

In the Realm of the Dragon

Chinese Art in the Collections of the National Museum in Krakow

The Main Building

al. 3 Maja 1, 30-062 Krakow, temporary exhibition hall, 1st floor

The exhibition presents 400 finest works selected from a priceless collection of Chinese art, numbering over 3,000 objects. The oldest exhibits date back to 2200 years ago, while the newest are over a hundred year old.

The National Museum in Krakow boasts one of the best collections of Far Eastern Art in Poland. In addition to the well-known selection of objects representing Japanese art, it comprises relics of Chinese culture. Today, eighty years after the first exhibition held in the Sukiennice, we can once again extend an invitation to become acquainted with the remarkable works of arts and crafts created by masters in ancient China.

We hope that this exhibition will bring this remote and still little-known, yet very interesting culture a little closer- says Zofia Gołubiew, the Director of the National Museum.

The Cultural Revolution in China resulted in the destruction of many historic buildings and works of art, collections, libraries and antique shops. In Beijing alone, approximately five thousand out of seven thousand monuments were destroyed, which is why the collections of Chinese art preserved in various museums and cultural institutions around the world are so valuable.

The collection of Chinese art, assembled for over a hundred years through donations and purchases, encompasses all areas of arts and crafts. It contains valuable examples of paintings and prints, fascinating sculptures, exquisite ceramics, objects made of bronze, enamel, lacquer and glass, decorative tapestries, impressive clothing, accessories, furniture and musical instruments. The oldest exhibits originated in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), whereas most of them date back to the second half of the Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

It is the first time in its history that the National Museum in Krakow has presented such a large selection of exhibits from this collection. Visitors will be able to admire paintings, prints and Buddhist sculptures, ceramics, clothing and accessories, nephrites and jades, objects made of brass, enamel, lacquer and glass, as well as fans, pipes, snuff containers, musical instruments and toys. Many of these splendid objects will be displayed for the first time.

The exhibition creators focused on the concept of space – both in its mythical sense, controlled by the title Dragon as well as in its cultural, literary, aesthetic and philosophical aspects. In Chinese culture, the Dragon – as the king of heaven and water, the first of the „360 animals with scales”, the fifth animal of the Chinese zodiac, a creature laden with symbols - is mostly good-natured. It symbolizes the male power of nature as well as the son of heaven and the emperor. In China, it is associated with the idea of good and positive forces fuelling changes, which in a natural way refers to the idea of rebirth and directly – to life.

Exhibition curators: Beata Pacana, Beata Romanowicz

Coordinator: Grażyna Kulawik

Design: Teren Prywatny – Anna Grzywa, Marcin Przybyłko and Sławomir Pankiewicz

text by Katarzyna Bik

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