

Year of the Dragon

Mystical Creatures of the Sky

龍年：神獸在天

From the dragon's first appearance during the early Neolithic period, seven to eight thousand years ago, these ferocious beasts have suffused Chinese culture with their transcendent and majestic power. They have inspired artwork in every medium, from jade to bronze, ceramics to paintings. Over thousands of years of Chinese history, they have served as spiritual, imperial, and cultural symbols, evolving in form and meaning.

Dragons originated as talismanic and totemic figures, later morphing into scaly mythological beasts that controlled the sea and rivers, rain and wind. Eventually, they became the four-legged, horned, and lithe creatures of the sky we know today, representing not only beneficent heavenly power and prosperity but Chinese culture itself.

To celebrate the dawn of the Year of the Dragon in the lunar calendar, this exhibition of objects from Mia's own Chinese art collection explores the evolution of dragon imagery and its connotations throughout Chinese art history, from the ancient to the contemporary world.