

Press Release



TANG DYNASTY
THE GOLDEN AGE
618 – 907 CE

Up Until May 10th, 2025

**Image: China, Seated Buddha, Tang Dynasty,
618-907 CE, Green Stone, 8.62 x 5 x 5 in**

Throckmorton Fine Art is pleased to present an expansive exhibit of small-scale works of art from the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), an era of openness and prosperity in Chinese history. Some fifty objects will be shown, including many stone figures of the Buddha, as well as sculptures of court ladies, tomb guardians, and horses. Jade carving was not so prevalent during the Tang Dynasty, but some jade carvings will be shown, too. Taken together, the objects exhibited offer an illuminating view of the richness and diversity of art during this formative period in Chinese history.

Tang China was one of the greatest empires in the medieval world. The Dynasty had strong but benevolent rule, successful diplomatic relationships (from Persia to India to Japan), economic trade, and a cultural openness and flowering. Indeed, the Tang Dynasty is ranked as the classical period of Chinese art. The era was also the golden age of Buddhism in China—an outgrowth, in large part, of interaction with India.

The images of the Buddha in the show are robust. There are two figures of the Buddha in bronze and one in jade. The other figures of the Buddha are carved from sandstone, limestone, and marble. All the Buddhas are beautifully cast or carved and are

soothing: they invite contemplation. These images would have adorned temples, though some small figures may have been used for private devotion. The figures survived the purges of Buddhism in Chinese history (unfortunately some were damaged). An albumen photograph at the gallery, by Afong Lai, dating to the 1870s, shows dozens of small-scale figures in a single temple. Many—if not most—of these temples have been closed, with the devotional objects within them scattered. (The building of the “Three Gorges Dam,” begun in 1983, led to many of the surviving temples also being closed.)

The beautifully glazed Tang ceramics in the exhibit include vessels and images of humans, gargoyles, and animals. In jade, the Tang favored images of dogs and horses. Small ceramic and jade objects have always been traded, with many finding their way to the Middle East, as well as to distant corners of Asia, from Indonesia to Korea to Japan. Centuries later, Europeans collected surviving Tang works of art. The art from this golden age of Chinese civilization has always been widely appreciated.

All the pieces exhibited were purchased from collections in the United States, Europe, and Hong Kong, and all of them were in the United States well before 2009 (the year the Chinese government began to restrict their export). Each work of art has been thoroughly studied and vetted by Gu Fang, an accomplished scholar, and Frank Aon, an authority on authenticating ancient artifacts.

The exhibit is open to the public and offers a fascinating window into Chinese history and art.

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