



MANDATE OF HARMONY

Jade Carvings from the
Western Zhou to the Eastern Zhou Dynasties

Up Until April 11th, 2026

Image: China, Horse-Shaped Pendant, Western Zhou Period,
1066-771 BCE, 1.75 x 2.87 x 0.25 in

Throckmorton Fine Art is pleased to present an exhibition of 65 distinguished jade carvings spanning the 800-year period of the Western Zhou (1046–771 BCE) and Eastern Zhou (770–221 BCE) Dynasties. Mandate of Harmony: Jade Carvings from the Western Zhou to the Eastern Zhou Dynasties will be on view from March 5 through April 11, 2026.

Laboriously and finely carved, the jade ritual objects, ornaments, and utilitarian objects on view are imbued with considerable meaning. These small sculptures are mystical, yet timeless, witnesses to the beginnings of a great civilization. The carvings were meant to be held and remain inviting, all but asking to be handled. Their beauty leads one to understand the Chinese proverb, “A gentleman does not part with his jade without good reason.” Likewise, there is a telling verse from the Chinese Book of Poems, “Thinking of the gentleman, he is as gentle as jade.”

Jade has long been prized. The lengthy Zhou era was central to the development of Chinese civilization when the arts flourished, including, prominently, the carving of jade. The origins of Chinese jade carving can be traced back 8,000 years, when jade objects were primarily tools and simple ornaments. During the late Neolithic period ritual objects were fashioned from jade, including the cong and the bi, whose shapes represent jade’s association with concepts of heaven and earth. During the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BCE), jade objects served theocratic rule.

During the Zhou Dynasty the role of jade underwent a fundamental change: from a magical medium for communicating with gods and spirits to a symbolic representation of social hierarchy to a latter “personalized art,” expressing individual aesthetic tastes. The many jades exhibited display the evolution in the role of jade in Chinese culture.

The exhibit is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with a contribution by the noted scholar, Gu Fang. His erudite essay establishes a context for viewing — and appreciating — these remarkable and rare works of art.

The Zhou Dynasty was China’s longest-ruling dynasty, though, it was a series of dynasties centered loosely around the royal house of Zhou. It held sway for nearly 800 years, from 1046 BCE until 221 BCE. During the Western Zhou period (1046-771 BCE), the royal house had military control over a large swath of territory in Northern China. In the Eastern Zhou period (770-221 BCE) control became more tenuous and ceremonial, but the political system created by the Zhou royal house survived. The latter Eastern Zhou period is itself subdivided into two eras: the Spring and Autumn period (770-475 BCE), where power became increasingly decentralized. The Warring State period (475-221 BCE) saw large-scale warfare that culminated in the end of the Zhou.

THROCKMORTON FINE ART

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