

別有洞天：蝙蝠之旅

BAT CAVE

TREASURES OF THE DAY AND
CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

TEACHER
RESOURCE GUIDE

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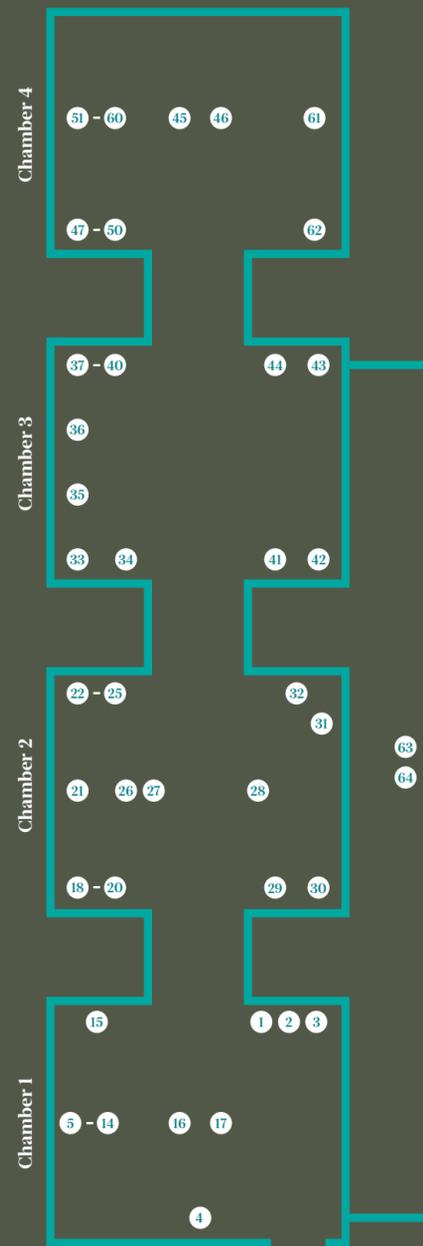
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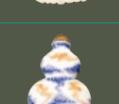
Bat Cave: Treasures of the Day and Creatures of the Night
Exhibit Checklist and Gallery Floor Plan

Gallery Floor Plan



Gallery Reception

Chamber 1

- 1 Dish with bat-and-peach design in *famille-rose* enamels
Mark and period of Yongzheng (1723 - 1735), Qing dynasty
Hong Kong Museum of Art Collection, Donated by B.Y. Lam Foundation 
- 2 Dish with bat-and-peach design in *famille-rose* enamels
Mark and period of Yongzheng (1723 - 1735), Qing dynasty
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of B. Y. Lam Foundation
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 
- 3 Dish with bat-and-peach design in *famille-rose* enamels
Mark and period of Yongzheng (1723 - 1735), Qing dynasty
Tianminlou Collection 
- 4 Peach-ground waxed paper with bats amongst clouds and Eight Auspicious Signs
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 
- 5 Jade ink slab carved with phoenix and bats
Qing dynasty (1644 - 1911)
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of Beishantang
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 
- 6 Jade pendant carved with bat
Kangxi period (1662 - 1722), Qing dynasty
Hong Kong Museum of Art Collection, Donated by Mr. Wong Ting-hong 
- 7 Jade pendant carved with characters "wanfu youtang (the gathering of all blessings)"
Qing dynasty (1644 - 1911)
Hong Kong Museum of Art Collection, Donated by Mr. Wong Ting-hong 
- 8 Mutton fat white jade pendant carved with bat and *lingzhi*
Qing dynasty, 18th century
Michael Liu Collection 
- 9 Set of five bats in gilt silver
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 
- 10 Amber bat with silver mount
Qing dynasty, 18th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 
- 11 Jade pendants in bat design
Qing dynasty, 18th - 19th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 
- 12 Snuff bottle with iron-red bats and clouds in underglaze blue
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 
- 13 Coral snuff bottle carved with bats and clouds
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Cheng Xun Tang Collection 

- 14 Hard wood case carved with bats and clouds
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Cheng Xun Tang Collection 

- 15 Pair of bowls with five bats in underglaze blue
Mark and period of Yongzheng (1723 - 1735), Qing dynasty
C. P. Lin Collection 

- 16 Gourd-shaped bottle with bat-and-cloud design in *doucai* enamels
Qing dynasty, 18th century
C. P. Lin Collection 

- 17 Jar with bat-and-cloud design in *doucai* enamels
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Tianminlou Collection 

Chamber 2

- 18 Pair of dishes with five bats surrounding "shou" and characters "wannian jiazǐ (ten thousand years of the *jiazi* cyclical year)" in *famille-rose* enamels
Mark and period of Jiaqing (1796 - 1820), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 19 Turquoise-glazed washer with bats and character "shou"
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Tianminlou Collection 

- 20 Pair of dishes with gilt bat and characters "shou" in *famille-rose* enamels
Daoguang period (1821 - 1850), Qing dynasty
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of Mr. Jenmou H. C. Hu 

- 21 Embroidery panel with an ornamental character "shou" made up of bats, peaches, and Covert Eight Immortals
Guangxu period (1875 - 1908), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 22 Snuff bottle with iron-red bats, peaches, and character "shou"
Mark and period of Guangxu (1875 - 1908), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 23 Peach-shaped porcelain cup with bat
Qing dynasty (1644 - 1911)
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of C. W. Chang 

- 24 Jade plaque carved with bats and peaches
Ming dynasty (1368 - 1644)
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of Mr. Victor Shaw
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 

- 25 Jade pendants with character "shou"
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 

- 26 Moon flask with bats, gourd vines, and character "shou" in underglaze blue
Mark and period of Yongzheng (1723 - 1735), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 

- 27 Vase with bats, gourd vines, and character "shou" in underglaze blue
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 28 Dragon-handled vase with a hundred "shou" characters in gilt on lime green ground
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Yi Tak Tang Collection 

- 29 Bat-handled vase with floral patterns and characters "shou" in *famille-rose* enamels
Mark and period of Daoguang (1821 - 1850), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 30 Turquoise-ground cup with bats and characters "shou" in *famille-rose* enamels
Mark and period of Jiaqing (1796 - 1820), Qing dynasty
C. P. Lin Collection 

- 31 White jade *xiyi* with bat and character "shou"
Qing dynasty, 18th century
Edward T. Chow and Hallam Chow Collection 

- 32 Rong Zuchun (1872 - 1944)
Finger painted rock, bat, and lingzhi
Ink on paper, fan
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Art Museum Acquisition Fund
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 

Chamber 3

- 33 Snuff bottle with iron-red design of Zhong Kui chasing demons
Mark and period of Xianfeng (1851 - 1861), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 34 Snuff bottle with iron-red design of Zhong Kui chasing demons
Mark and period of Xianfeng (1851 - 1861), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 35 Fan Shaozhen (1945 -)
Zhong Kui
Ink and color on paper
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of Prof. Lee Hon Ching
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 

- 36 Su Renshan
Zhong Kui with Bats
Qing dynasty (1644 - 1911)
Ink on paper
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of Mr. Huang Miaozi
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 

- 37 Jade pendants in blessings-before-your-eyes design
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 

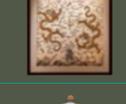
- 38 Silver mirror inlaid with jade plaque
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Cheng Xun Tang Collection 

- 39 Hair pin with bat design in gilt silver
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 

- 40 Hair ornament with bats in gilt silver and gems
Qing dynasty, 19th - early 20th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 

- 41 Copper snuff bottle with Daoist immortals in *balanci* enamels
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 42 Pair dishes with bats, peaches, and seascape in *doucai* enamels
Mark and period of Yongzheng (1723 - 1735), Qing dynasty
Tianminlou Collection 

- 43 Embroidery with dragon-and-flaming-pearl design
Jiaqing period (1796 - 1820), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 44 Jar with iron-red dragon-and-flaming-pearl design on white ground
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Yi Tak Tang Collection 

Chamber 4

- 45 Semi-formal court robe of blue silk with dragons and roundels composed of bats, endless knots, and peaches
Guangxu period (1875 - 1908), Qing dynasty
The Edrina Collection
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 

- 46 Hat rest with dragons, bats, and clouds in *famille-rose* enamels
Mark and period of Jiaqing (1796 - 1820), Qing dynasty
Yi Tak Tang Collection 

- 47 Vase with bat-and-cloud design in *famille-rose* enamels
Xuantong period (1909 - 1911), Qing dynasty
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of Huaihaitang
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 

- 48 Gourd-shaped vase with hundred iron-red bats
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Yi Tak Tang Collection 

- 49 Vase with iron-red bats
Mark and period of Guangxu (1875 - 1908), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 50 Porcelain vase simulating carved lacquer with bats in *famille-rose* enamels
Mark and period of Xianfeng (1851 - 1861), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 51 Hair ornament in openwork design of bats and character "shou" in silver
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 

- 52 Chalcedony snuff bottle carved with bat and horse in relief
Qing dynasty (1644 - 1911)
Hong Kong Museum of Art Collection 

- 53 Gourd-shaped wall vase with bats and characters "daji (luck)" in *famille-rose* enamels
Qianlong period (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection 

- 54 Gourd-shaped jade scent holder with bats and characters "daji (luck)" in openwork
Qing dynasty (1644 - 1911)
Hong Kong Museum of Art Collection 

- 55 Jade pendants in blessings-and-longevity-before-your-eyes design
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 

- 56 Jade pendant with bats
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Mengdiexuan Collection 

- 57 Cinnabar lacquer box carved with bats and clouds
Qianlong period (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
Joseph SL Wu Collection 

- 58 Group of jade plaques with auspicious designs
Qing dynasty (1644 - 1911)
Joseph SL Wu Collection 

- 59 Wang Xiaotang (1885 - 1924)
Vase with Magn bestowing longevity design in famille-rose enamels
Early Republican era
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of Huaihaitang
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 

- 60 Yellow-glazed brush pot with carved design of blessings, status, and longevity
Mark and period of Daoguang (1821 - 1850), Qing dynasty
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of Huaihaitang 

- 61 Large vase with spring scene in *doucai* enamels
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736 - 1795), Qing dynasty
C. P. Lin Collection 

- 62 Gao Jianfu
Bat, pomegranate and peaches
Dated 1904
Ink and color on silk, round fan
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK, Gift of Mr. Ho lu-kwong, Mr. Fok Bo-choi, Mr. Lai Tak and others
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK 

Annex

- 63 Sun Xun
Beyond-ism
2010
Animation film, 8:08 minutes
Collection of Hallam Chow 

- 64 Sun Xun
The "Dao" of a Bat
2015
Ink and gold
Collection of the artist; Supported by Hallam Chow and H2 Foundation for Arts and Education 

Annex

Table of Contents

About the Exhibition	02
How to use the Guide	02
Preface	03
Chapter 1: General Introduction	
1.1 Ways of appreciating Chinese artifacts	04
1.2 Chinese auspicious motifs	05
1.3 Bat in Chinese art	06
Chapter 2: Appreciation of Treasures with Bat Imagery	
2.1 Dish with bat-and-peach design in <i>famille-rose</i> enamels	07
2.2 Peach-ground waxed paper with bats amongst clouds and Eight Auspicious Signs	08
2.3 White jade <i>ruyi</i> with bat and character “ <i>shou</i> ”	09
2.4 Su Renshan <i>Zhong Kui with Bats</i>	10
2.5 Semi-formal court robe of blue silk with dragons and roundels composed of bats, endless knots, and peaches	11
2.6 Hat rest with dragons, bats, and clouds in <i>famille-rose</i> enamels	12
Chapter 3: Links with Contemporary Art	
3.1 About the Artist: Sun Xun	13
3.2 <i>Beyond-ism</i>	14
3.3 <i>The “Dao” of a Bat</i>	15
Reference	17
Suggested Answer	17

About the Exhibition

Bat Cave: Treasures of the Day and Creatures of the Night is on display at the Chantal Miller Gallery to memorialize bats, the quintessential night creatures found on site at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, from September 16, 2015 to January 3, 2016. With over 70 exquisite traditional Chinese objects with bat motifs, including ceramics, jade carvings, paintings and textiles among others, this exhibition offers a rare opportunity for visitors to explore the thematic variations of the bat motif that are seldom displayed together. In addition, the exhibition also presents a response project by the contemporary artist Sun Xun with the theme of bats. By unravelling the hidden meanings and stories behind bats in a modern and fun context, the exhibition aims to alter the stereotypical opinions associated with traditional Chinese art.

Bats are an auspicious symbol in China as the word for “bats” in Chinese is phonetically similar to the word for “blessings”. Bats were especially popular during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and could be found on a wide range of objects from folk art to court commissioned pieces. These multi-layered messages in Chinese art will be revealed to the visitors as we unlock the hidden meanings behind these fine works in this exhibition.

A short film made using Chinese ink and site-specific wall paintings of bats by the contemporary artist Sun Xun will also be on display. The enhanced museum experience and the time-transcending interplay between the treasures in the past and the artworks in the present will surely appeal to the visitors and rejuvenate the bat motifs.

The exhibition is co-organized by Asia Society Hong Kong Center and Art Museum, Institute of Chinese Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The curator is Dr. Xu Xiaodong, the Associate Director of the Art Museum, and the Associate Professor (by courtesy) of the Fine Arts Department, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The Assistant Curator is On-tsun Andrew Fung from the Gallery Team of Asia Society Hong Kong Center.



How to use the Guide

This teacher resource guide is designed to assist educators of visual arts, Chinese history, and Chinese language and culture when taking their students to view the exhibition. It also provides ideas for organizing educational activities related to Chinese artifacts and traditional art. This guide is divided into three chapters:

Chapter 1: General Introduction

provides an overview of Chinese artifacts and traditional art, and an introduction to the educational themes of this exhibition.

Chapter 2: Appreciation of Treasures with Bat Imagery

provides an introduction to six major art works displayed at the exhibition.

Chapter 3: Links with Contemporary Art

provides an introduction to two works displayed at the exhibition by the contemporary artist Sun Xun.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide a list of questions for discussion and suggested activities. During or after the gallery visit, teachers are encouraged to ask questions or organize educational activities suited to the level of their students. Suggested answers to some questions have been provided on the last page of this guide in order to help teachers and students enhance their knowledge of Chinese art and culture.

Appreciating Chinese art can be regarded as a journey to discover the traditional culture through objects. The creations, uses and circulations of art objects speak to the human's ideas and activities. Although most artworks featured throughout the exhibition carry no words to convey their voices, by taking appropriate approach, you can still understand them like reading a book without words. We may take a glimpse of the makers' creativity and exquisite techniques, as well as the hidden historical and cultural contexts. The purpose of this guide, therefore, is to provide guidance to educators and students during this exploratory journey into Chinese art.

During the final decade of the late Ming dynasty (1637, the 10th year of the Chongzhen emperor's reign), *The Exploitation of the Works of Nature (Tiangong kaiwu)*, an encyclopedia of Chinese handicraft arts and agriculture, written by Song Yingxing, was published. The author wrote in the foreword: "Under heaven and upon earth, things are to be numbered in the tens of thousands, and there are a like number of phenomena. All details are complete, nothing is overlooked: such cannot have been the fruit of human endeavors alone"¹. In other words, this splendid world composed of countless things, originated from the external changing of nature itself, which is called *tiangong* (a Chinese word meaning power of nature). In comparison with power of nature, marvelous art treasures were created by the manpower of the ancients. They thereby serve as witness to the process of our civilization. Wouldn't it a pity if the future generations do not know how to appreciate them?

This exhibition mainly covers the Ming and Qing dynasties and extends to the modern era. Based on artistic traditions nurtured by previous generations, painting and calligraphy as well as other forms of crafts, embraced a new opportunity for flourishing innovations throughout this time. During the Yuan-Ming dynastic transition, the modest and monochrome elegance gave way to the social trend of embracing multi-color. New polychrome glazes were invented on the foundation of monochrome, underglazed copper red and cobalt blue porcelains of the Yuan dynasty.

The handicraft industry that was controlled by the government of the early Ming dynasty became more diverse and commercialized in the later period. The acculturation and interaction among Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism in the Ming-Qing period, also helped nurture Chinese folk culture. Common pursuits for longevity and well-being among the commoners and noble were also reflected by handicrafts and painted works in that period. In addition to the popularity of polychrome and auspicious motifs, literati tastes and aesthetics had a great impact upon late-Ming art objects. Therefore, implements of study, in which literati shared a keen interest since the Song dynasty, had enjoyed a prosperous development.

When it came to the Qing dynasty, under the influence of the late-Ming literati trend, the Manchu imperial family became the most significant patrons of Chinese art. Dominated by Emperor Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong, the imperial workshops integrated the essence of previous traditions in art making, with Western knowledge and technologies. The snuff bottles of the Qing dynasty, as this exhibition showcases, are the best examples. After hundreds of years of cultural exchange between China and the West, the contemporary young artist Sun Xun, whose artworks combine ink-painting elements from East Asia and multi-media technology, made a sharp reflection upon the tension of historical tradition and its role in modern society, marking a rather ideal end-point for this exploratory journey.

Discussion

Have you ever visited a Chinese art exhibition or learnt about Chinese artifacts? What kind of impression did you have about Chinese traditional art and crafts before visiting this exhibition? Share your opinion with us.

¹ The translated version is quoted from the English version, *Chinese technology in the seventeenth century*, translated by E-tu Zen Sun and Shiou-chuan Sun and first published by The Pennsylvania State University Press in 1966 (ISBN 0-486-29593-1).

Chapter 1: General Introduction

1.1 Ways of appreciating Chinese artifacts

The ways of appreciating Chinese artifacts may vary by person, however, there is a shortcut. In general, we may start by looking at two aspects: materiality and visibility. Apart from achieving a better understanding of Chinese traditional art, this approach can also be applied to other countries or cultural regions.

Materiality means the material(s) and related techniques, based upon which the artifact was made. This exhibition features porcelain, jade (nephrite), gold, silver, paper, and embroidery silk, etc. Not only did they require different production procedures and mastering techniques, they also reflect the preference and tastes of specific social strata. Precious materials such as gold, silver, and jade were strictly controlled by the ruling classes of the early period. Commercialization and social mobility in the late Ming period helped fill the gap of stratification, encouraging the rising merchant class to furnish their identities with luxury objects. Various techniques were highly accomplished, so it is not rare to see art objects that are blend with different mediums and skills. They also witnessed a close cooperation of different craftsmen, as well as their highly organized workshop system. From Ming-Qing popular novels, such as *The Plum in the Golden Vase* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, one can find meticulously descriptive details on household furnishings, clothing and dressings, which vividly illustrate the rich material culture of that time.

Visibility, namely the pictorial designs, motifs and patterns, covers both the visual representations on flat painted and calligraphic works, and those on uneven surfaces of vessels. The highly schematized auspicious motifs, as shown in the exhibition, were all transferred by craftsmen from painted sketches/drafts to uneven vessel surfaces, and were thus mass-produced. Therefore, during the Ming and Qing periods, the pictorial interaction among painting, woodblock illustrations and utensil handicraft resulted in a shared motif circle, and thus marked a distinctive style in that period.

Lastly, we can analyze **the intents and contexts of art objects** based on their materiality and visibility. Some painted and calligraphic works, together with their titles and inscriptions, directly convey the artist's or artisan's messages. However, since Chinese culture tends to emphasize on implicitness instead of explicitness, the symbolic meanings of most artifacts showcased in the exhibition should be explored "via a detouring journey". Even the conventional and widespread auspicious motifs, by the meticulous employment of different attributes (figures, animals, plants, and vessels etc.), and by literal homophony, pun, and metonymy, not only interpret substantial long-lasting folk customs and mythical legends, but also convey the universal pursuits for well-being across the centuries. It familiarizes the viewers with the antique artifacts.

Suggested Activities

- 1 Encourage students to appreciate Chinese art works from the perspective of materiality and visibility. For instance, make a classification based on their materials (porcelain, jade, embroidery etc.), or based on the auspicious themes found on the artifacts.
- 2 During the exhibition, you can get a basic idea of the production procedures of some of the artifacts through the audio guide. For your interest, you can also search the internet for further information of techniques and making processes.

1.2 Chinese auspicious motifs

China has embraced a long history of auspicious symbolism, the majority of which has been passed down to today, thereby reflecting the wisdom of our ancestors. This year, 2015 of Gregorian calendar, is also the year of the ram in the Chinese lunar calendar. The conception of the ram as a homophone attribute to *xiang* (auspiciousness) can be traced back to the late Shang and Zhou periods. Similar to the Catholic churches' spread of the gospel to the illiterate masses by the means of religious icons and dramas, Chinese traditional auspicious motifs and blessing words serve as the Chinese folk culture and embody precious yet fragmentary popular belief. Therefore, this exhibition also serves as a lens through which we may peek into the much-overlooked cultural aspect that is rarely recorded in official historiography.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the adoption of visual auspiciousness in art objects reached its prime. Its major representations can be classified into three methods, listed as follows:

First, directly applying the Chinese words and phrases that carry auspicious meanings. In addition to the widespread Chinese characters such as *fu* (happiness), *lu* (emolument), and *shou* (longevity), four-character phrases like *jinyu mantang* (hall full of gold and jade), *fushou kangning* (happiness, longevity, well-being) are also included.

Second, applying those popular yet traditional visual attributes (objects, figures, animals or plants) as decorations. In addition to the dragon and the phoenix that stand for imperial identity and power, the Eight Auspicious Signs (*ba jixiang*²) that convey auspiciousness in Tibetan Buddhism, as well as the implements that represent the Eight Immortals³, have been widespread in the Ming-Qing period regardless of their religious roots. On the other hand, conventional pictorial combinations, such as "A hundred children (*baizi*)" or "Children playing (*yingxi*)" which originated from the Tang and Song periods, and the "Three friends of Winter (*suihan sanyou*⁴)" that symbolized unyielding integrity in the Yuan dynasty, continued to the Ming and Qing dynasties along with new developments.

Third, utilizing Chinese homophony. For instance, bat stands for *fu* (blessings); butterfly is a homophony of *die* (age of seventy to eighty), which means longevity; and fish is a homophony of *yu* which means surplus or rich. Auspicious representations on many artworks of the Ming and Qing dynasties involve two or even three combinations. For example, a butterfly combined with a melon means long-lived prosperity; and two characters *daji* (great luck) decorated on a vessel in the shape of a gourd (*hulu*, in homophony of happiness and emolument) stands for happiness and emolument together with great luck. The arrangement of a peony with a vase (*pin*), means wealthy and peaceful.

Discussion

In this exhibition, what objects are commonly found in the visual representation of the Chinese auspicious patterns?

Suggested Activity

Encourage students to connect daily life with traditional festivals, so as to learn more about Chinese culture, proverbs and auspicious imagery from folk customs. They can also utilize their knowledge of Chinese language to deepen their understanding of visual motifs and homophony.

2 "Eight Auspicious Sign (*ba jixiang*)" are the eight auspicious symbols in Tibetan Buddhism: Dharma wheel, white conch, precious umbrella, victory banner, lotus flower, vase of treasure, golden fish, and endless knot.

3 The implements representing the Eight Immortals are called "Covert Eight Immortals". They include the cattail leaf fan, gourd bottle, flower basket, lotus flower, precious sword, bamboo flute, fish-shaped drum, and jade clapper.

4 The "Three Friends of Winter" refer to pine, bamboo, and plum blossom.

1.3 Bat in Chinese art

In Western culture, bat is often associated with witchcraft, and thus symbolizes evil spirits. However, in the context of Chinese language, the sound for bat is a homophony of *fu* (blessing), and is thereby incorporated into Chinese auspicious symbolism. Ming-Qing visual arts feature the bat imagery in various ways. This creature either appears as an exclusive theme, or serves as an element integrated in various combinations. They are found on art objects in such illustrations as "numerous blessings that are as high as heaven (*hongfu qitian*)", "blessing and longevity both completed (*fushou shuangquan*)", "longevity as high as mountains, blessings as deep as the sea (*shoushan fuhai*)", etc. Chinese idioms including "blessing ahead (*fu zai yangqian*)" and "longevity surrounded by five blessings (*wufu pengshou*)" are also applied. Popular pictorial combinations that feature the bat include:

- *Hongfu qitian*, a Chinese idiom derived from the Yuan period, meaning numerous blessings that are as high as heaven. *Hong* contains homophonic attributes to the Chinese sound for red, and also carries the meaning of "vast space". Therefore, the visual representation of this idiom depicts red bats flying amid auspicious clouds in the sky.
- As the *Classic of Books* records, there are five types of blessings: longevity, wealth, well-being, moral cultivation, and peaceful death. Such five blessings cover most human being's secular pursuits, and they are usually depicted with five bats evenly surrounding the Chinese character *shou*.
- The combination of a bat and a horse (*ma*) means "to immediately achieve happiness (*mashang youfu*)". The motif *wanshou fulu* depicts a bending deer carrying a circular character *shou*, which is surrounded by flying bats. Both combinations are simple yet ingenious.
- From early times, Chinese copper coins were deliberately designed with a center hole for daily convenience. In addition to its homophonic attribute to *qian* (money), copper coins usually appear accompanied by a bat, carrying the meaning that the blessing is just at your sight. Many Qing-dynasty accessories, such as mirrors and hairpins, are decorated with such design, reflecting the social aesthetic in that period.
- From the Tang and Song dynasties, Zhong Kui has become a widespread figure for expelling demons. His images can be found in woodblock prints, New Year pictures, poplar dramas and novels. In the Ming-Qing society, apart from the Lunar New Year, hanging the Zhong Kui pictures throughout the household gradually became a common practice during the Dragon Boat Festival. The making of Zhong Kui pictures for different festive occasions in the Chinese lunar calendar varied from region to region. Zhong Kui, in later visual images, usually appeared accompanied by a bat flying above him, carrying auspiciousness by welcoming blessings along with his exorcist function.

Discussion

What is the difference in the meaning of bat imagery between Western and Chinese cultures? Try to further explain why there are such differences.



Jar with bat-and-cloud design in *doucai* enamels
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736-1795),
Qing dynasty
Tianminlou Collection

The jar is decorated with five-colored clouds, and coral-red flying bats, which means "the blessings as high as heaven".



Pair of dishes with gilt bat and characters "shou" in *famille-rose* enamels
Daoguang period (1821-1850), Qing dynasty
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK,
Gift of Mr. Jenmou H. C. Hu

This pair of dishes are decorated with a circular Chinese character *shou* in the center, evenly surrounded by five red bats, constitutes a popular auspicious composition.



Chalcedony snuff bottle carved with bat and horse in relief
Qing dynasty (1644 - 1911)
Hong Kong Museum of Art Collection

A bat flying above the horse, carrying the meaning to immediately achieve blessings.



Jade pendant in blessings-before-your-eyes design
Qing dynasty, 19th century
Mengdiexuan Collection

Decorated with a coin surrounded by bats, meaning "blessings at your sight".



Snuff bottle with iron-red design of Zhong Kui chasing demons
Mark and period of Xianfeng (1851-1861),
Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection

A red bat flying in front of Zhong Kui, which means Zhong Kui welcome blessings.

Suggested Activity

Can you identify the variations of bat motifs found in the exhibited artifacts? Try to copy the bat motifs with pencils or paint brush, and discuss the difference between the bat motifs in Chinese art and the image of bat in natural world.

Chapter 2: Appreciation of Treasures with Bat Imagery

2.1 Dish with bat-and-peach design in *famille-rose* enamels

Chamber 1

These three dishes feature the same popular design from the Yongzheng emperor's reign (1723–1735). With the underglaze blue reign marks of Yongzheng in six characters within the foot-ring, this set of wares were imperially ordered to celebrate the emperor's birthday (*wanshou jie*).

Please carefully observe the visual naturalism of the enamels painted over the white porcelain body. In the 18th century, the Qing court developed the *famille-rose* enamels based on the five basic palette colorings (*wucan*). It introduced the new *famille-rose* palette from European copper enamel and glass-making techniques, leading to softer layers and oil-painting-like dark shades decorated on vessels. Depicted over glass-white glaze, the branch elongates on both sides of the dishes. Eight pink peach fruits and eight coral-red bats are also decorated, respectively echoing the lucky number “eight” in Chinese culture. More importantly, bats and peaches constitute a visual auspiciousness of happiness and longevity. Viewers can take a closer look at the vivid depiction and naturalism by the hands of the artisans, and appreciate their fine workmanship and brushworks.



Dish with bat-and-peach design
in *famille-rose* enamels

Mark and period of Yongzheng (1723–1735),
Qing dynasty
Hong Kong Museum of Art Collection,
Donated by B.Y. Lam Foundation



Dish with bat-and-peach design
in *famille-rose* enamels

Mark and period of Yongzheng (1723–1735),
Qing dynasty
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK,
Gift of B. Y. Lam Foundation



Dish with bat-and-peach design
in *famille-rose* enamels

Mark and period of Yongzheng (1723–1735),
Qing dynasty
Tianminlou Collection

Discussion

Without the assistance of machines for mass-production, how do the motifs on all three dishes look almost identical? Discuss their manufacturing procedures.

Suggested Activity

Encourage students to copy the bat-and-peach motif by sketching the outline with pencils, and color it with gouache, watercolor paints or color pencils at school.

2.2 Peach-ground waxed paper with bats amongst clouds and Eight Auspicious Signs

Chamber 1

Inlaid with gold, this piece of treated paper was probably used by the Qianlong emperor for writing ceremonial couplets during festive occasions. It is decorated with bats, fungi-shaped clouds, and the “Eight Auspicious Signs” such as the conch shell and the infinite knot. The colors and designs would have been much brighter in its original glory before oxidation. With a seal mark reading “*Mingren dian* paper copied during the Qianlong reign” at the bottom right, this paper serves as evidence of cultural connection between the Yuan dynasty and the Qing court.

The brush, ink, paper, and ink stone are collectively known as the Four Treasures of the Study. Between the late Ming and Qing dynasties, because of the diverse demand and supply, papermaking began to witness more novel designs and decorations.



Peach-ground waxed paper with bats
amongst clouds and Eight Auspicious Signs
Mark and period of Qianlong (1736–1795),
Qing dynasty
Huaihaitang Collection

Discussion

- 1 Find the seal mark of “*Mingren dian* paper copied during the Qianlong reign” at the bottom right of the paper, and try to decode the mark. What motivated Qianlong to copy this type of famous paper originating in the Yuan dynasty?
- 2 Did you or your family write auspicious words or phrases on couplets for festive celebration or furnishing? What is the motivation (personal or political interest) for Qianlong to intimate the Han cultural custom?

Suggested Activity

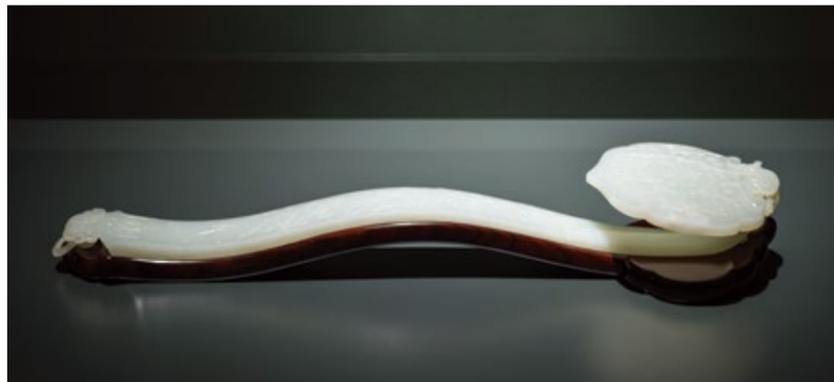
Find out all the auspicious elements on the paper, such as bats, the “Eight Auspicious Signs”, and so forth.

2.3 White jade *ruyi* with bat and character “*shou*”

Chamber 2

Ruyi was introduced to China along with the spread of Buddhism from India. Its early design, with a long handle and a palm-shaped end, indicates its original function was for scratching pleasure. One can find Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī holding a *ruyi* on mural paintings from Longmen and Dunhuang sites. Since the Six Dynasties, *ruyi* became a plaything in the noble and gentry households. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, various precious materials, including gold and jade, were used to produce *ruyi*, which were usually decorated with auspicious fungi-shaped decoration at one end.

This Qianlong *ruyi* is made of one single piece of fine white jade, with an openwork design at one end; and bats, clouds, and the character *shou* carved at the other. Large fine jade materials were rare in the Ming and Qing dynasties. During the 18th century, Emperor Qianlong expanded new territories by achieving a series of “Great Campaigns”, and thereby incorporated fine jade resources from Xinjiang into the Qing Empire. It was not until then did the jade making of the Qing dynasty reach its peak.



White jade *ruyi* with bat and character “*shou*”
Qing dynasty, 18th century
Edward T. Chow and Hallam Chow Collection

Discussion

- 1 “Jade” mainly consists of two kinds of minerals: jadeite and nephrite. The mohs scales of the Chinese nephrites range between 5.5 and 7.0. As the old saying goes, “jade is of no use without polishing.” Jade should be processed and cut with much harder minerals. How could jade workers in the past process jade without modern instruments or machines?
- 2 Do you use any implement for scratching in your daily life? Can you identify the differences between today’s implements and *ruyi*? Try to discuss the transformation of *ruyi* from daily implement in the early stage (daily implement) to symbolic decoration in the later stage, in terms of its materials and visual designs.

Suggested Activity

Ask students to find out some objects that are invented for daily use, but also carry symbolic identity of power or wealth.

2.4 Su Renshan *Zhong Kui* with Bats

Chamber 3

Su Renshan (1813-1850) was born in Shunde, Guangdong. He failed the civil service exams twice and thereafter turned to painting. Apart from landscapes and figures, he also painted flowers. Notorious for his peculiar seclusion, he developed his own unconventional compositions and forceful brushstrokes that challenged the traditional literati style.

The records on Zhong Kui expelling devils can be traced back to early times. The most renowned of the folk-tales tells of his exorcistic performance in the dream of Emperor Xuzong of Tang, where he expels the devil and consequently cures the emperor of his illness. Upon waking, Emperor Xuanzong ordered the figure painter, Wu Daozi, to depict the exorcist’s image as he recalled it from his dream. From the Tang and Song dynasties, Zhong Kui has become a widespread exorcist figure. His images can be found ranging from woodblock prints and New Year pictures, to poplar dramas and novels. In the Ming-Qing society, sword-carrying Zhong Kui, together with the Dragon Boat Festival symbols including the “five poisons”⁵ and peach, constituted a new development in visual auspiciousness.

Ming and Qing painters preferred to add flying bats in their Zhong Kui paintings. The similar combination can be found in earlier festive prints. Bats were also referred to as little ghosts, meaning Zhong Kui would spread out happiness by expelling them. In such pictorial expression, Zhong Kui is usually depicted carrying his sharp sword. With Su Renshan’s hand, the upper two ink bats are painted with one brushstroke in grass script, in an abstract yet refined style. The same method is also applied to Zhong Kui’s cap, and shows very intriguing visual effect.



Su Renshan
Zhong Kui with Bats
Qing dynasty (1644-1911)
Ink on paper
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK,
Gift of Mr. Huang Miaozi
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK

Reference photos



Fan Shaozhen (1945-)
Zhong Kui
Ink and color on paper
Collection of the Art Museum, CUHK,
Gift of Prof. Lee Hon Ching
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK



Zhong Kui image from Waseda
University Library Collection,
Japan⁶

Discussion

Su Renshan’s Zhong Kui figure is very distinctive from the conventional pattern. In folklore or festive pictures, Zhong Kui is usually depicted in a red robe, with a scowling facial expression covered with thick beard. The same subject by Fan Shaozhen in this exhibition, also emphasizes Zhong Kui’s dramatic action and exaggerated performance. However, Su chose monochrome ink stroke to depict an eye-closing and clumsy figure. What was his intention in making such an abnormal Zhong Kui figure?

Suggested Activity

Encourage students to intimate the actions and expressions from Zhong Kui paintings respectively by Su Renshan and Fan Shaozhen, so as to further experience two painters’ different ways of expression.

- 5 The “five poisons” include scorpion, centipede, snake, toad, and lizard. These five creatures are also applied to children’s garments and festive dresses in that they are believed to help protect people (especially children) from other poisonous beings.
- 6 For more resources about Zhong Kui images, see the online database of the collection of Waseda University Library, Japan. It belongs to the public domain: <http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/>

2.5 Semi-formal court robe of blue silk with dragons and roundels composed of bats, endless knots, and peaches

This elaborate Qing court robe features nine five-clawed dragons amongst endless knots, bats, and ocean designs with *kesi* technique. Court robes, or namely *huayi*, were worn by princes, dukes, and officials during important ceremonies and court audiences. According to the *Collected Statutes of the Great Qing (Da Qing huidian)*, this court robe was designed for the Qing dukes.

As for the gold thread technique, the artisans first hammered gold brick into thin gold leaves, which would be used to cover silk threads and thereby turned into a gold thread that was applied to this robe. Besides yellow, other robe colors like green and blue were also common. The number of dragons and claws are indicative of the official rank of those who wore them.

Several characteristics of this robe also reflect the Manchu's nomadic background, horsemanship and archery traditions. Most distinctive is the semi-circle sleeve cuff, namely horse's hoof sleeve. This special design can help keep the wearer's hands out of the cold winter during outdoor hunting or military activities.



Semi-formal court robe of blue silk with dragons and roundels composed of bats, endless knots, and peaches
Guangxu period (1875-1908), Qing dynasty
The Edrina Collection
Photo: © Art Museum, ICS, CUHK

Discussion

- 1 Which visual motif is designed for a higher rank, five-claw dragons or four-claw dragons?
- 2 During the Qing dynasty, which social members were allowed to wear yellow robes? Why is there a strict hierarchical system of color use in dressing?

Suggested Activities

- 1 Carefully identify the visual elements decorated on the robe, such as the number of dragons and their claws.
- 2 Apart from court robes, traditional Chinese clothes including *qipao*, long robes, or wedding dress also involve auspicious designs. Encourage students to learn more about them via Internet.

2.6 Hat rest with dragons, bats, and clouds in *famille-rose* enamels

Finely decorated hat rests were used to hold official hats (*guan*) in the Qing court. This hat rest, for instance, also helped furnish the imperial space in terms of its elaborate decorations. The globular part in openwork design with a lotus base is for resting the hat. Its yellow ground sits five-clawed dragons of different colors. The neck of the hat rest has a bat-and-cloud design; whereas the Chinese flowering crabapple-shaped base in red and gold is decorated with floral and cloud patterns.



Hat rest with dragons, bats, and clouds in *famille-rose* enamels
Mark and period of Jiaqing (1796-1820), Qing dynasty
Yi Tak Tang Collection

Reference photos

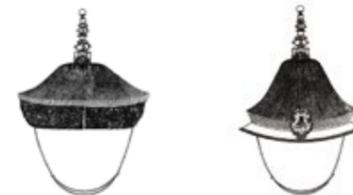


Illustration of the winter court hat for Qing emperors

Illustration of the summer court hat for Qing emperors

Source: *Illustrations to Imperial Collective Statutes of the Great Qing (Qinding Da Qing huidian tu)* Chapter 57

Discussion

How many claws are depicted on the dragons on the hat rest? Also, referring to the court robe showcased together with the hat rest, were the artifacts designed for the same rank of imperial members?

Suggested Activity

How was the hat rest used in the Qing imperial palace? What are the similarities and differences between it and modern hat stand in terms of design? Please refer to the illustrations in the reference photos, find out how the hat rest was designed for the court hat.

Chapter 3: Links with Contemporary Art

3.1 About the Artist: Sun Xun

Sun Xun was born in 1980 in Fuxin, Liaoning Province, China. He graduated in 2005 from the Department of Printmaking, the China Academy of Art. Among the artists of the new generation from Mainland China, Sun Xun has held solo exhibitions in London, Los Angeles, New York, Basel, Taipei, and so forth. He established π Animation Studio in 2006, and won the 2010 Chinese Contemporary Art Awards (CCAA Best Young Artist).

During his college years, Sun Xun had already created his first experimental short film called *Ba ya*, and then finished the completed animation *Genesis* in 2002. All the lines drawn by his hands illustrate the dreamy, realistic or absurd imaginaries. Sun Xun's artworks more or less point to complex historical metaphors, which were either derived from the blurred memories of his childhood, or serve as his personal thinking of Chinese history textbooks. He constantly tries to seek for a framework that defines human's self-existence, and raises critical questions through making animation films. For instance, in his installation called *The Creatures of Civilization*, the hybrid creature combined with elements of horse, chicken, sphere, and screen, was intended to mock the social trend that embrace superficial understanding.

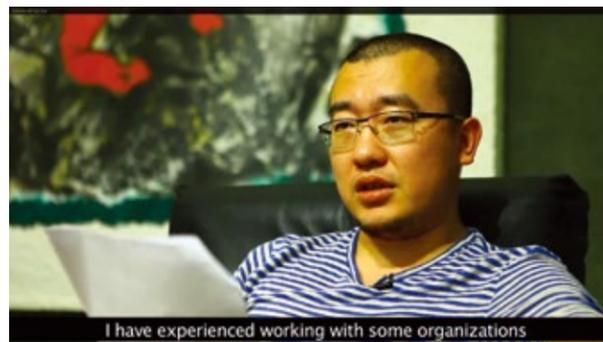
Sun Xun tends to create artworks by his own hands, and thus largely but not exclusively avoids the intervention of computer or other high technologies. His works, therefore, inject the coarse style with subtle sensation. On the other hand, Sun Xun's animation films are filled with different kinds of strange creatures and fantasies, which project the artist's reflection upon our history and civilization. His solo exhibition *Brave New World*, held in Hong Kong in 2014, borrows the title of the famous dystopia novel of 1932. During the exhibition, the hand-made animation work *The Story of Dragon Year: Script I*, not only vividly captured human indifference and absurd atmospheres, but also highlighted the importance of independent thinking in our society.



Sun Xun



Sun Xun & π Animation Studio main page:
<http://www.sunxunandp.com/>



Video of Sun Xun's personal interview:
https://youtu.be/82ls_nUGfTY

3.2 Beyond-ism

Sun Xun points out that, the ancient Chinese believed our world was a mountain, carried by a mythical tortoise known for its strength called *Bi Xi*... Another legend has it that the first Chinese emperor Qinshihuang sent Xu Fu to the remote Penglai Island to find the elixir of life. Some say he reached Japan. On Penglai, there are no birds, only bats. They fly through liminal space that is neither day nor night, real nor illusory, temporal nor spatial, yin nor yang.

The artist tries to raise the question to audiences: Penglai is the world's most beautiful myth – a fantastical land of ragged romance. Will our dreams come true there? Or, should we subvert these lies? Beyond all these, where do we position ourselves?



Beyond-ism
2010
Animation film, 8:08 minutes
Collection of Hallam Chow

Discussion

- 1 What is the medium used by the artist to convey his idea? When making this short film, Sun Xun made many large-scale ink paintings in advance, which would be used for filming and editing. What are the differences between the static ink-painted works and the animation film in terms of their ways of representation?
- 2 What is “-ism”? We can find many different kinds of doctrines or ideologies from the historical narratives of politics and art history. Are they the targets to which the artist hopes to draw our attention and criticize?
- 3 Many animals appear in the animation. They either come from the reality, or are imaginary and are inspired by Chinese ancient tales like the *Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shanhai jing)*. What are the symbolic meanings of these creatures? How about the bats?
- 4 The magician figure wearing a top hat in a black suit plays a significant role in Sun Xun's early works. He also appears in this animation. Can you identify him? The artist considers the magician as a “legal liar” armed with power to create illusions and fictional reality. What is his role in this work? Also refer to Sun's artistic concept, and try to answer why he has applied the same character into his many animation works.

Suggested Activity

Try to note down the animals or other important images (figures, monumental architectures) in chronological order. Discuss with your classmates or teacher about the narratives of the work.

3.3 The “Dao” of a Bat

During the Warring States period, the Yin-yang naturalist Zou Yan proposed a theory about the Five Elements in order to explain the dynastic cycle. According to this theory, the Han dynasty is associated with the earth and its corresponding color, yellow. Thus, yellow was advocated and became the imperial color. This tradition continued to the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Sun Xun also points out that this mural was inspired by the Kano School from Japan in the Muromachi period. Between the 15th and 17th centuries, under the patronage of Japanese shōgun and warrior classes, the influence of the Kano School had reached its peak. The school combined the ink brushstroke from Southern-Song China with exquisite golden decorations. This mural presents an expansive golden yellow space, with bats as the subject to bring infinite blessings.



Beyond-ism
2010
Animation film, 8:08 minutes
Collection of Hallam Chow

The “Dao” of a Bat
2015
Ink and gold
Collection of the artist; Supported by Hallam Chow and H2 Foundation for Arts and Education



Kano Eitoku
Chinese Guardian Lions
Museum of the Imperial Collections
Source: Wikipedia

Discussion

The short film *Beyond-ism* is the fruit of Sun Xun’s artist-in-residency program (2009-2010) in ZAIM Gallery, Yokohama, Japan. It begins with the legend that Xu Fu was sent by Qinshihuang to find the elixir of life. The mural is also inspired by the style of the Kano School from Japan. What is the role of Japanese inspiration and related style in both works?

Suggested Activity

Please search for representative artworks of the Kano School, such as *Chinese Guardian Lions* (Kano Eitoku, Museum of the Imperial Collections), *Peacock and Pine* (Kano Tan’yū, Kyoto), and compare them with the mural, in terms of their materials and visual representations.

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Suggested Answer

2.1 Dish with bat-and-peach design in *famille-rose enamels* (P.07)

Three dishes adopt the same sketch, which was imperially ordered by copying from paper. The painter first draws a pictorial draft according to the imperial order(s). After imperial review, the sketch together with the vessel model would be sent to Jingdezhen in Jiangxi for the production of imperial porcelains.

2.3 White jade *ruyi* with bat and character “*shou*” (P.09)

- 1 In traditional China, major methods of Jade making include: disc cutting, string sawing, and roller sawing. You may further discover the procedure of jade working from *The Illustrations to Jade Making* of the late Qing in the 19th century or online resource: <https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/asian-art-museum/aam-China/v/working-jade>

2.5 Semi-formal court robe of blue silk with dragons and roundels composed of bats, endless knots, and peaches (P.11)

- 1 The use of five-claw dragons was strictly limited to the Qing imperial members (the ranking of duke or above).
- 2 According to the Qing imperial statutes, the use of imperial color yellow is exclusive for the emperor, prince, empress and imperial columbines.

2.6 Hat rest with dragons, bats, and clouds in *famille-rose enamels* (P.12)

According to Qing hierarchical system of color, the hat rest was designed for the imperial members of higher rank than those who wore the court robe.

3.2 *Beyond-ism* (P.14)

- 2 The concept of “-ism” refers to a comprehensive system of ideological doctrines or principles.

