

A Taste of Asia

Tour Description

Whet your appetite with a sample of Asian arts from China, Japan, India, and Southeast Asia. See works from Mia's world-renowned collection such as ancient bronzes, tomb and temple sculptures, a Chinese scholar's library or Japanese teahouse, scroll and miniature paintings, and tour-de-force decorative arts.

Tour Objective

This tour introduces visitors to the arts of China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and India. The tour examines what we can learn about culture and history from careful observation and discussion of Asian artworks and also introduces aesthetic principles that show what these cultures value in the production of art.

Means

Because Mia's Asian art collection is so extensive, it is important to choose a theme that helps you make a representative selection of objects. Encourage your group to return many times in order to see the depth and richness of the collection. For any tour theme, tradition and innovation play an essential role in the production of works both historically and in the present.

Themes

Philosophy and Religion in Asian Art

This theme highlights objects inspired by the major religions and philosophies of Asia: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Choose from the following suggested list:

China

Zun/wine vessel in shape of an owl, 13th-12th c. BCE, 50.46.116

Kuan Storage Jar, 2nd-1st c. BCE, 98.214.2

Maitreya (The Buddha of the Future), early 6th c. BCE, 45.3

Kuan Yin images or sculptures

Sarcophagus of Prince Yuan Mi, 524, 46.23.1a-d

Guardian Lions, 8th c., 2008.23.1,2

Tang Tomb Reliquary, 8th c., 49.1.1-10

Han tomb figures and tiles (pick one or two)

A Gathering of Lohans (jade), 17th-18th c., 92.103.3

Jade Mountain, 1790, 92.103.13

Portrait of Confucius, late 14th c., 98.65.1

Wu Family Reception Hall (Confucianism)

Buddhist and Daoist (Tibetan and Chinese) robes

Tibetan Mandala, 1991, 92.44

Sutra containers and scrolls

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Korea

Flask, 17th c., 99.6 and other white ware/porcelain (taste associated with Confucianism)

Japan

Nio Guardian figures, mid-14th c., 83.76.1,2

Jizo Bosatsu, 13th c., 86.7a-c and 2013.31.52a-c

Amida, the Buddha of Infinite Light, 12th c., 78.20 and 2015.79.256a-c

Descent of Amida (Raigo), 13th c., 61.16 and 14th c., 2015.79.8

Wisdom King of Awe-Inspiring Power, 13th c., 2013.29.1a-g

Taima Mandala, early 14th c., 85.9

Daruma, 1917, 2013.29.1134 and 17th-18th c., 2001.267.1

South and Southeast Asia

India, Shiva Nataraja, about 1100, 29.2

India, Shiva's Family, 10th-11th c., 97.36

India, Vishnu Stele, 11th c., 90.67

Gandhara (Pakistan), Buddha, 3rd c., 2001.153

Thailand, Walking Buddha, 15th c., 31.115

Burma, Enshrined Buddha, about 1800, 89.55

Cambodia, Prajnaparamita, late 12th-early 13th c., 97.105

Indonesia, Ganesha, 10th-11th c., 2003.198

Artists as Master Craftsmen

This theme emphasizes the tremendous range of materials worked with outstanding skill in Asian art. Artists attained heights of technical and aesthetic refinement in jade, silk, ceramics, wood, lacquer, metalworking, and painting. Suggestions include:

China

Water Coupe (with frog stopper), 18th-19th c., 92.103.20a-c

Celadon Vase (in shape of a Hu), 10th-13th c., 2000.210.1

Covered Vase, 1736-1795, 29.19.1a,b

Covered Tripod, 19th c., 92.103.22a,b

Tang Tomb Reliquary, 8th c., 49.1.1-10

Silk imperial robes

Gold presentation boxes

Mirror Stand and Cosmetic Case, early 17th c., 94.8a-r

Carved lacquer box, 13th c., 2001.73.1a,b

Jade Mountain, 1790, 92.103.13

Huang-hua-li furniture examples

Amida, the Buddha of Infinite Light, 12th c., 78.20 and 2015.79.256a-c

Zun/wine vessel in shape of an owl, 13th-12th c. BCE, 50.46.116

Gui (ritual food vessel), 11th c., BCE, 50.46.8

Shallow Bowl with Double-fish Motif, 12th-13th c., 43.1

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Japan

Samurai suit, early 17th c., 2009.60a-s

Kano Naganobu, Emperor Ming Huang and Yang Guifei with Attendants, around 1600, 2013.29.48

Writing box with moon and wave design, 18th c., 75.90.1a-f

Jizo Bosatsu, early 13th c., 86.7a-c and 2013.31.52a-c

Kano Sansetsu, Moonlit Scene, first half of 17th c., 2013.29.35

Maruyama Okyo, Two Cranes and a Pine Tree, 18th c., 2007.106.9

Additional scroll or screen paintings

Korea

Gourd-shaped Ewer, 12th c., 99.41a,b and other celadons

South and Southeast Asia

India, examples of Bidri ware

India, examples of miniature paintings

Burma, Enshrined Buddha, about 1800, 89.55

Here are some suggested themes for tours focusing exclusively on China.

Arts of China: Ancient Traditions

This tour discusses how ancient traditions manifest themselves in Chinese art. Select objects that teach about the importance of place in society as expressed through philosophy and religion; the use of symbolism; technical traditions in bronze and ceramic production; and the practice of the *Three Perfections*: painting, calligraphy, and poetry.

Many of the Chinese works of art listed previously can be used for this tour.

Symbolism in Chinese Art

The Chinese have an extensive repertoire of symbols which furnish decorative motifs and provide insight into cultural values and beliefs. As part of the Chinese respect for tradition, artists have continued to use many of these symbols throughout history in various media. Look for the following symbols on a variety of objects.

Bi disc and cong – heaven and earth

Dragons – water, fertility

Peonies – love and affection, happiness

Lotus – purity, marital happiness

Chrysanthemums – purity, among the last blooms of autumn

Pine, bamboo, and plum – “three friends of winter” representing endurance and faithfulness through adversity (literati culture)

Eight precious symbols of Buddhism

Cranes, peaches, phoenixes, Daoist immortals – immortality

Lion dogs – protection

Lingzhi fungus, turtles – long life

**Arts of China:
Reverence for
Nature**

The Chinese delight in the beauty of the natural world. They believe humans have a particular place within the universal order and that it is crucial for humans to be in harmony with nature. These ideas are reflected in their preference for elements from nature as decorative motifs and their representation of people's place in the natural world.

Many of the Chinese works of art listed previously can be used for this tour. Be sure to include examples of landscape paintings.

Here is a suggested theme for a tour focusing exclusively on Japan.

**Arts of Japan:
Reverence for
Nature**

This tour shows how respect for nature can be seen in the subject matter, materials, design principles, and spirit of Japanese artworks. Every flower, bird, or tree stands for a season. Sensitivity to how feelings are affected by the environment is unique to the Japanese aesthetic. This is an essential component of understanding and experiencing Japanese art.

Other aspects of Japanese art to discuss on this tour include respect for the materials used, the role of empty space and asymmetry (a part of nature), and the significance of humor and playfulness. Here are a few suggestions:

Tea house and tea ceremony ceramics

Lacquer boxes with various designs

Contemporary ceramics

Parinirvana of Sakyamuni, 14th c., 94.85

Kano Sanraku, Rice Farming in the Four Seasons, 1620s, 81.1.1

Maruyama Okyo, Gamboling Puppies, 1779, 74.1.136

Kano Gyokuraku, Lin Hejing Searching for Plum Blossoms, late 15th c., 2013.29.33

Additional examples of screen or scroll paintings

Works based on *The Tale of Genji*

This tour can be adapted to whatever objects are currently in the galleries.