

A SELECTION OF

THE ARTS OF CHINA IN THE MIA'S COLLECTION

> A Self-guided Tour <

The museum has a rich collection of Chinese art. Enhance your visit to "China's Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor's Legacy" by exploring the Chinese art galleries in this brief self-guided tour.

A BRIEF HISTORY

IN HIS QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY, China's First Emperor, Qin Shihuang, began plans at age 13 for his extravagant tomb complex and eternal empire. Elaborate burial customs and ritual practices started in China long before the Qin ("chin") dynasty (221-207 BCE). During China's Neolithic period (New Stone Age), small farming communities developed along the Wei, Yellow, and Yangzi rivers. A more sedentary lifestyle encouraged development of woven textiles, painted ceramics, lacquer ware, and carved jades, many of which accompanied the deceased into the next world in the form of grave goods.

RELIGION TIMELINE >

Birth of Daoism (570 BCE)

Confucianism (551 BCE)

Buddhism (6th-5th century BCE)

CHINA'S NEW STONE AGE
(10,000–2000 BCE)

Gallery 204



China, Ma-chia-yao culture, Storage Vessel, Neolithic period, 3000 BCE, earthenware with painted designs and burnished surface

Chinese Neolithic pottery was both delicate and durable to serve practical and ritual purposes. Earthenware jars were used for stores of rice and millet, whereas the more elaborate pedestal and tripod (three-legged) pottery forms were likely reserved for ritual and ceremonial use. Found in burial sites, these elaborate vessels reflect a belief in the afterlife and serve as symbols of prestige bestowed upon the deceased.

Q: Based on their forms, which vessels might have been used for storing grains? Which vessels might have been used for ritual purposes?

SHANG DYNASTY
(1600–1046 BCE)

Gallery 215



China, Animal Face Appliqué, Shang dynasty, 1766–1122 BCE, calcified green jade

Recovered from ancient tombs, jade carvings include ritual blades, axes, and small amulets in the shapes of birds, animals, and dragons. These ornamental jades most likely helped distinguish a person's social status while serving a protective role in burial. Extremely hard and brittle, jade is shaped in a slow, labor-intensive process through grinding with abrasive sand.

Q: As you explore these ancient jades, notice the many different carved figures and shapes. Which is your favorite?

ZHOU DYNASTY
(1046–256 BCE)

Gallery 214



China, *Sheng Ting*, Zhou dynasty, 6th century BCE, Spring and Autumn period, bronze

During the Zhou dynasty, the development of more complex social systems resulted in sophisticated metalworking techniques and large-scale bronze production. Smelting metal ores likely derived from high-temperature kilns used for producing ceramics. Chinese bronze objects include a variety of shapes and sizes made for both sacrificial ritual and real-world use. The complex designs were made from mold casting. The green patina on the once-brightly polished bronze developed naturally over thousands of years.

Q: Take note of the shape, size of, and ornamentation on the bronze objects. Look carefully at the intricate patterning. What patterns do you see?

WARRING STATES PERIOD
(475–221 BCE)

Gallery 214



China, Kneeling Figure (detail), Zhou dynasty, Warring States period, 4th century BCE, bronze

Qin Shihuang, the First Emperor, was born in the Warring States period, a time of great turmoil in China's history. Iron replaced bronze, resulting in a vast improvement in weaponry for the warring infantries and cavalries. Motifs in bronze production turned to the natural world to emphasize the earthly power of the warring kingdoms. Forms and symbols moved away from the spiritual realm, to images from nature and vessels with patterns of gold and silver inlay, to delight the eye rather than to inspire religious reverence.

Q: What clues and secrets are revealed about life in ancient China through these objects?

QIN DYNASTY
(221–206 BCE)

Target Galleries



China, Charioteer (detail), Qin dynasty, 221–206 BCE, ceramic

The Warring States period ended when Qin Shihuang conquered the seven warring states and declared himself First Emperor. Ruthless and aggressive, he unified the dynasty and brought standardized systems of writing, measurement, and currency to all of China. After only 15 years of rule, the First Emperor died.

Q: Want to know more about the First Emperor? For the complete story of Qin Shihuang and his empire, visit the special exhibition "China's Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor's Legacy," in Target Galleries. Timed tickets available in the Third Avenue lobby.

China's Terracotta WARRIORS

THE FIRST EMPEROR'S LEGACY

OCTOBER 28 TO JANUARY 20

PRESENTED BY

J.P.Morgan | CHASE

This exhibition was organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in partnership with the Asian Art Museum and the Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau and Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Promotion Centre, People's Republic of China.

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Gallery 206



China, Celestial Horse, Eastern Han dynasty, 25–220 CE, 1st century, bronze with traces of polychrome

The short-lived Qin dynasty was weakened after the First Emperor's death and quickly overthrown by the Han dynasty. The long and prosperous Han dynasty brought great advancement and expansion. China exported silk and lacquer by way of the 5,000-mile overland trade route known as the Silk Road in exchange for silver, gold, and a larger, faster, stronger breed of horse.

Q: As you explore the various objects in this gallery, how many types of materials and construction techniques do you see?

Gallery 206



China, Funerary Model of a Pig Sty (detail), Western Han dynasty, 2nd century BCE, earthenware

Models of spiritual and everyday objects called *ming-ch'i* (ming-chee), or "spirit articles," were made to accompany the deceased into the afterlife. Luxury goods of gold, silver, silk, lacquer ware, jade, and bronze have all been excavated from tombs. More affordable ceramic spirit articles were mass-produced in great numbers to provide everything one would need in the afterlife. These well-preserved tomb objects reveal much about life in ancient China.

Q: In this gallery, do you see items that you would want to take with you into the next world?

Gallery 200



China, Jade Mountain Illustrating the Gathering of Poets at the Lan T'ing Pavilion (detail), Ch'ing dynasty, 1644–1911, 1784, light green jade (nephrite)

From its origins to present day, China's great civilization has endured for 35 centuries. China's artistic legacy is rooted in a respect for tradition, history, and technical excellence born of innovation and exploration.

Q: As you explore the MIA's Chinese art collection, how many items, materials, symbols, forms, and shapes can you find that have continued throughout China's history?