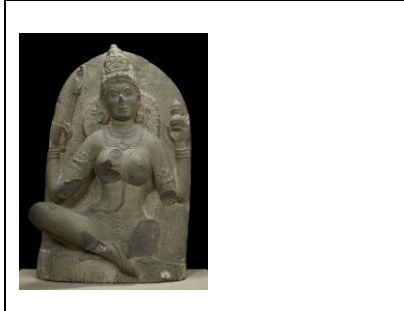

Title of Object

Yogini with a jar

Photo of Object (optional)



Object Information

Artist: Unknown

Culture: India (Hindu)

Date of Object: early 10th century

Country: India

Accession Number: 60.21

File Created: 5/23/2016

Material/Medium: Igneous rock sculpture

Author of File: Debbie Koller

Department: Chinese, South and Southeast Asian Art

Reviewer of File: Kara ZumBahlen

Last Updated/Reviewed: 6/29/2016

Tour Topics

Group 3 tour, ancient culture, animals/birds, architecture, beauty, fashion/dress, fertility, gods/goddesses, power/status, ritual/ceremony, spirituality/sacred, symbolism, women, Hinduism

Questions and Activities (list 3 to 4 sample questions here):

1. Take a moment to look at this life size female goddess figure known as a yogini. What about her makes you think she is a Goddess? (4 arms divine status, yoga meditative pose, etc.)
 2. What clues can you find that might tell you what powers she had? (Jar of medicine and spatula - curing power. Bird under her right foot - power of flight)
 3. Imagine yourself in a circular temple with as many as 108 yoginis. You are standing in front of her - What emotions might this space invoke?
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Key Points (Form: subject matter, medium and techniques of manufacture, style, etc.)

1. Life-size female figure, sculpted out of stone.

2. She had 4 arms - upper arms hold medicine jar and small spear or spatula suggesting curative power. The broken off left bottom arm would have held a skull cup of drinking liquor or blood.

3. She is sitting cross legged in a meditative yoga pose.

4. Indian sculptures, while revealing the body, are never nude, and are always adorned with elaborate jewelry (heavy necklaces, bracelets, belts, anklets and earrings and headdress)

Key Points (Context: use, history, cultural information, artist bio, etc.)

1. Hindu devotees worshipped yoginis as embodiments of female energy (Shakti). Shakti controls all action in the universe and is an inexhaustible source of energy and supernatural powers. This energy can be portrayed as fierce or more serene, like Mia's yogini.

2. Devotees would have prayed to her to cure an illness.

3. Indian sculptures are frequently curvaceous, even sensual, going back to the earliest temple monuments. Ancient Indian texts speak of love and sexual satisfaction as one of the four goals of life, and it is clear that worldly practice and religious belief merged in public monuments. The veneration of fertility was embedded within sacred monuments from the inception of stone carving. Her voluptuous body is a symbol of her feminine power from which devotees derived strength.

4. The small bird underneath her right foot suggest her power of flight. Thousand year old text described yoginis as fearsome flying goddesses that could impart gifts of flight and the ability to transcend death and time to mortals.

5. This yogini would have been enshrined in a circular, open-air temple with at least 15 other goddesses and perhaps 64 or even 108 other goddesses. The roofless temple enabled them to fly in and out. She is 1 of 19 known sculptures from the same temple that now reside in a dozen museums. (Photo of Yoginis in Temple below) The circular and open form of the temples evokes the shape of a yogini chakra, which in yogic theory is an energy center along the spinal column of the body.

6. Yogini's serene expression emphasizes her power of balance, her union of opposites.

7. This yogini holds more benign implements than some of her counterparts, demonstrating that goddesses frequently embody contrasting human traits. They could be at once fearsome and benevolent, beautiful and terrible. Other yoginis hold much fiercer tools such as clubs, spears, and shields to portray their martial identities.

8. How did a yogini wind up in Minneapolis? In 1926, the archaeologist Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil began shipping sculptures originally belonging to a single yogini temple in Tamil Nadu, India, to a Paris-based art dealer, leaving only a few behind in India. Over the next 29 years, Loo sold at least 12 of these sculptures to many private collectors and museums in America and Europe. We can identify 19 of the sculptures originally belonging to the temple: 15 goddesses (including Mia's yogini), two male Hindu gods, and two door guardians placed outside the temple to guard the entrance. The stories of these globe-trotting goddesses are the subject of the book "Scattered Goddesses: Travels with the Yogini" by Padma Kaimal. (see artstories)

Current Mia Label Information (optional)

This powerful, life-size female figure is a goddess known as a yogini. Hindu devotees worshipped yoginis as embodiments of female energy (Shakti), an energy that could be as ferocious as it was benevolent. Our yogini was once enshrined in a circular, open-air temple with at least 15 other goddesses. She has four arms, indicating her divine status—her upper arms might hold a jar of medicine and spatula, suggesting her curative capabilities. Her now broken bottom left arm would have held an outstretched skull cup for drinking liquor or blood. Yoginis were believed to possess powers of flight, to which the lightly incised bird underneath her right foot might allude.

Sources of Information and/or Prop Ideas (photos/videos)

Mia collection site, Art stories

Wikipedia

