



INTRODUCTION

The arts of Asia at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), including major geographic areas of China, Korea, Japan, India, and Southeast Asia, are pathways to understanding these cultures.

The geography of the region as a whole is marked by striking contrasts—from the high mountain ranges of the Himalayas to remote deserts such as the Gobi, to chains of islands, fertile plains, and great rivers including the Yangzi and Mekong.

For nearly five thousand years within these varied surroundings, the civilizations of Asia have produced art that testified to their changing histories and cultural needs. Some works of art were intended for religious settings, ceremonial, or ritual use, others for private viewing, burial, or commerce and trade. Unrivaled in technical excellence, bronzes, ceramics, lacquer wares, and silks were hallmarks of the Asian countries from which they came.

Looking closely at Asian works of art, we can learn about belief systems developed centuries ago and the continuity of those traditions today. The individual qualities of a piece also demonstrate how techniques and styles are transplanted or duplicated as ideas flow from place to place. Exchanges were made by itinerant craftsmen, wandering pilgrims, and traders as well as by conquests, wars, and the migrations of people. Such cross-cultural influences and exchanges are woven into the very fabric of Asian art as seen through the

- INFLUENCE OF BUDDHISM
- IMPORTANCE OF TEA PRACTICES
- CELEBRATION OF THE SEASONS
- NATURE OF WELL-WISHING
- REPRESENTATION OF AUSPICIOUS BEASTS
- MASTERY OF BRUSH AND INK

The works of art from the DIA selected for this guide reflect in some way one or several major cultural themes described above, while highlighting what is unique to the work of art and its country of origin.