE), under the reign of the emperor Ch’in Shih-Huang-ti (Qin Shi Huangdi; pronounced Chin shur-hwong-dee).

Today, the longest Chinese dictionary includes some 50,000 characters. Approximately 5,000-8,000 are commonly used.

WHY IS CALLIGRAPHY CONSIDERED ART?

Chinese characters are complicated, subtle and require great skill and discipline to be well-written. It takes many years of training and practice to become a master calligrapher.

Calligraphy is not only about writing words. Composition, balance, subtlety and energy are also important aesthetic qualities to consider.

Good Chinese calligraphy possesses *chi (qi)*, the life force or energy central to the Taoist beliefs.

WHAT DO THE CHARACTERS ILLUSTRATED ON THE CHINESE ART CART REPRESENT?

The four characters on the China Art Cart represent some of the various script styles used by calligraphers. The artist who made them is Baofeng Wang (husband of former CIF guide Bin Yang).

**WHAT DO THE
CHARACTERS
ILLUSTRATED
ON THE CHINESE
ART CART
REPRESENT?
(CONTINUED)**

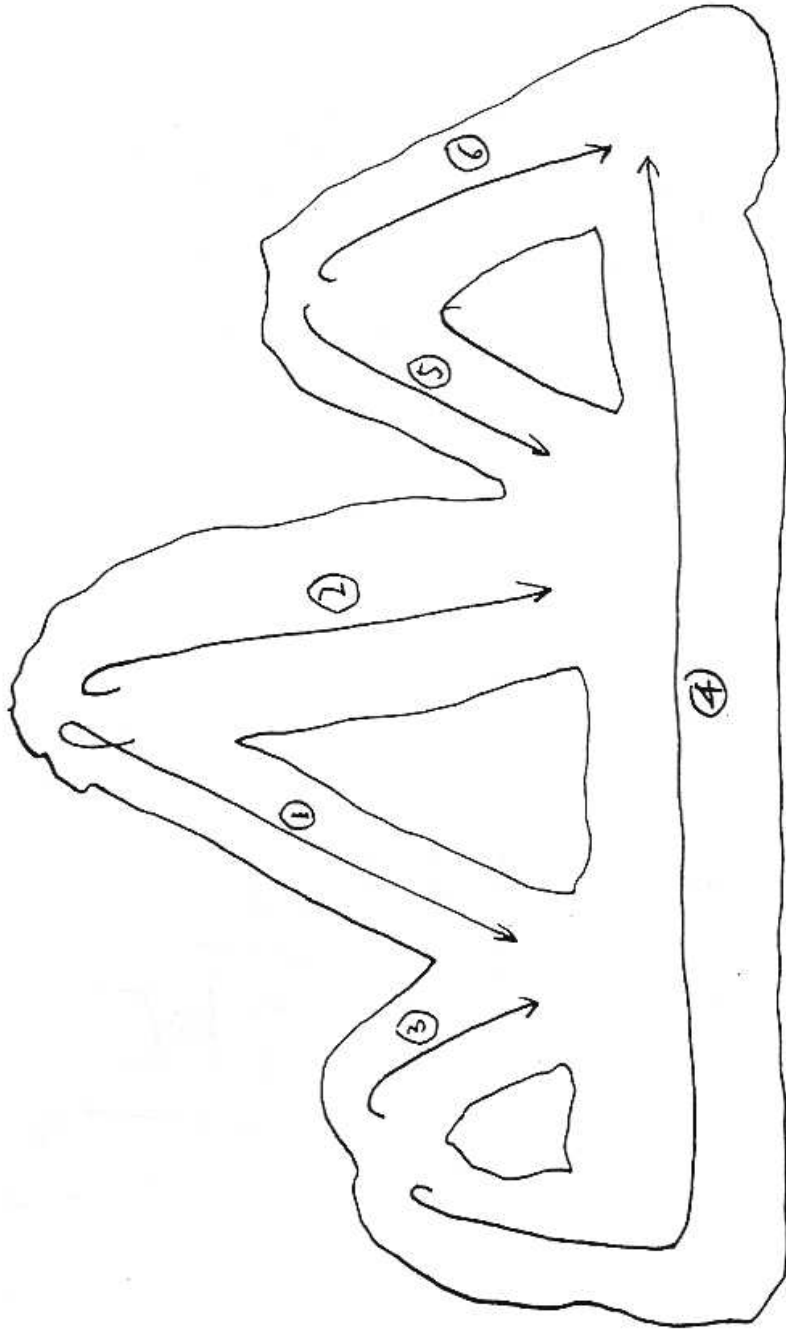
mountain: ancient pictograph pre-dating standardized written language of the Chin dynasty; evolved into the modern character for “mountain”

()

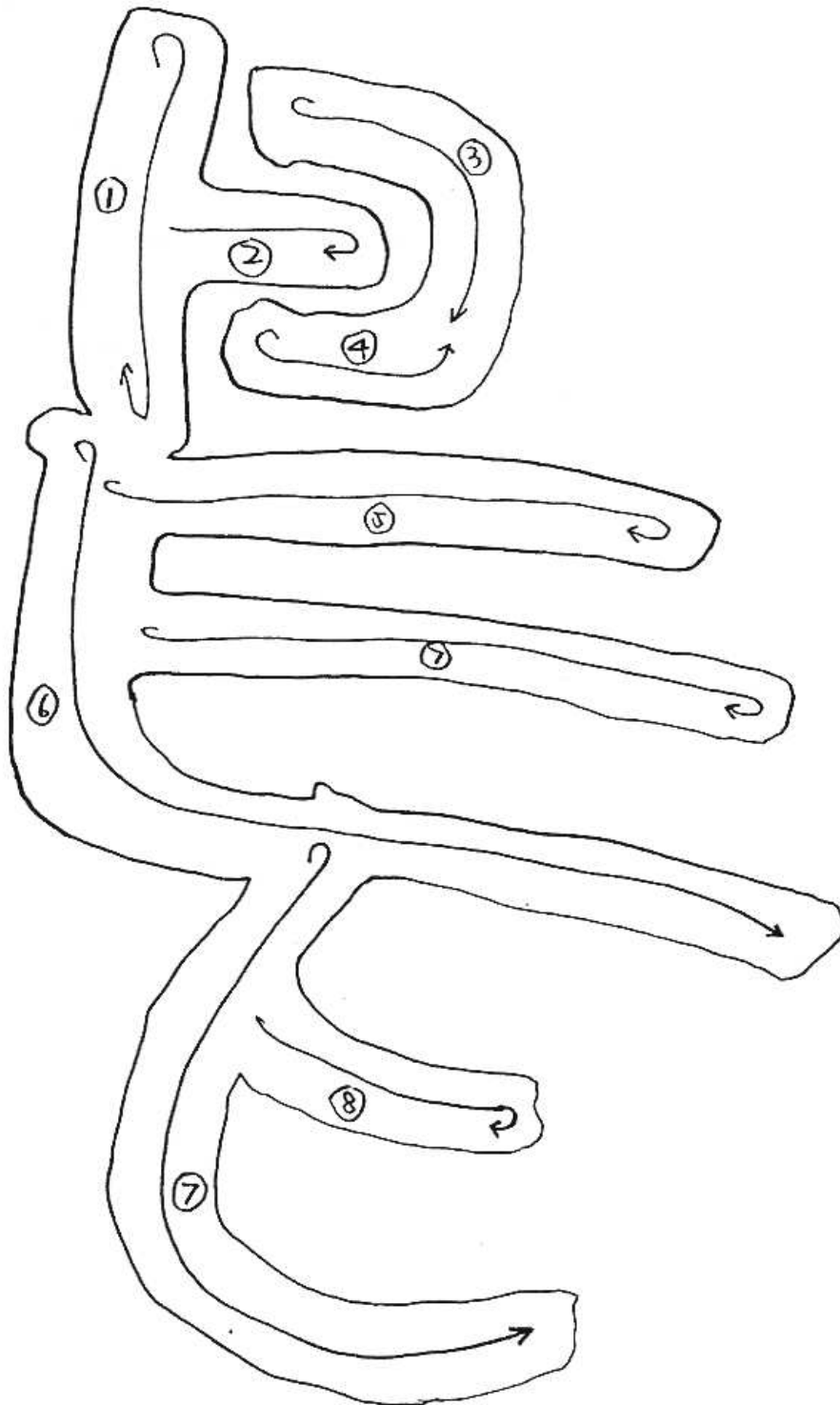
bird: seal script/*xiao zhuan*; the style developed during the Chin dynasty under Chin Shih Huang-ti; originally used for official documents; used later and still today for stone seals or chops (like those used by artists to sign their work)

good fortune/happiness: regular style/*kai shu*; a very standardized, consistent style used in Chinese printed materials today

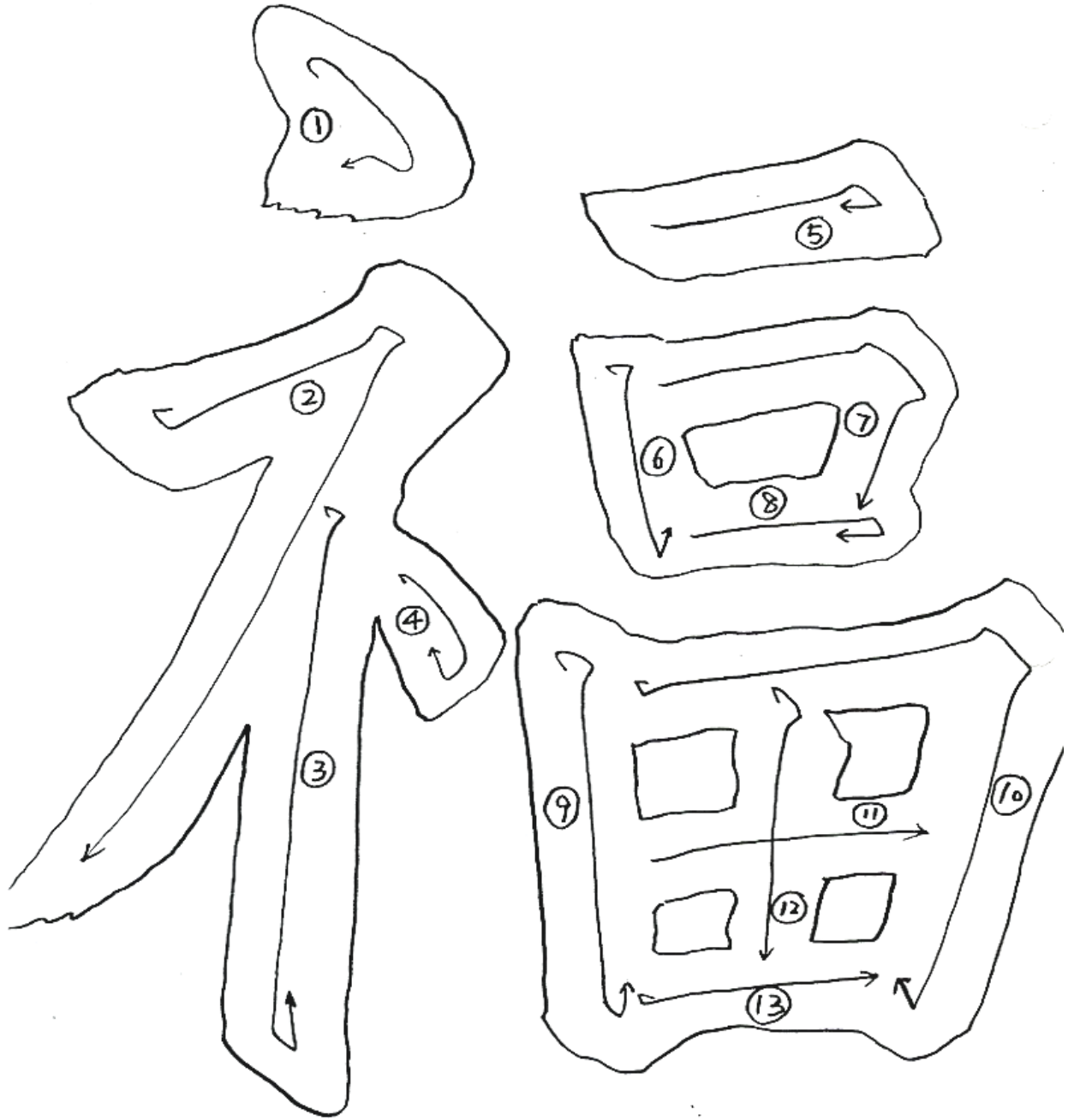
dragon: cursive/running/grass style/*cao shu*; a variation on regular style that allows for more creative freedom and expressiveness



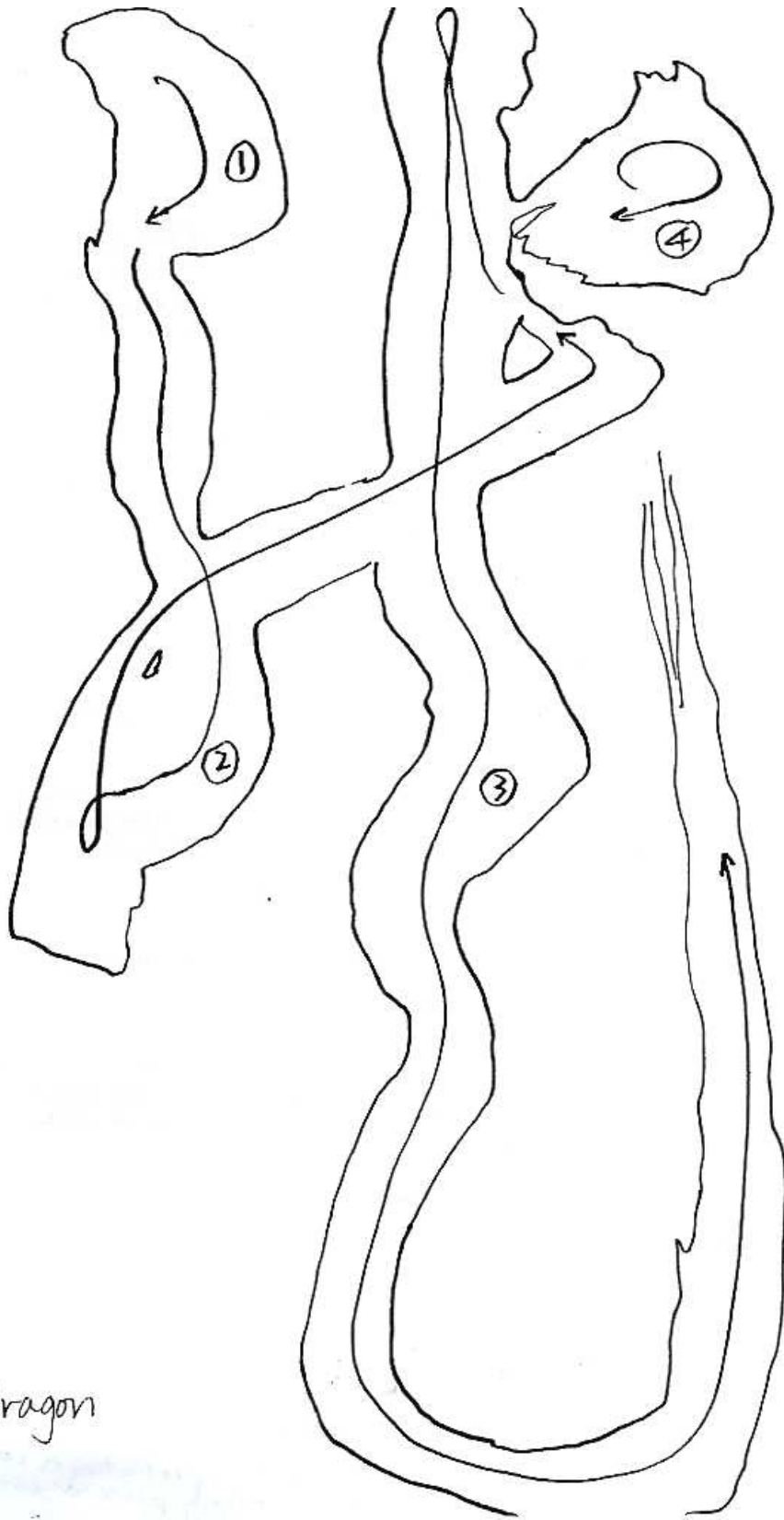
mountain



bird



good fortune



dragon

HOW WERE THEY MADE?

The Four Treasures of a Scholar's Study are paper, brush, ink, and inkstone. All four can be found on the Art Cart.

Calligraphy is typically created using a bamboo brush* (traditionally, wolf, deer, goat, rabbit, or weasel hair is used) and black ink (often referred to by its Japanese name *sumi*). Brushes come in many shapes and sizes from a single bristle to a brush as big as a person. Ink traditionally comes in stick or cake form and is made from soot and a binding agent. Ink can also be purchased in liquid form.

Ink sticks* or cakes must be ground on an ink stone* and mixed with water to create the desired hue (degree of gray or black).

When not in use, brushes are placed on a brush rest* or stored in a brush wrapper* (rolled inside a bamboo mat).

Grinding ink is a very slow and controlled process—one that many calligraphers feel is an important part of the preparatory period during which the artist must relax his/her body and opens and clears the mind for the intensity of the creative process.

Most calligraphers use rice paper,* although calligraphy can be done on other types of paper and fabrics such as silk. Paradoxically, “rice paper” used for Chinese calligraphy and painting is not made from rice. It is instead made from the fibers of the bark of the mulberry tree. It gets its name from the fact that this smooth, strong paper was used to make packaging for rice.

An artist might practice one character or a group of characters or strokes many times before creating the final product. Black ink and rice paper are not very forgiving, so there is no room for mistakes!

**Example can be found on the China Art Cart*

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Encourage visitors to try their hand at Chinese calligraphy!

Supplies:

- Chinese-style table (work surface)
- “Magic Paper” (mounted/matted) on boards; this reusable paper is only to be “written on” with water; the marks made with water will fade and disappear as the water dries.
- Small stands on easels for propping up Magic Paper boards.
- Water in leak-proof containers (please, keep pens, pencils, rubber stamps/ink, ink sticks away from the “Magic Paper.”)

**QUESTIONS
AND ACTIVITIES
(CONTINUED)**

- Brushes
- Calligraphy samples and illustrations showing individual strokes and their order

Suggested activity:

Ask visitors to select one character to work with (of the 4 samples on the cart). If it is a pictographic character (bird, mountain, and dragon), explain what pictograph/pictogram means (a symbol representing a concept, object, activity, place, or event by illustration) and help them to see the relationship between the meaning and the shape of the character, if it isn't obvious. If it is not pictographic (good fortune/happiness), tell them what it means if they do not already know. Give the visitor one Magic Paper board and explain how it works. (When water is applied with a brush, it will turn black like ink. It will fade in 5-10 minutes and the paper can then be used again.) Show the visitor how to hold the brush (see illustration). Encourage the visitor to examine the character and illustration breaking down the individual strokes carefully before attempting to write it. Concentrate, and go for it!

Follow-up questions:

- How did it feel? What surprised you most?
- Was it harder or easier than you expected?
- What would you do the same/differently the next time?

After discussing seals and seal paste with visitors, let them stamp one of the rubber stamps of Chinese characters using the red ink pads and rice paper squares. Please do what you can to keep them from stamping on the calligraphy boards. They can take it home or throw it away in an appropriate place. Please do not leave used scraps of paper on the floor of the galleries or inside the cart!

Related questions:

- How does the rice paper feel?
- What do you imagine it would be like to paint on?
- How do you imagine it might react to the ink/water when applied?
- Why might the literati/scholars have preferred paper to silk for painting? (Ask this only if you've already had a discussion about the literati and/or Chinese painting.)

WALNUT HAND EXERCISERS

Calligraphy requires a great deal of dexterity and control on the part of the artist. To achieve and maintain flexibility and muscle tone in the hands, calligraphers often use hand exercisers like these.

Held in the hand, the hand exercisers can be rolled or rotated around the palm using the muscles in the palm and fingers.

The hand exercisers on the Art Cart are natural nuts from a walnut tree, as are the examples currently on view in the case of literati calligraphy implements (across from the Scholar's Studio).

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

BRONZES WITH INSCRIPTIONS (EARLY WRITING)

Many examples on view in G214, including:

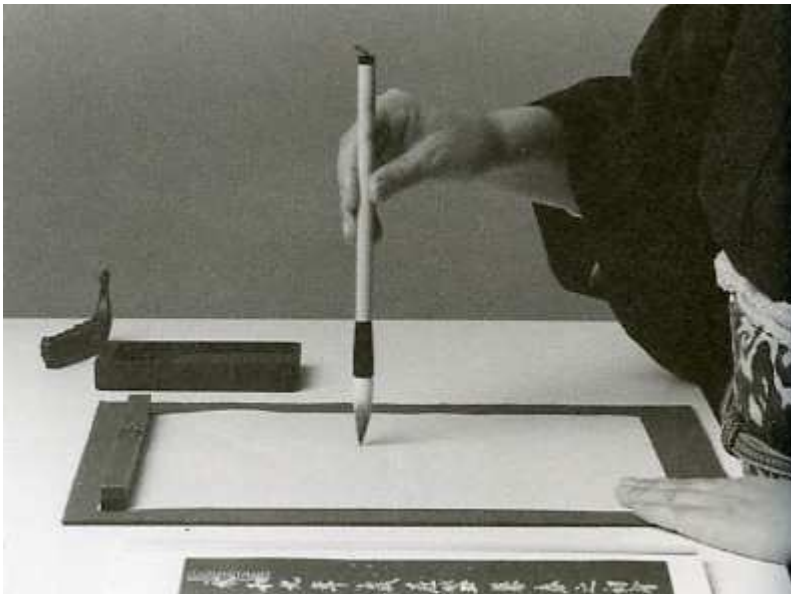
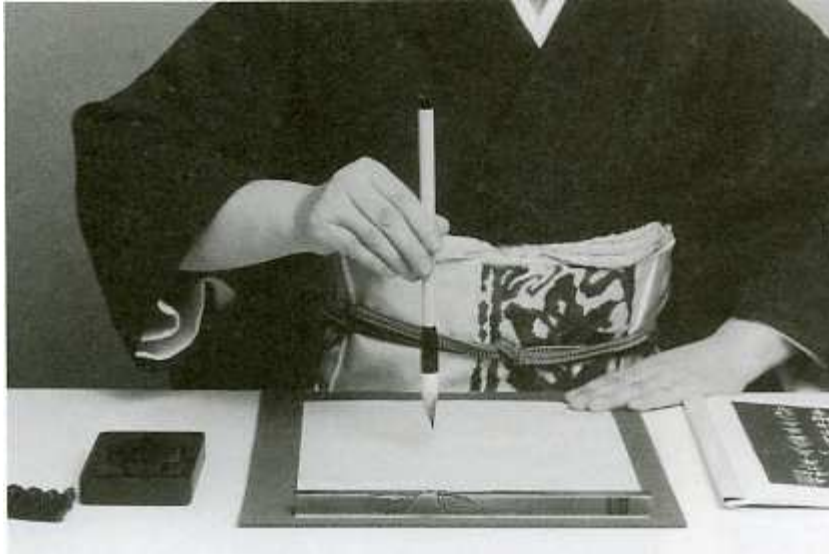
- Shang Dynasty, *Kuei on Socle*, 50.46.8
- Chou Dynasty, *Kuei*, 50.46.39
- Chou Dynasty, *Kuei*, 50.46.119

CALLIGRAPHY AND OTHER FORMS OF SCRIPT

- Tibet, *The Bhadrakalpika Sutra*, 2002.89.3
- Inscriptions on paintings throughout China, Japan, and Korea galleries
- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Jade Mountain*, 92.103.13
- North Africa, *Page from the Koran*, 51.37.6a,b
- Iran (Persia), *Rectangular Tile*, 50.46.458
- Egypt, *False Door*, 52.22

SCHOLAR'S TOOLS

- Ink stones, ink sticks/cakes, brushes, brush pots, etc., in the Scholar's Studio and elsewhere throughout G216.





Cricket Cage

What is It? This small Chinese cricket cage was donated by docents Glenn and Laurel Keitel.

About Crickets Admired for their singing and fighting abilities, crickets have been collected, appreciated, and documented in Chinese culture for thousands of years. Crickets and other singing insects (like katydids and cicadas) began to be kept in cages as pets and conversation pieces during the T'ang Dynasty (618 – 906 CE).

Over time, keeping crickets as beloved singing pets became a hobby of literati, emperors, Buddhist monks and, of course, billions of Chinese children who have delighted in catching and keeping crickets. The practice of buying and selling crickets, cicadas, and katydids in Chinese summer markets persists to the present day.

Crickets are of the *Grylloidae* family. They have black, green or brown flattened bodies, 3-part legs, and range from 1/4” to 1” in length. The cricket produces its unmistakable chirp by rubbing two parts of its wing together. The frequency of the sound can range up to 20,000 Hz (cycles per second), well beyond the range of the human ear. The rate of chirping is related to the temperature (Fahrenheit temperature is 40 plus the number of chirps in 15 seconds).

The cricket has a life cycle that involves laying hundreds of eggs in the fall and then dying (although at least one source refers to their living on into the following spring). The eggs hatch in the spring. In October, the cricket, or *cu zhi* (meaning “encourage weaving”), is found singing indoors—an indication that colder weather is approaching—and “the ladies expedite their weaving efforts to ensure sufficient cloth for the coming Winter” (www.insects.org).

SYMBOLISM OF CRICKETS

Crickets have come to be associated with intelligence and good fortune in China. In the earliest Chinese agrarian culture, singing insects such as crickets and cicadas played an important role, being the best indicators of changes in the climate such as when to start planting crops and when to prepare for winter. Inscriptions on ancient bones or tortoise shells show the early Chinese word for “summer” as a pictographic character in the form of a cicada and for “autumn” in the form of a cricket.

The ability of the cricket to lay hundreds of eggs related to the Chinese belief that an important aspect of success in life was to have children.

Cricket Cages

Historically, cricket cages have been made of ivory, brass, bronze, sandalwood, bamboo, ceramic, animal bone, and gourd. Other cages, usually temporary, were made from wheat or corn stems, reed, or gauze.

The cricket cage on the China Art Cart is a modern reproduction of a traditional form. It is carved from animal bone in China and has a section that slides up allowing access to the cricket.

**CRICKETS IN
POPULAR
CULTURE**

Cricket culture has developed and endured in China for centuries. For example:

- Crickets have been the subject of popular songs, poems, and proverbs.
- Certain varieties of crickets were raised for their fighting abilities. Betting on cricket fights became such a social problem that, after the Ch'ing dynasty, it was banned.
- Children may recall the lucky cricket Cri-Kee kept as a pet by the title character in Disney's 1998 animated version of the Chinese folktale *Mulan*.
- In one of the closing scenes of the film *The Last Emperor*, the emperor gives a cricket pot to a young boy.

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

- Compare the Art Cart's cricket cage and birdcage. How are they similar? Different? How are they customized to suit the size and needs of each creature?
- What are some reasons why humans take such pleasure in keeping pets? What human needs do pets fulfill?
- What would you keep in this cage? Why?
- Would you/have you ever kept insects as pets? Why? Why not?
- Find images of insects in the galleries and draw them.
- Find other cricket cages and bird cages in the Chinese gallery.

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

CHINESE CRICKET PARAPHERNALIA

- Displayed in case to the right of the Commemorative Gate, gallery 217.

PETS

- Sir John Everett Millais, English, *Peace Concluded*, 1856, 69.48
- Nicolas de Largillière, French, *Portrait of Catherine Coustard*, 1699, 77.26
- Gabriel Metsu, Dutch, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1667, 92.16
- Paul Gauguin, French, *I Raro Te Oviri (Under the Pandanus)*, 1891, 41.4
- Nigeria (Benin), *Leopard*, 17th century, 58.9
- Pierre Bonnard, French, *Dining Room in the Country*, 1913, 54.15

COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS
CONTINUED

INSECTS

- Japan, *Suzuribako (Writing Box)*, 18th century, 75.90.1a-f
- Ghana, Asante, *Goldweight in the Shape of a Rhinoceros Beetle (#28)*
- England, *Barber's Bowl*, 1720, 96.36.6
- Theodore Wendel, *The Butterfly Catchers*, 1900-1908, 2001.43
- Abraham Mignon, Dutch, *Still Life with Fruit, Foliage and Insects*, 87.4
- School of Maria Sybilla Merian, German, *Tulip, Lily, Rose, etc., in Vase, with Insects*, 66.25.117
- Ming Dynasty, *Basketwork Box*, 2001.158.1a,b



BIRD CAGE

- WHAT IS IT?** The square cage with the blue covering on the Art Cart is a birdcage. Considered elegant, refined, and practical, the bird is perhaps the most popular pet in China. Birds are believed to bring good luck, with the value of the bird dependent upon how well it can carry a tune. Birds have been a beloved fascination of the Chinese for many centuries. “Bird and flower” paintings were first popularized during the Sung Dynasty. During the Ch’ing Dynasty, in particular, sons of elite Manchu families usually did not have to work, and playing with birds was a popular pastime.
- HOW IS THE CAGE USED?** Today, bird owners in China, often elderly men, take their pet birds for strolls through the park and give them "treats" of live grasshoppers and special honey drinks. In heavily populated urban areas such as Hong Kong, Beijing, and Shanghai, birds and birdcages provide an important opportunity for socializing and are a key component of urban China’s vital early morning park culture. Birds provide a link to nature in an otherwise lacking urban environment.
- WHAT IS THE CAGE MADE OF?** The cage on the Art Cart is made of three different kinds of wood. The majority of the posts are constructed of bamboo, as has been the custom for bird cages for hundreds of years. Bamboo is valued for beauty as well as strength and lightness, key factors for those who might carry several birdcages on one outing. The frame of the cage is made from a wood called *hongmu*, or mahogany, and is admired for its natural reddish color. The wood called *huang lei mu* is reserved for the two horizontal bars on the inside of the cage. A bird would spend most of its time in the cage on these bars. *Huang lei mu*, or rosewood, is a very durable, sturdy wood that is also expensive. Therefore, it is only used in small amounts on the cage.
- The type of bird in the cage is the main factor for determining the shape and size. In general, small birds, such as lotus birds or canaries, prefer small, square cages like the one on the Art Cart. The covering, made of durable fabric, is used to shield the bird from noise and light as it is taken to the park. Once at the park, the covering is removed so the bird can enjoy the fresh air. Each cage has a variety of different components to store food and water. The cage on the Art Cart includes a large round porcelain cup for water, a glass jar to store extra water, and a second smaller porcelain cup for worms. The two-pronged piece on the cage is for apples.
- WHERE DID THE CAGE COME FROM?** This birdcage was bought in the bird market of Suchou (Suzhou) by CIF Guide Zhining Chin. Suchou is the 2500-year-old city very near to where the MIA’s Wu Reception Hall and Scholar’s Studio originated. Suzhou is known for its landscaped gardens and marketplaces, including a spectacular flower and bird market. While a visit to the market will reveal a variety of birds, among the most popular are babbling thrush, the lark and myna.

**USING THE CAGE
WITH VISITORS**

Please note: There is a built-in lock so that the door will not slide open and let the bird escape. The door to the cage is located on the front where you see the pieces of lattice. You will notice five small holes above this door. To open the door, carefully put pressure on the prongs so that all the posts fit into the above holes. The middle post is the one that will need to be adjusted. Once in, the piece of lattice should unlock and slide upwards. Because the door is fragile, encourage visitors to watch you demonstrate how the door is opened and closed.

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

1. What type of animal would you keep in this cage? (Consider the size and shape.) Why? Do you have birds or other pets at home? Where do they sleep, eat, etc.? If they have a cage, how is it the same or different than the one on the Art Cart? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. What do you see? Describe the different parts of the cage. What kinds of things do you think a bird would need to survive in a cage like this? What type of items would you put in your cage?
3. What characteristics of songbirds might the Chinese admire and make them want to keep them as pets?
4. Look for images of birds/pets in the galleries. Draw them!
5. What are some reasons people keep pets? Tell me about your pets.

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

BIRD CAGES
China, Bird cage in Scholar's Studio

IMAGES OF BIRDS

Cadzi Codi, *Elk Hide*, 85.92
Northwest Coast, Haida, *Rattle*, 75.55
James Tissot, French, *On the Thames, A Heron*, 75.7
Master of the Embroidered Foliage, Netherlandish, *Madonna and Child in a Landscape*, 90.7

IMAGES OF PETS AND PET PARAPHERNALIA

Chinese cricket paraphernalia, various accession numbers
West Mexico, Colima, *Dog*, 99.57.3
Gabriel Metsu, Dutch, *Portrait of a Lady*, 92.16
Nicolas de Largilliere, French, *Portrait of Catherine Coustard*, 77.26
Sir John Everett Millais, British, *Peace Concluded*, 69.48
Robert Koehler, *Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue*, 25.403
Japan, *Taoist Immortals*, installed in the Audience Hall, 63.37.4



CHILD'S DRAGON ROBE

WHAT IS IT?

This 20th-century silk robe is hand embroidered with dragons and other common Chinese motifs. It was made for a small child in the style of official court robes worn during the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1911). It was purchased in China in the 1980s by former docent Charlotte Karlan. She believed that it was made sometime in the mid-20th century. It was made for commercial purposes and was never worn at court.

HOW WAS IT USED?

This dragon robe (*lung-pao*) is an example of *chi-fu* (pronounced — chee-foo) or “festive dress,” a semiformal style of attire that had its origins with the Manchus who ruled China during the Ch'ing Dynasty. Characteristic of *chi-fu* robes is the simple cut like we see in this example – a relatively close-fitting garment with a side closure and a slit skirt. The cut was likely an adaptation of the riding attire familiar to the nomadic Manchus before they rose to power in China.

Children in Ch'ing dynasty China dressed in much the same way as adults. Semi-formal robes like this one were worn during official court functions. Men and women dressed very much alike as well. There are, however, subtle differences in the cut of garments to differentiate the wearer's gender. We can tell this is a robe for a girl because it has side slits for ventilation and ease of movement like those of adult women, whereas robes worn by men and boys had slits in the center of the front and back panels.

WHAT DO THE DESIGNS MEAN?

The designs on Ch'ing dragon robes, like those on which the example on the Art Cart is based, derive from ancient mythology and earlier Ming dynasty designs. They follow established systems of symbolism that indicate the wearer's rank and status.

The standard dragon robe design is a microcosm of the universe, with the dragon at the center as a symbol of the emperor, the intermediary between heaven and earth. The dragon is depicted among the clouds of heaven; below are pulsing waves and towering mountains, associating the emperor/dragon with the earthly realm. Perched atop one of the mountains/waves at the bottom of the robe is a pink peony, a flower that blooms in the spring and is symbolic of love, affection, good fortune, and feminine beauty and appropriately associated with the young girl who would have worn a robe like this one. On the sleeves are plum blossoms, evocative of winter and symbolic of long life.

The dragon on this robe has five claws, indicating its imperial association. Since the Han dynasty, the five-clawed dragon has been the emblem of imperial power. The Emperor's throne, robes, and articles of household use all bore this five-clawed dragon. Princes of the third and fourth rank were allowed the use of the four-clawed dragon, while princes of the fifth rank, and certain officials, were only entitled to employ a serpent-like creature with five claws as their emblem. Surrounding the dragon are clouds and flaming pearls, symbolic of the heavenly realm and of the emperor's wisdom.

**WHAT DO THE
DESIGNS MEAN?**

Some other common beliefs about dragons include: their role as special protectors and bringers of all-important rain to the agriculturally-based Chinese, the ability to make themselves as large as the universe or as small as a silkworm, and special powers to change color and appear and disappear in a flash. It is believed that they are rarely seen because they cleverly hide in caves, burrow into the lofty mountains, or coil up on the bottom of the deepest seas.

**HOW WAS IT
MADE?**

The robe is made of woven silk with embroidered designs sewn onto the fabric by hand. Because of their elaborateness, it took a great deal of time to create each dragon robe. A similar robe for an adult might take as many as 8 years and more than 6 million stitches to produce!

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

6. Closely examine the child's dragon robe. What do you see? What do you feel?
7. How would you describe the dragon on the robe? If you were to meet this dragon, how do you think he would act (friendly, ferocious, etc.)? What do you see that makes you say that?
8. Find other dragons and dragon robes in the galleries. How are they similar or different from this one? What do you see that makes you say that?
9. This elaborate robe would be worn on special occasions. What kinds of clothing do you wear on special occasions (birthdays, weddings, holidays, etc.)? Why?
10. Find images of children in the Asian galleries and throughout the museum. What are they wearing? What are they doing? What do you see that makes you say that?

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

IMPERIAL ROBES AND FURNITURE

- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Portrait of Prince Duo-lo*, 83.30
- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Ancestral Portraits of Prince Shih Wen-Ying and Princess Shih*, 2002.12.2.1,2
- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Dragon robes*, gallery 315
- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Throne*, 93.32a-d

DRAGONS AND MYTHICAL CREATURES

- Korea, Choson Period, *Dragon jars*, 99.168; 81.113.6
- T'ang Dynasty, *Flying dragons*, 2000.87.2.1,2
- Ming Dynasty, *Cosmetic case and mirror stand*, 94.8a-r
- Yuan Dynasty, *Zodiac animals*, 99.178.3.11
- Doan, Japan, *Tiger and Dragon Screen*, 83.75.1
- Ch'ing Dynasty, *Nine Dragon Box*, 2001.68.14a,b

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS
(CONTINUED)**

- Maria and Julian Martinez, *Vessel*, 84.94.1
- England, *Mazer* (St. Margaret of Antioch and her dragon), 61.55.4
- Italy, *Coat of Arms of Cardinal Scipione Borghese*, 61.63.2
- John Bradstreet, *Wall Sconce* (in the shape of a dragon), Duluth Room, 82.43.71.4a-f

CHILDREN'S ATTIRE

- Great Plains, Tsistsistas (Cheyenne), *Girl's dress*, 2000.24
- Great Plains, Apsaalooka (Crow), *Children's moccasins*, 2004.112.2a,b
- Blue Hmong, *Rooster hat*, 83.70.7

IMAGES OF CHILDREN (IN DIFFERENT STYLES OF DRESS)

- Ming Dynasty, *12-paneled screen* (boy's capping ceremony), 96.124.1a-l
- Ku Chian-lung, Ch'ing Dynasty, *Portrait of Wang Shih-min*, 96.68.2
- Africa, *Mother and child figures*, gallery 250
- West Mexico, Nayarit, *House group*, 47.2.37
- Rufino Tamayo, Mexican, *The Family*, 60.4
- Edgar Degas, French, *Portrait of Mlle Hortense Valpinçon*, 48.1
- John Singer Sargent, American, *The Birthday Party*, 62.84
- Sir John Everett Millais, English, *Peace Concluded*, 69.48
- Attributed to James B. Read, American, *Portrait of a Boy*, 77.46
- François-Joseph Navez, Belgian, *Portrait of the Gaspard Moeremans Family*, 91.35



ROUND LACQUER BOX WITH POMMEL-SCROLL MOTIFS

- WHAT IS IT?** This is a small round, covered red and black lacquered box. The artist employed the *t'i-hsi* (*guri*) carved lacquer technique in decorating the box.
- WHAT IS T'I-HSI?** *Ti-hsi* (tea-she; also Romanized as *tixi*), or “marbled technique,” is a distinctive style of carved lacquer popular in China from the 13th through 16th centuries. *T'i-hsi* is characterized by deep v-shaped troughs that expose alternating layers of colored lacquers (red and black in this example). The primary decorative motif of *t'i-hsi* lacquers is a “pommel-scroll” pattern like the one seen on this example and on others in the permanent collection, however one does occasionally find other floral and geometric motifs. The *t'i-hsi* technique was also adopted by the Japanese and is often referred to universally by its Japanese name, *guri* (goo-ree).
- WHAT IS LACQUER?** Lacquer is the hardened sap of the sumac tree (*Rhus Vernicifera*, or *ch'i-shu* in Chinese). Decorative lacquer like that applied to this box is applied in many thin layers and cut or carved away to create elaborate designs.
- WHERE DOES LACQUER COME FROM?** The Chinese are considered the inventors of lacquer. The earliest evidence of the use of lacquer in China comes from the Shang dynasty (1523-1028 BCE). Lacquerware is waterproof and has a high resistance to intense heat and strong acids. Since ancient times the durability and beauty of lacquerware made it a desirable and valuable trade item. It was exported to Korea and Japan at an early date and copied.
- HOW IS IT MADE?**
- Gathering and Preparing:**
The tree known for yielding the best lacquer is the *Rhus Vernicifera*, which is indigenous to China. At first the trees grew wild, but as their value was understood they were cultivated and periodically protected by law. The trees yield the best sap when they are a few years old. The best time for gathering the sap is during the warmer months of the year.
- The sap is gathered by incising the trees horizontally and allowing it to trickle into cup-shaped containers of copper or bamboo, which are tied underneath. When the sap first comes out it is dirty white, somewhat like a grayish mushroom. When it is exposed to light and air, it thickens and darkens.

**HOW IS IT MADE
(CONTINUED)?**

The preparation of the collected sap is a long and laborious process. At first it is strained to remove the impurities such as fragments of wood and insects that may have gathered in the containers. The sap is then heated in shallow containers. Throughout the “cooking” process it is stirred and skimmed so it gradually becomes more pure and even. Finally it is filtered through finely woven cloth to make sure that even tiny particles of foreign matter are removed. The coloring process of lacquer occurs during the heating process with vegetable and mineral dyes being added to produce the desired color. Red, the Chinese color of celebration, is created with either mercury sulfide or iron oxide being added to the lacquer. Red lacquer is also often referred to as cinnabar. Adding cadmium creates yellow, and a rich lustrous black is achieved by adding iron. (To see various colors, direct visitors to the many lacquer objects in the Jade Corridor.) Once the sap has been processed in this way it is stored in airtight containers where it can be kept for years.

Applying:

After the lacquer is prepared, an even more painstaking and time-consuming process is needed to successfully use it for coating whatever surface is to be lacquered. The chemical process, which combines the elements within the sap and enables the final product to harden, must be carried in strictly controlled conditions. The temperature must be between 25-30 degrees Centigrade (77 - 86 degrees Fahrenheit) and the humidity as high as 80%-85%. Oxygen is necessary for the process to be successful, and high humidity ensures that it is easily and evenly absorbed.

The core or base of most lacquered objects is softwood (e.g. pine) or bamboo. Wooden cores are selected so that they have no knots. This is because the resin, excreted by the knotty parts of timber, can seep into the lacquer and spoil the hardening process.

Once the core is made, it is primed in inferior lacquer. On some boxes a thin layer of muslin is also used to cover the core. It is held in place with vegetable glue or lacquer, sometimes mixed with rice paste. The main purpose is to seal the wood completely before the final more decorative layers are applied. The core is thus completely isolated from the applied lacquer surface.

After the box is primed, it is smoothed down with ground stone or clay so that it is as even as possible before the more precise and arduous application of the top layers begins. Highly toxic in its liquid state, lacquer is applied in thin layers to the foundation material. It can take weeks for each layer to dry and harden thoroughly. Each layer is polished before the next layer is applied. Polishing provided the next layer of lacquer a proper surface to adhere to and ensured that the finished top surface was smooth. A layer of lacquer is

**HOW IS IT MADE
(CONTINUED)?**

approximately 0.05 mm thick. These layers sometimes of several different colors are exposed during the carving process. Chinese carved lacquer objects have from thirty to three hundred layers. It could take six months to produce a fine piece of lacquerware.

**WHY DOES IT LOOK
THE WAY IT DOES?**

The decorative carving is done in the *t'i-hsi (guri)* technique after all the layers of lacquer have hardened. This box was coated with alternating coats of red and black lacquer. The carver makes deep u- or v-shaped cuts revealing the alternating colors of lacquer.

The curvilinear decorative motif on the top of the box is typical of *t'i-hsi* lacquer and is referred to as the "pommel-scroll" pattern. It is also used on carved ivories. Some say that it is said to resemble the saddle pommel* on early Mongolian horse saddles. Others say the design resembles ancient sword pommels**.

*Pommel (saddle), the slightly raised area at the front of a saddle

**Pommel (sword), the counterweight at the end of the handle of a sword

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

What do you see?

How does it feel?

How would you describe the shapes carved on the box? What do you see that makes you say that?

What kinds of things would you keep in the box?

What kinds of containers do you have for small objects that you like to keep?

Find objects with similar designs in the Chinese galleries.

Find other examples of carved lacquer in the Chinese galleries.

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

Examples of Chinese *t'i-hsi* (*guri*) carved lacquer

1. Yuan Dynasty, *Small cup*, carved black, red, and yellow *t'i-hsi* lacquer with gilt copper liner, 2001.68.7



2. *Hexagonal Box with Cover*, late 14th-early century, black and red carved lacquer (*t'i-hsi*), 2001.68.8a,b



15th

3. Yuan Dynasty, *Small Circular Box*, carved lacquer with red and yellow layers (*t'i-hsi*), 2001.74.2a,b



black

4. Ming Dynasty, *Octagonal Box*, red and black carved lacquer (*t'i-hsi*), 2001.73.2a,b



Lacquered Objects from Japan and Korea

1. Korea, *Hatbox (Tanggeontong)*, Wood, lacquer, abalone shell, metal
2002.219.1



2. Japan, *Bale-handled Wash Basin (Tarai)*, Negoro ware; lacquer over wood core with gilt metal fittings, 2002.146.1



3. Japan, Yo_yu_sai Hara, *Suzuribako (Writing Box)*, Lacquer on wood with gold, lead and mother-of-pearl, 2001.70.1a-i





Round Lacquer Box

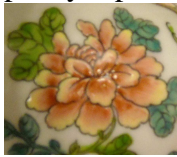
PEACHES AND PEONIES EXPORT PORCELAIN VASE

WHAT IS IT?

This porcelain vase is based on a mid-nineteenth century Chinese bottle and lid currently in the Peabody Essex Museum collection in Salem, Massachusetts. The original bottle and lid were part of a lady's toilette, owned by a woman in one of the grand homes of Chestnut Street, Salem, Massachusetts. Though produced in China, this and many other porcelain products were developed for and sent to a European or American market.

WHAT ARE THE DESIGNS ON IT?

Peony Flowers: China's unofficial national flower. Symbolically, the peony represents royalty, rank, wealth, honor, and female beauty.



Peach Fruit: Peaches symbolize longevity and immortality in China. The god of longevity is often depicted carrying a peach or coming out of one. The combination of peaches and peonies represent wealth and rank over the course of a long life.



Butterflies: Butterflies represent longevity as well as love, indicating conjugal fidelity.



Pomegranates: Representing fertility in Chinese culture, the numerous seeds in a pomegranate stand for the hundreds of sons a family might hope for. Pomegranates also hold strong meaning in the Judeo/Christian tradition, perhaps enhancing the appeal of this exported vase to European and American markets. In the Jewish tradition, the pomegranate is said to contain six hundred and thirteen seeds, representing, among other things, the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah. In the Christian tradition, the many seeds represent the individuals united by their faith, and the bursting forth of seeds represents the resurrection of Christ.



HOW WAS IT MADE?

The technique of making porcelain was so specialized that European manufacturers competed to find the secret recipe for true porcelain-- a hard, white, heat-resistant ceramic unlike anything produced in Europe. Not until the eighteenth century did Europeans develop a substitute, creating a high demand for “China” export porcelain over many centuries.

To learn about the process of making porcelain clay and building the vase, please see the section labeled “How was it made” in the entry for the “Porcelain Bowl with Underglaze Design” also on the China Art Cart. Though construction of the vase is similar to that of the bowl, their painting techniques do differ. The blue-pigmented underglaze technique dominated trade until the end of the seventeenth century, at which point polychrome enameled decoration gained popularity. This was probably due to growing interest in porcelain decorated with coats of arms, which required more intricate and chromatically different details for reproduction.

Though the original porcelain toilette set was probably made at Jingdezhen (jing-du-jen), the porcelain capital of the world from the fourteenth century to the present, it was probably sent with only its blue underglaze to Guangzhou (gwong-joh), where Chinese artists decorated it with colorful overglaze enamels before traders brought the vase West.

WHAT WOULD IT BE USED FOR?

This vase would have been part of a lady’s toilette set, used in her routine of grooming and dressing, and perhaps contained water. In the nineteenth century, elaborate toilette sets were created for bureaus, dressing tables and washstands, providing a wonderful niche for Chinese porcelain makers. A toilette set might have included an ewer (pitcher), a basin or bowl in which to wash, soap dishes, toothbrush holders or waste jars.

WHAT WERE AMERICANS’ HYGIENE PRACTICES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY?

In many ways, nineteenth century American hygiene was similar to our practices today. As a result of growing scientific knowledge about the nature of illness, cleanliness was a constant concern of the middle and upper class. For the economically comfortable, laundered clothing, pristine homes, and frequent bathing became the norm while standards of social and visual appearance increased. For those of the economically lower classes, older patterns of infrequent bathing and lowered standards persisted. After World War I these differences in the standards between classes declined, as the urban working class and rural people were able to obtain homes with new technologies (such as indoor plumbing, sinks, showers, portable and fixed tubs).

As mechanization increased, so did the nature of the products people used. While in the early nineteenth century many people made their own soaps, scented water, tooth powders, cosmetics, and other items for self-hygiene, the Industrial Revolution changed the way that people related to

these products. As soap factories opened in England in the middle of the 19th century, they launched some of the largest advertising campaigns in history, influencing the subsequent onslaught of advertising. Tooth powders, which had typically been made at home from chalk, salt, or pulverized brick, came into competition with factory-produced tooth pastes, surpassing powder in popularity during World War I. Scented waters made way for more chemically complex perfumes invented by scientists and perfume houses in Europe and eventually America. Economically well-off European and Americans' obsession with purity influenced new developments in cosmetics at the turn of the twentieth century, as makeup salons opened on the streets and women began to overtly purchase such formerly scandalous items as lipstick and blush.

In many ways, the nineteenth century was a formative period of change and development constructing much of the hygiene, advertising, and industrial practices of today.

**WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF
CHINA'S PORCELAIN
TRADE WITH THE WEST?**

By the time Northern Europe began actively trading with China in the sixteenth century, China had already been trading silk, tea, spices, and porcelain throughout Asia, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean for thousands of years. This system of both established routes and unofficial paths was dubbed the "Silk Road" during the nineteenth century. As a result of these exchanges, China not only gained traded items from other regions, but also exchanged ideas-- Buddhism came to China from India, Chinese calligraphy was adopted by Japan. Though these routes continued across the Asian continent, when Western Europeans entered into trade the cultural impact grew much wider.

Chinese porcelains were introduced to Europe in the fourteenth century, and were initially considered rare and luxurious. In the early sixteenth century, when Portugal established trade routes to the Far East and began commercial trade with Asia, Chinese potters began to produce objects specifically for export. Porcelain was an important addition to cargo not for its intrinsic value, but because it served as a clean and protective ballast (a stabilizing weight) over which more delicate and expensive cargo such as silk, tea, and spices could be safely packed. Even as the number of porcelains imported to the West increased into the millions, the product remained relatively minor in the China trade.

By 1635, however, the Dutch were forwarding wooden models of the shapes they required, allowing the Chinese to cater specifically to European tastes in form and design such as mugs, ewers, and candlesticks. As a result, porcelain became extremely popular and was shipped in greater quantities. In 1643 a total of 129,036 pieces of porcelain were sent to all of The Netherlands, whereas by 1752 a single ship contained

150,000 pieces destined for sale in Amsterdam alone. Yet over the course of the century interest in Chinese porcelain waned. By the end of the eighteenth century enthusiasm for Chinese wares was in serious decline, as European factories started producing their own porcelain.

Though interest in Chinese porcelains was diminishing in Europe, new geographical markets revitalized the export porcelain industry. After gaining independence, America officially entered into trade with China in 1784. As was the case with European trade, American agents in China rushed special orders for clients that catered to their unique tastes. Items such as the vase on the Art Cart used for a woman's morning toilette would have been designed specifically with the American consumer in mind. Though many of these exports continued to use Chinese motifs, as they had with European trade, porcelain artists in China tailored their products to their intended audience through theme as well. Many American products showed extreme patriotism through designs such as American eagles, important generals, and political figureheads.

By the late nineteenth century, Chinese export porcelains, especially blue-and-white ware, had become nostalgic emblems of the colonial era. As the century came to a close, these export porcelains were increasingly collected as interest in a distinctly American past increased. This fascination continues today, as Chinese export porcelains-- once a less important facet of trade with China-- have come to represent the trade itself.

**WHAT IMPACT DID
TRADE BETWEEN THE
EAST AND WEST HAVE?**

Beyond exchange of goods, international trade influenced science, religion, philosophy, and other aspects of culture for every nation involved. As a result of trade, European countries became fascinated with China and Japan, leading to greater interest and developments in geography and navigation. European explorers looking for new trade routes "discovered" new land masses along the way, including the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand, leading to much of colonization with repercussions that continue today.

WHAT IS CHINOISERIE?

Chinoiserie (sheen-wa-zer-y) is the term used to describe European-made, fanciful depictions of life in an imagined and exotic Far East, inspired by Chinese themes and decoration. These vignettes of life in East Asia reflect the European fascination with this then unknown part of the world, and often have little basis in reality.

When Europe entered into trade with China in the sixteenth century, interest in the "exotic East" increased. In addition to demand for Chinese silks, spices, and porcelain, Europeans grew fascinated by an idealized version of what they believed to be "the Far East," inspiring tapestries, paintings, sculpture, and utilitarian objects meant to emulate a sense of

exotic luxury rather than an accurate depiction of Chinese life. As trade increased in the seventeenth century, so did European obsession with the East. This interest in all things Eastern exotic, now called *orientalism*, focused not only on China but also Africa, Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea, the Middle East, Turkey and even parts of Europe. The European Rococo style popular at that time was especially influenced by ideas of the exotic, drawing on the European imagined visions of Oriental sensuous, swirling excess.

For examples of both *Chinoiserie* and *Orientalism*, visit the Leo and Doris Hodroff Gallery of Chinese Export Porcelain on the second floor (G209), which includes items with pseudo-Arabic and Chinese letters, painted “China,” as well as Chinese-made items for a European audience. The tapestry *The Chinese Fair* by Francois Boucher (photo prop available on the Chinese Art Cart and on view in the European Galleries) is a beautiful example of a French-made object designed to appear exotic and Chinese without having any basis in reality. The MacFarlane Memorial Room (G328) is designed around the theme of *Chinoiserie*, complete with Chinese wallpaper and matching furnishings, while other European Period rooms (listed below) have Chinese export art covering their shelves and tables to reflect the fashion.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Visit the Dutch Art Cart on the third floor. What connections do you see between the Chinese export vase on the China Art Cart and the objects on the Dutch Art Cart related to international trade, travel, and commerce?

Describe the designs you identify on the vase. How are these designs similar to the designs on other items in the galleries? How are they different?

How would you use this vase? What do you see that makes you say that?

Visit the European period rooms. What do you find that may have come from China or other parts of Asia? Do this exercise in your own home as well.

What products do you use today that might have come from China? Other countries? How do the kinds of items that we use today from abroad compare to the kinds of products that someone two hundred years ago might have purchased from abroad?

The nature of international trade is the exchange of ideas as well as items. What cultural or ideological exchanges might have occurred as a result of trade in the past? In what ways do we continue such ideological exchanges

today?

COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS

CHINESE EXPORT ART

- China, *Plate*, c.1800, 2001.172
- China, *Vase, one of a pair*, 19th century, 31.10.4
- China, *Bowl*, 18th century, 31.84.3
- China, *Bowl*, 18th century, 31.84.4
- China, *Cup and Saucer*, c. 1780, 25.11
- China, *Vase, one of a garniture of five*, c. 1775, 95.98.43.1-.5
- China, *Wallpaper*, late 18th century, 67.58.7

EUROPEAN PORCELAIN

- Bow Porcelain Factory, England, *Male Figure in Front of Tree*, c.1765. 2000.176.5.1
- Manufacture Nationale de Sevres, France, *Covered vase*, 1780, 80.36.1a,b
- Worcester Porcelain Works, England, *Teapot, from a tea service*, c.1770, 31.9.6 a, b
- Capo di Monte, Italy, *Wine bowl with cover*, c. 1750-1780, 31.9.1 a, b
- Wedgwood & Company, England, *Sauce Tureen*,c.1800, 83.119.13a-c

THE “EXOTIC” IN WESTERN ART

- Gabriel Metsu, Netherlands, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1667, 92.16: A Turkish carpet draped over the table serves to exhibit the lady’s wealth, showing her ability to afford such exotic luxuries.
- Jacques-Joseph Tissot, England, *Journey of the Magi*, c.1894, 70.21: Tissot uses his religious theme as an excuse to dabble in the contemporary fascination with the Near East, specifically Palestine.
- Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier, France, *The Algerian*, c.1850-1857, 76.3: Unlike most other artists of his time, Cordier traveled widely in the French colony of Algeria, studying racial and ethnic groups in order to more accurately portray them.
- Jean-Leon Gerome, France, *The Carpet Merchant*, c. 1887, 70.40: Gerome traveled in North Africa and the Middle East for inspiration, painting luxuriously detailed accounts of what he saw.
- Ferdinand-Victor-Eugene Delacroix, France, *View of Tangier*, 1852-53, 93.67: The dry yet vibrant landscape calls up images of a place both ancient and far away, also reflected in the figures’ clothing.
- Francois Boucher, France, *The Chinese Fair*, designed 1742, woven 1743-45, 45.14: This tapestry, created by and for a French audience, captures the energy of a European market under the guise of a Chinese fair. Exotic elements such as palm trees, elephants, camels, and pagodas converge in an amalgamated “Oriental” utopia.
- John Scott Bradstreet, *Duluth Living Room*, G320: Interior designer

John Scott Bradstreet visited Japan six times, and created work highly influenced by the styles he saw there. Furniture, photographs, and woodwork in the room all reflect his Japanese training and influence.

PERIOD ROOMS WITH CHINESE EXPORT ART

- *Leo and Doris Hodroff Gallery of Chinese Export Porcelain (G209)*: A gallery entirely dedicated to Chinese Export art, filled with porcelain, paintings, and information on the porcelain trade.
- *The Queen Anne Room (G326)*: Displays a case filled with Chinese porcelain, as may have been shown in a British home of the time.
- *The Charleston Dining Room (G337)*: Contains Chinese plates and other decorative Chinese objects, exhibiting the international power of this American family.
- *The Charleston Drawing Room (G336)*: Includes a tea service, vases, and other porcelain objects from China as may have been displayed in an early American home.
- *The MacFarlane Memorial Room (G328)*: This New England-inspired room wonderfully represents America's interest in China and obsession with *Chinoiserie*. The wallpaper is a hand-painted Chinese creation intended for a Western audience, while objects throughout the room either come from China or are intended to fit into a theme of the exotic.

