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Wisdom Embodied: Chinese Buddhist And Daoist Sculpture In The Metropolitan Museum Of Art



Synopsis

The Metropolitan Museum's collection of Chinese Buddhist and Daoist sculpture is the largest in the Western world. In this lavish, comprehensive volume, archaeological discoveries and scientific testing and analysis serve as the basis for a reassessment of 120 works ranging in date from the fourth to the twentieth century, many of them previously unpublished and all of them newly and beautifully photographed. An introductory essay provides an indispensable overview of Buddhist practices and iconography—acquainting us with the panoply of past, present, and future Buddhas, bodhisattvas, monks and arhats, guardians and adepts, pilgrims and immortals—and explores the fascinating dialogue between Indian and Chinese culture that underlies the transmission of Buddhism into China. In addition to detailed individual discussions of fifty masterpieces—a heterogeneous group including portable shrines carved in wood, elegant bronze icons, monumental stone representations, colorful glazed-ceramic figures, and more—the catalogue presents a ground-breaking survey of the methods used in crafting the sculptures. A second introductory essay and several technical appendices address the question of how early Chinese bronzes, as opposed to those from Gandhara and other westerly regions, were cast; the construction methods used for wood sculptures in China, notably different from those used in Japan; the complex layers of color and gilding on works in all media and their possible significance; and the role of consecratory deposits in wood and metal sculptures. A final appendix publishes the results of an intensive study of the wood material in the collection, classifying every sculpture by the genus of its wood and including a section of photomicrographs of each wood sample—an invaluable resource for researchers continuing to study works of this genre. As illuminating for new enthusiasts of Chinese Buddhist art as for scholars and connoisseurs, *Wisdom Embodied* is a glorious tour of the Metropolitan's unparalleled collection, certain to earn its place as a classic in the field. (This title was originally published in 2010.)

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“For anyone interested in the Buddha and his teachings, *Wisdom Embodied* is a stunning book and if I were not a practicing Buddhist myself, it may well have brought about my conversion.”
—Birmingham Post (Birmingham Post) “A stunningly illustrated study of 50 of the most significant Chinese Buddhist sculptures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, this book is more than a mere catalogue. . . . Highly recommended.”
—D.K. Haworth, *Choice* (D.K. Haworth *Choice*) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Featuring all new photography, this comprehensive volume reassesses 120 works from the Metropolitan Museum’s unparalleled collection of Chinese Buddhist and Daoist sculpture.

To form a full appreciation of Chinese sculpture, they say, one must journey to the cave sanctuaries of central China. Unfortunately, visiting these out-of-the-way sites is a challenge, at least for an old dog like me. Yet there are compensations. One of the best collections outside China is in New York’s Metropolitan Museum of art, the subject of this superb volume. To my mind, the overarching theme is the contrast between the intense spirituality of the Wei pieces over against the sensuality and realism of many later works, some of them reflecting Indian influence. With its splendid reproductions, this volume is a must for any admirer of Chinese art.

Great book!

Thank you

The title is a bit of a misnomer as it deals with Buddhist sculpture in China. Daoism is considered peripherally from the point of view of its influence on Buddhist sculpture and although there are a couple of Daoist pieces, the book contains close to a hundred Buddhas and Bodhisattva sculptures. This book is definitely worth buying due to a clear and succinct introductory essay on the foreign design influences on Chinese sculpture, from the original Indian, to the Central Asian and

finally to the Indo-Himalayan influences from the 15th to the 19th Century. Although there is not much new in this essay for scholars with a background in Buddhist art, it does provide a framework to understand the artform for the lay reader. What is more interesting is an essay called "Creating Sacred Images of the Buddha - A Technical Perspective". As no ancient texts discuss the methods of creating Buddhist sculptures, this essay discusses the use of the latest modern technical methods such as X-Ray radiography, X-ray spectrometry and thermoluminescence to determine how these sculptures were created. This essay was supplemented by two appendices on polychrome (color) applications and the different woods that were used for sculpture (how Chinese woods differed from Japanese woods for example) and represent the cutting edge of research. The pictures are well lit and of high quality as you would expect from the Metropolitan Museum and there are a number of truly stunning pieces (such as the altarpiece dedicated to the Buddha Maitreya from the Wei Dynasty (386-534) and some of the steles.) These were also accompanied by dedicated essays in the appendix. My only complaint would be that some of the images of the sites in China are often quite poor, but these are few in number and do not detract from this wonderful book. Highly recommended to those with an interest in Chinese and Buddhist Art.

Not only has the Met cataloged their wonderful collection of Buddhist and (to a lesser extent) Taoist sculpture, they generously offer the PDF version for free on their website. The direct link is: resources.metmuseum.org/resources/metpublications/pdf/Wisdom_Embodied_Chinese_Buddhist_and_Daoist_Sculpture_in_The_Metropolitan_Museum_of_Art.pdf and more information about the title can be found here:

metmuseum.org/research/metpublications/Wisdom_Embodied_Chinese_Buddhist_and_Daoist_Sculpture_in_The_Metropolitan_Museum_of_Art If the links do not appear above, just use Google to search for the phrase "Wisdom Embodied: Chinese Buddhist and Daoist Sculpture in The Metropolitan Museum of Art"

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