



BALTIMORE  
MUSEUM OF  
ART

## BMA Offers New Insights into Asian Art Collection with Reinstalled Galleries Opening October 1

### Art from India, Indonesia, Iran, and Türkiye are presented alongside works from East Asia

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BALTIMORE, MD (September 21, 2023)— A new interpretation of the BMA’s Asian art collection debuts on Sunday, October 1, with the addition of works from India, Indonesia, Iran, and Türkiye displayed alongside works from East Asia. This presentation of 182 objects provides a more complete understanding of the development of art across Asia through juxtapositions that offer new insights into materials, cultural and technological influences, and exchange and trade from the 26th century BCE to the 20th century. Approximately half of the works haven’t been on view for decades—if at all.

“Artworks from India, Japan, and China were among the BMA’s earliest acquisitions, and the collection has since grown to significant depth. We are delighted now to provide our community with a deeper look into the BMA’s Asian art holdings with this reinstallation and to invite greater understanding of these intricate and compelling objects,” said Asma Naeem, the BMA’s Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “The reinstalled galleries also offer new perspectives on the cultural exchanges that led to the evolution of artistry and the spread of ideas across centuries. This presentation approach reflects the BMA’s vision to examine the history of art through the lens of global development, transcending geographic and political boundaries.”

Highlights of the more than 50 artworks that will be new to visitors are a *Large Cup Decorated with Stylized Mountain Goats* from Iran (900-700 BCE), a pair of *Covered Jars with Daoist Symbols* from China (1100-1300), and a *Lid of Buddhist Monk’s Alms Bowl* from Thailand (1825-1850). The majority of the objects are by unidentified artists, but a few exceptions are *New Year’s Game Paddle Decorated with Longevity Symbols* (late 19th-early 20th century) by Sakai Doitsu, *Barrel-Shaped Vase with High-Relief Fish Design* (1920-30) by Yamamoto Shuko, and *Ocean Whirlpool* (2001) by Monden Kogyoku.

The galleries are organized thematically with the first presenting a variety of ceramics, prints, and textiles that relate to traditions and beliefs pertinent to daily life, such as feasting and writing, with an emphasis on geographic origin—from Korea in the north to Bali in the south and from Japan in the east to Türkiye in the west. Objects such as a *Small Dish with Aquatic Motif* (early 13th-century) from China, a *Deep Dish Decorated with a Sailing Vessel* (1660-1680) from Türkiye, and a *Large Platter Decorated with a Scene of Grasshoppers in a Garden* (Late 17th century) from Japan

demonstrate technological and stylistic exchanges and innovations between some of Asia's centers of artistic production.

For centuries, decorative displays of Chinese porcelain have demonstrated owners' discernment, wealth, and status. China's ceramic artists satisfied markets at home and across Asia and were deeply influential on other ceramic centers across the globe. Similarly, glass and jade works made in present-day Iran and India, respectively, were also widely admired. Among the most impressive ceramics coming from Chinese kilns featured in this gallery is the *Large Celadon Dish with Caved Decoration* (early 15th century). Dishes like this one were used for communal meals in Muslim communities from southern China to coastal East Africa.

China's ceramic art has also advanced innovation, inspired imitation, and ignited competition around the world for more than 5,000 years. Ideas, objects, and cultures traveled back and forth across Asia by trade routes extending over land and sea beginning in the 2nd century BCE. The melding of influences can be seen with objects like a *Large Amphora with Dragon-Head Handles* (7th century) from the Henan or Hebei Province of China that echoes a two-handled Greek wine jar decorated with iconic Asian dragons. An oil painting of a *Sailing Vessel* (c. 1855) illustrates the proliferation of shipping trade with China in the 19th century, much of it involving the distribution of Chinese export porcelain shown in a nearby case.

The reinstallation further explores Asia's diverse philosophical and religious systems, including beliefs in continued existence beyond a human lifetime. Objects representing these beliefs include the BMA's large-scale bronze *Water-Moon Guanyin (Shuiyue Guanyin)* (15th century) and *Seated Boy as Kui Xing* (15th–16th century), which references Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Mortuary art like *Figure of a Striding Camel* (early 8th century) was intended to be included in tombs, while other items were made for use in life and buried to continue that function.

The Asian collection reinstallation is curated by Frances Klapthor, BMA Associate Curator of Asian Art.

This installation is made possible by the Victor J. Schenk Trust, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, and Amy L. Gould and Matthew S. Polk, Jr.

### **BMA Asian Collection**

The BMA's collection of Asian art includes more than 3,200 objects comprised of works from China, Japan, India, Tibet, Southeast Asia, and Southwest Asia. The strength of the collection resides in Chinese ceramics, with a particular depth in mortuary wares from the Tang Dynasty (618–907) and utilitarian stonewares from the 11th through the 13th centuries. Artworks from India, Japan, and China were among the BMA's earliest purchases and gifts. The museum's first purchase, Indian metalwork, was made at a 1922 auction. In 1926, the BMA's first named gallery and purchase fund for Asian art were given in memory of founding trustee, Julius Levy and purchases made with the Julius Levy Memorial Fund have been made from 1939 to the present. Asian art is also represented in other areas of the BMA's collection, including Japanese prints and books, as well as contemporary art.

## **Baltimore Museum of Art**

Founded in 1914, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) inspires people of all ages and backgrounds through exhibitions, programs, and collections that tell an expansive story of art—challenging long-held narratives and embracing new voices. Our outstanding collection of more than 97,000 objects spans many eras and cultures and includes the world’s largest public holding of works by Henri Matisse; one of the nation’s finest collections of prints, drawings, and photographs; and a rapidly growing number of works by contemporary artists of diverse backgrounds. The museum is also distinguished by a neoclassical building designed by American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of modern and contemporary sculpture. The BMA is located three miles north of the Inner Harbor, adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University, and has a community branch at Lexington Market. General admission is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

## **Visitor Information**

General admission to the BMA is free. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with extended hours on Thursdays until 9 p.m. The Sculpture Gardens are open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to dusk. The museum and gardens are closed New Year’s Day, Juneteenth, July 4, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive, three miles north of Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit [artbma.org](http://artbma.org).

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