

SPOTLIGHT: Jade Pagoda



EI Presenter: Mary Halpert

Date: November 18, 2014

Title of Piece: Jade Pagoda

Year created: 1711

Artist: Unknown

Five essential aspects of this work of art:

1. The use of jade for ornamental/ritual objects goes back 7,000 years in China. Jade is associated with immortality, Daoist imagery and Confucianism. In this case, jade was used to build a shrine to ensure that Ch'ien Lung would eventually ascend to Buddhist Heaven. This is carved by hand. No tools from Jerry's were used. They had a carving device that resembles a trundle sewing machine. (Photos of the trundle are available in the vertical file - - CHNA, Jade.
2. Most of the jade that you see is moss-in-the-snow, the finial is spinach green, the archways of apple green frame pink serpentine glass doors. Openings of the main floor doorways feature carved jade seated Buddha facing the four cardinal directions, those eight floors above have gilded wooden Buddha, seated and facing the same way.

3. Is this your lucky day? Nine is an auspicious number, there are nine stories, and the jade is nine feet high. Carved railings of jade and on the teakwood base feature lucky fungus.
4. Concerned about evil spirits? No need to worry at the Pagoda, as the rooflines are curvilinear and spines are adorned with guardian animals and dragons in gilt bronze, not to mention the wind bells.
5. Feng Shui was incorporated into Chinese architectural structures, including this Pagoda. Qi is not just a two-letter Scrabble word. It is natural, life force or energy that flows positively or negatively. The bells, the positions of the Buddha, the curved roofs, the number nine all go with the flow.

Possible questions to use when discussing this piece with museum visitors:

1. What is going on inside this structure?
2. What kind of sounds would you hear?
3. What is a Pagoda and what is it used for?
4. What images do you see repeated?

Tour Type: Explore Asia, Faces and Places, Learning to Look

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