

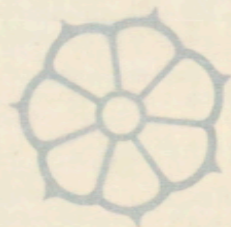


1600 YEARS OF ASIAN SCULPTURE

GOVETT-BREWSTER ART GALLERY
NEW PLYMOUTH N.Z.

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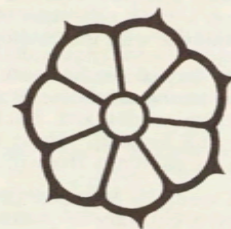
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from the R.H.T. Longden collection



GOVETT-BREWSTER ART GALLERY
15 May - 1 July 1973

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Mr. R. H. T. Longden for his generosity in lending this splendid collection of Asian Sculpture to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery for exhibition. This occasion marks the first time a collection, representing 1600 years of sculpture from the most important civilisations this world has known, has been viewed in New Plymouth. Mr. Longden has the rare ability to choose quality in works of art and as a private dealer and one who has been involved with the most important auction houses in Europe he has been able to form a small collection of superb quality. Mr. Longden should also be thanked for his assistance with the catalogue, it is much appreciated.

Gratitude is due to Mr. Trevor Bayliss for his work in facilitating the loan of these works which have been on display at the Auckland War Memorial Museum where he is Assistant Director. The catalogue entries and black and white photographs have been generously provided by him and his staff. He is also to be thanked for the loan of supportive material in the way of paintings from the Museum's Collection.

In retrospect I must also give credit to Mr. Don Driver, Senior Technical Assistant at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, a collector of Asian sculpture himself, for not only planting the idea-seed for this exhibition but for making the initial contacts.

Cover: 52 cast iron monk's head. Early Ming Dynasty. China.

INTRODUCTION

Viewing works of art from Asia with Western eyes can be a difficult and sometimes unproductive task.

The images of the Buddha for instance may seem to be merely repetitive, but on closer study there are major changes within the given context. The two illustrated, one from Kashmir (Cat. No. 31) and the other from Burma (Cat. No. 46), are not only stylistically different (note the hair, expression, clothes and base) but their basic message is different. The excellent Buddha image from Kashmir has the hand gesture (mudra) of teaching while the latter that of subduing "Mara" (i.e. the illusory world); two aspects within one basic belief.

On the other hand Asian sculpture can be enjoyed purely for its esthetic worth without the knowledge of its symbology. However, some study into the nature of the Asian mind and his religious attitudes would add greatly to the enjoyment of the viewer. I have compiled a selected bibliography which appears at the back of this book for those interested in furthering their knowledge on this subject. The books are of an introductory nature and would therefore be suitable for the beginner.

Most estheticians agree that objects become works of art when they impart or express the reason for their being. They must convey their message not only in illustrative terms but with emotion, feeling and vitality and at the same time be ordered and reposed.† With this in mind I would like to discuss briefly some of the works possessing the above qualities and thus illustrate to the viewer what to look for.

All images in this collection are of a religious nature and all are produced with a basic and detailed iconography. It is only in recent times that sculptors have exerted their individuality through personal expression in the east. However, this does not, as one would think, limit the power of expression inherent in the best of these older works. As an example, the Siva figure from India of the 12th century (Cat. No. 7) is an incredibly sensual and moving piece of sculpture. Though the figure is seated it seems to be swaying with rhythmic vibration. The flow of energy radiates the power of the image and thus expresses one of the aspects of the Hindu Trinity; Siva the Destroyer.

On the other hand consider the subtle expressive power of the 9th century Buddha from Kashmir, radiating inner warmth and compassion as he quietly teaches his disciples "the Eight Fold Path". The seated Chinese Buddha of the 3rd-6th century though worn with time, still expresses ageless peace in his gesture of giving. The almost primitive yet sophisticated beauty of a mother and child (Cat. No. 17) express a dignity beyond external forms. The powerful yet quiescent figure of Harihara (Cat. No. 33) representing the two all powerful Hindu gods Vishnu the preserver and Siva the destroyer, displays an intense yet pacific quality underlying the all important role of duality. The impressive Chinese Ming bronze of Kuan-Yin (Cat. No. 56) is known as the Goddess of mercy who not only watches over all humanity but protects man with her blessings and is the giver of children. Her dual role is expressed by her attitude of compassion holding a child or a symbol of humanity.

† Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. *The Dance of Shiva*. New York. p. 80-81.

In all the examples above and in the remaining works an all important quality is present. Nothing is out of place as everything is visually ordered to create a unified whole. This in turn expresses the overriding theme of all religions; unity.

In this excellent and varied collection further examples of the qualities which transform objects into works of art can be found. It is hoped that each viewer will look more deeply into the origins of these images to discover the wealth of knowledge and wisdom inherent in the cultures which produced them. Through a deeper understanding of these cultures not only will a more profound awareness of the sculpture become manifest but a more profound awareness of life and art in general in its east/west context.

METHODS

It would seem important to discuss the methods used in producing the works in the collection. In that the largest portion consists of bronzes and that carvings are self explanatory I will discuss the former.

The "lost wax" process, which is employed, was developed in the production of ritual vessels in Ancient China. The process consists of first making a wooden or more commonly a clay model of the image. This is covered with many coats of wax which is then carved to create the final design. The wax is covered by clay and after drying is fired. During firing this melts out of the area between the inner model and outer shell leaving a thin hollow area. Into this area is poured the liquid bronze. Solid models made entirely of wax are made for smaller castings.

More often than not flaws occur in the object during the pouring of the metal, these are caused by uneven flow of metal, air bubbles and cracks from uneven cooling. Sometimes these are repaired, other times the artisans have to begin again. After the object has cooled it is cleaned, smoothed and, if a large piece, joined. Larger bronzes usually are cast in more than one piece.† After the above processes are completed the finishing touches are added such as gold leaf, lacquer, jewels, etc. In the larger objects such as Tibetan images, they are clothed much as the Buddha himself would have been. These methods remain little changed in the production of modern sculpture today.

The majority of these objects were made as devotional offerings and the higher the quality and the more that were created the more important were the blessings received. Therefore the quality was usually high (relative to the technology of the time and culture) and so were the number produced.

R. H. Ballard
Director
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.
March 1973

† Hugo Munsterberg. *Chinese Buddhist Bronzes*, Tokyo, 1967.

7. Siva, sitting on lotus pedestal, with Naga ornament.
12th century. India.



9. Jain image in meditation under the canopy. Early 14th century. India.



13. Siva figure. 18th century. India.



17. Figure of mother and child. 18th century.
India.



31. Buddha seated on a lotus pedestal with the hand gesture of teaching.
9th century. Kashmir.



33. Figure of Harihara, Hindu God representing Vishnu and Siva in the same figure. Vishnu with four arms holding symbol; Siva with the third eye and Naga ornament. 15th century. Tibet.



34. Buddha image in subduing Mara, cross-leg posture, decorated pedestal with floral lotus and mythological animal. Cr. 1690. Tibet.



47. Buddha Image in subduing Mara. 16th century. Burma.



51. Sitting Buddha image, hand gesture of giving. 3rd-6th century. China.



56. Bodhisattva, sitting in state. Late Ming Dynasty. China.



57. Standing figure of Kuan Yin, goddess of mercy and fertility, gilded bronze. Cr. 1680. China.



CATALOGUE

All dimensions are in centimetres and only height is given unless otherwise noted. Asterisk denotes reproduction in catalogue.

INDIA

1. Stone carving. 3rd century. 12 cm.
2. Buddha in subduing Mara, lotus pedestal with decorated floral design. 6th century. 10.5 cm.
3. Stone carving of Vishnu and Lakomi. 9th century. 8.2 cm.
4. Standing figure and 3 Buddhas in meditation. 9th century. 17.6 cm.
5. Buddha Image in Pala style subduing Mara, cross-leg posture, sitting on lotus pedestal. 12th century. 8.8 cm.
6. Siva figure in unworked state. 12th century. 35.5 cm.
7. Siva, sitting on lotus pedestal, with Naga ornament. 12th century. 10.5 cm.*
8. Seated Jain figure in meditation. 13th century. 9.9 cm.
9. Jain image in meditation under the canopy. Early 14th century. 26.5 cm.*
10. Bronze figure. 15th century. 20.7 cm.
11. Figure of Vishnu, four arms holding conch, disc, club, lotus, small figure on base. 16th century. 10 cm.
12. Figure of Turaka, one episode of Uma. 16th century. 11.3 cm.
13. Siva figure. 18th century. 16.8 cm.* **KHARNA**
14. Figure cast in two metals possibly of Parvati. 18th century. 7.7 cm.
15. Balakrishna, from South India. 18th century. 9.8 cm.
16. Uncertain of iconography. 18th century. 12.9 cm.
17. Figure of mother and child. 18th century. 12.6 cm.*
18. Horse and rider, from Central India. 18th century. 17.2 cm.
19. Uncertain of iconography. 18th century. 13.5 cm.
20. Uncertain of iconography. 18th century. 15.3 cm.
21. Elephant and rider: Village Sculpture. 19th century. 15.9 cm.
22. Bronze figure. 19th century. 20.8 cm.
23. Standing Brahma. 19th century. 11.1 cm.
24. A donor and his wife. 19th century. 10.5 cm.
25. Standing figure, left hand holding lotus. 19th century. 7.9 cm.
26. 2-seated figures: Village Sculpture. Date unknown. 13.6 cm.
27. Bronze figure. Date unknown. 11.2 cm.
28. Elephant and rider. Date unknown. 13.5 cm.

CEYLON

29. Buddha Image in meditation. 16th century. 6.3 cm.
30. Carved Ivory of a demon face. 18th century. 9 cm.

KASHMIR

31. Buddha, seated on a lotus pedestal with the hand gesture of teaching. 9th century. 23 cm.*

TIBET

32. Figure of Siva, standing on lotus pedestal. 14-15th century. 16.5 cm.
33. Figure of Harihara, Hindu God representing Vishnu and Siva in the same figure. Vishnu with four arms holding symbol; Siva with the third eye and Naga ornament. 15th century. 17.3 cm.*
34. Buddha image in subduing Mara, cross-leg posture, decorated pedestal with floral, lotus and mythological animal. Cr. 1690. 11.5 cm.*
35. Uncertain of iconography. Late 17th century. 18.6 cm.
36. Tara, sitting on lotus pedestal, right arm on the knee, hand turned palm outwards, left hand gesture of presenting doctrine. 17th century. 8 cm.
37. Uncertain of iconography. Early 18th century. 8.7 cm.
38. Figure of Vishnu in 10 Episodes. 18th century. 19 cm.
39. The presence of Buddha. 18th century. 21 cm.
40. Uncertain of iconography. 18th century. 14.3 cm.
41. Bodhisattva. 18th century. 17.4 cm.
42. Mould for clay votive figure. 19th century. 8.4 cm.
43. Sculpture of temple dancer from human bone; part of an apron. Date unknown. 12.3 cm.

NEPAL

44. Tara. 18th century. 8.6 cm.
45. Buddha Image in subduing Mara, cross-leg posture on lotus pedestal. Date unknown. 28.5 cm.

THAILAND

46. Buddha Image in subduing Mara. 15th century. 60 cm.

BURMA

47. Buddha Image in subduing Mara. 16th century. 20.7 cm.*
48. Buddha Image in subduing Mara. 17th century. 14.5 cm.

JAVA

- 49. Figure of Hindu God. 9th century. 10.8 cm.
- 50. Buddha Image in subduing Mara, lotus pedestal. 9th century. 9.5 cm.

CHINA

- 51. Sitting Buddha image, hand gesture of giving. 3rd-6th century. 10.8 cm.*
- 52. Cast iron monk's head. Early Ming Dynasty. 2.3 cm.*
- 53. Bodhisattva, sitting in cross-leg posture on lotus pedestal. Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). 18.6 cm.
- 54. Lohan. Ming Dynasty. 51 cm.
- 55. Sitting Buddha image, hand in gesture of worship. Ming Dynasty. 12.2 cm.
- 56. Bodhisattva, sitting in state. Late Ming Dynasty. 17 cm.*
- 57. Standing figure of Kuan Yin, goddess of mercy and fertility, gilded bronze. Cr. 1680. 92 cm.*
- 58. Seven Buddha images in meditation with halo sitting on lotus. 17-18th century. 9 cm.
- 59. Bronze plaque. 17-18th century. 17.5 cm.

KOREA

- 60. Standing Buddha (Amida). 9th century. 18.5 cm.
- 61. Standing Buddha (Amida). 9th century. 17.5 cm.

JAPAN

- 62. Bodhisattva. Kamakura period (1185-1392). 13.9 cm.
- 63. Bronze figures. Momoyama period (1573-1615). 18.8 cm. x 17.5 cm. width.
- 64. Mask. Edo period (1615-1868). 20.5 cm.

PERSIA

- 65. Copper bull. Date unknown. 12.9 cm.

UNKNOWN ORIGIN

- 66. Bronze figure showing Mongol influence. 15th century. 7.5 cm.

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