



Flying Tiger Banners, Art Teaches Tour Transcript - English

Hello. My name is Colette Richardson. I am one of the exhibition interpreters, or tour guides if you will, of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art. Right now, I am in the Soreng gallery which focuses on the Chinese collection. This exhibition is called *Myriad Treasures: Celebrating the Reinstallation of the Soreng Gallery of Chinese Art*. I would like to draw your attention on the one object that is hanging behind me, and then write down some observations about what you see.

This is a good time for you to pause and respond

We can see an animal that looks like a tiger, with stripes covering the whole body. It is fiercely standing on its back legs, with wide, open wings spreading from the left to the right side of the square. It's very sharp teeth look ferocious, its jaws are wide open, and we can almost hear the roar of the tiger. We can see three paws that are clenched, but the fourth paw shows sharp claws.

We can see rainbow-colored clouds, reinforcing the fact that the tiger is flying. Clouds produce rain, much needed for rice which was the main crop grown during the Qing dynasty. It is interesting to notice that the word "cloud" is pronounced (*fuyun*) means "good fortune"; so we could say that clouds are a symbol of luck. They are also shaped like sacred mushroom, that had the property of granting people's wishes and of bringing immortality.

A final observation we can make on these two banners is that each square is framed by a red border.

Let's take a moment to think about the meaning of the tiger on these banners? This is a good time for you to jot down some of your ideas, and then share them in a discussion.

The tiger is one of the oldest protectors. In Korea images of tigers are still used to protect the household all year long. The tiger has to look fierce to scare away any uninvited guest and to ward off any evil spirit. In Chinese language, the word protection and the word tiger are both pronounced the same way (*hu*) although they are each represented by a different character. The tiger is considered the king among beasts often associated with strength and military power.

These two banners are about two hundred years old. They were made during the Qing dynasty. During that time, eight armies were created, each one represented with a triangle banner. Later on, other military banners were added, and decorated with a flying tiger. The idea was to carry them into the battles and mostly to place them at the gates of the emperor's guards when they were traveling and camping. The borders came in different colors: bordered with red for the west, standard red for the north, bordered with white for the east, and standard blue for the south.

What medium or material do you think was used to make them? What might have been the pros and cons of carrying a banner like this into a battle?

This is a good time for you to pause and to respond.

We refer to this kind of artwork as textile (a type of cloth or woven fabric) because it is embroidery on a piece of fabric. In this case on silk. This kind of embroidery is tightly connected with the emperor's court since silk was very expensive then. In spite of being more than 200 years old, these very detailed and delicate works still look fresh.

Today, these banners are part of the museum collection, but, at some time, 200 years ago, they might have been used by an army that was directly under the emperor's orders. We can imagine the problems posed by carrying banners that could fray easily during battles or suffer from exposure to all kinds of weather conditions. Such fabric banners were easy to roll and transport during travel between camps.

I hope that you have enjoyed learning more about the Chinese banners with Flying Tigers.

Now, this is the time for you to think of an animal you would like to draw if you had the opportunity to create your own banner. What would your animal represent or symbolize? And how would you position your animal to help the representation. Sitting? Jumping? Flying?

This is a good time for you to pause and respond.

I am sure you already have a very good idea, so my last word to you is to have fun and to enjoy your art project!

Flying Tiger Banners

Chinese; Qing dynasty, circa 1775-1825

Light green (left) and light yellow (right) and orange silk twill embroidered with multicolored silk floss in satin & stem stitch and couched with gold wrapped thread

Murray Warner Collection

