
Title of Object

Traveling in Autumn Mountains

Photo of Object (optional)



Object Information

Artist: unknown

Culture: Chinese, Qing

Date of Object: 17th-18th century

Country: China

Accession Number: 92.103.15

File Created: 11/9/2016

Material/Medium: Grayish white nephrite with brown markings (Jade)

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Last Updated/Reviewed: 7/6/2017

Tour Topics

Passion-place, Passion for place, Highlights 1600-1850, Group 4, Nature/Flowers, Landscape, Animals, literati, Power/status, water, waterfall, traveler, journey, yin/yang, harmony, Daoism

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

1. (Descriptive/Interpretive) Take a moment and walk around this jade carving. Describe the scene that you see here. What kind of feeling does it evoke for you? (Mountain scene with an official riding a donkey, followed by an attendant carrying an umbrella, crossing a rustic bridge. Smaller scale group in background. Importance of nature in Daoist beliefs.)
2. (Descriptive) Jade carving was influenced by the brush paintings of the same time period. Jade craftsman tried to represent the characteristics of brush painting. What reminds you of a painting? (Show prop of detail of brush painting – displays height and depth)

3. (Interpretive) Notice the use of the colors in the jade. How did the craftsman use the colors in the jade to enhance the scene? (Show prop of colored jade – the colors on the object give the impression of autumn trees, talk about where jade came from)

4. (Associative) This jade carving would have been favored by the literati (Chinese scholars) of the time. What kind of things might we see in the library or on a desk of someone today that is equally favored? (On way to object, pass by The Studio of Gratifying Discourse)

Key Points (Form: subject matter, medium and techniques of manufacture, style, etc.)

1. This jade is from the Qing Dynasty in China, dating back to the 17th or 18th century. This is a mountain scene with an official riding a donkey, followed by an attendant who carries an umbrella, crossing a rustic bridge. A smaller scale group in the background is crossing another bridge. ***This may not be an actual place but an imagined landscape which represents the importance of nature in the cultural traditions of the arts in China.***
2. In the Chinese imagination, mountains were imbued with sacred power as manifestations of nature's vital energy (qi). They attracted rain clouds that watered the farmer's crops, concealed medicinal herbs, magical fruits, alchemical minerals that held the promise of longevity. Mountains pieced by caves and grottos were viewed as gateways to others realms – cave heavens (dongtian) leading to Daoist paradises where aging is arrested and inhabitants live in harmony. The natural world is thought of as self-generating, complex arrangements that are continuously changing and interacting. Uniting these disparate elements is the Dao, or the Way. ***According to Daoist beliefs, man is a crucial component of the natural world and is advised to follow the flow of nature's rhythms.*** (Metmuseum)
3. ***When jade craftsman carved landscapes they tried to represent the characteristics of brush painting.*** Scenes of human figures and landscapes were mostly carved in relief on different levels. The designs mostly used the three methods of Chinese perspective, emphasizing the flat horizon, height and depth. (Yang, 165)
4. Jade production during this period was splendid. The jade craftsman of the Qing Dynasty often carved scenes of landscapes, plants or historical figures. To do this kind of work a craftsman required a deep understanding of his subject before he started to carve. ***Usually he sought to appeal to spiritual and artistic taste.*** (Metmuseum)
5. This object is made from grayish white nephrite with brown markings. ***During the Qing Dynasty, there was fuller access to more raw materials.*** Hotan or Hotian in the western part of present day Xianjiang was annexed and this allowed for a huge increase of raw nephrite jade materials in central China. This had long been the source of nephrite jade and craftsman were familiar with the high quality "mutton fat" stone from there. During this period, jade craftsman intentionally conserved the exterior parts of the raw jade material and used them as part of the landscape. ***The changing colors were used, as you can see here, to give the impression of autumn trees.*** (Yang, 165)

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

1. During the 17th and 18th centuries China was on the verge of becoming a global cultural power. This was especially true during the 60 year reign of Emperor Qing Long (or Quianlong). "Starting in the mid-Ming, the region south of the Yangzi River enjoyed great economic prosperity; jade carvings became ever finer and more elegant under the patronage of literati and rich merchants. In the 2nd

half of the 18th century, the conquest of the Uygur region of Eastern Turkistan further gave the Qing court direct access to and control of the Khotan nephrite mines; jadeite also started to come in from Myanmar with the active development by Qing in the southwestern region.” (National Palace Museum) During Qianlong’s reign, the emperor catalogued and authenticated ancient designs, critiqued new designs, promoted interpretations from the past, incorporated landscape and adopted techniques from Muslim jade workers. Driven by the imperial house's taste, jade carving experienced an unprecedented thriving period.

2. Jade has long been used in China. From the 10th century on, jade pieces were limited to small jewelry, personal accessories, small sculptures or desktop items. After the 1750s, jade began to be used as inlays and was expanded to include utensils, large three dimensional sculptures, musical instruments, ritual objects such as jade books and seals, and objects conveying good wishes such as ruyi scepters.
3. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, a duality existed. There was totalitarian rule and rigid social hierarchy but there was also a merchandise economy emerging. Jade work reflected these competing forces and catered to both humanistic and secular tastes.

Current Mia Label Information (optional)

In this mountain scene, an official riding a donkey is followed by his attendant who carries an umbrella; they cross a rustic bridge over a waterfall. Above them a similar group in smaller scale, as if in the far distance, crosses another bridge. This type of jade mountain had its beginnings in the late Ming period. The setting, with its figures, trees, bridges and animals, represents a translation of the orthodox landscape painting tradition into jade sculpture. Numerous depictions similar to this one of scholars traveling in or contemplating mountain scenery can be found in paintings of the period. The theme of humankind's harmony with nature was favored by the Taoists and the literati.

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

Department of Asian Art. “Nature in Chinese Culture.” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cnat/hd_cnat.htm (October 2004)

Department of Asian Art. “Landscape Painting in Chinese Art.” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/clpg/hd_clpg.htm (October 2004)

Art in the Quest of Heaven and Truth: Chinese Jade through the Ages (National Palace Museum): http://www.npm.gov.tw/exh99/chinese_jades/en1.html and “The Ingenuity of Jade Carving” from http://www.npm.gov.tw/exh99/chinese_jades/en5.html

Sun, Jason. “Chinese Hardstone Carvings.” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hard/hd_hard.htm (June 2016)

Watson, William and Chuimei Ho. The arts of China after 1620. New Have: Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 78 -94.

Yang, Boda. "The Glorious Age of Chinese Jades" in Jade, Kaverne Roger (ed.), London, 1991, pps. 126-187.

Small piece of colored jade from tour office (prop)

Eight Daoist Immortals of China by Gion Nankai from <http://burkecollection.org/catalogue/308-eight-daoist-immortals-of-china> (prop)

