

# THE BARAKAT GALLERY

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Chinese Art

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Tang Horses  
Tang Horse and Riders  
618 AD - 907 AD



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# Tang Horses

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The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. Their rapid mobility allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Similarly, the military role of the horse aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia ultimately led to the creation of the Silk Road.

The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified, revered and believed to be relatives of dragons, a theory which reflected their sacred status within society. During the Tang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art.

The most magnificent horses, immortalised in Chinese literature and the visual arts, were the Ferghana horses introduced into China from the west (from modern Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) during the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). Obtaining these extraordinary stallions was still a priority for the Tang dynasty Emperor Taizong (r. AD 626-49), despite the fact that by the middle of the 7th century the Tang government owned more than 700,000 -built up through tribute gifts and the careful management of official herds. Emperor Taizong was so devoted to his own horses that he ordered bas reliefs of his six favourite battle steeds to be carved and placed at his tomb. Even Emperor Xuanzong (r. AD 847-59) was said to have had two consuming passions - beautiful women and horses, and a dramatic painting of one of his favourite horses, Night-Shining White, by the renowned horse painter Han Gan (AD 720-60) can now be seen now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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Such horses were used both for military campaigns and for leisure activities - for the Tang dynasty elite they became symbols of power and prosperity. Furthermore, during the early years of the Tang dynasty, the increasing cross-cultural fertilization between sedentary Chinese and Central Asian semi-nomadic people encouraged the fashion of horse riding. Its tremendous popularity was very soon restrained by an imperial edict in 667, decreeing that only aristocrats (of both sexes) should be allowed to ride horses: owning a horse then became a privilege dispensed only to members of the higher class.

It is then not surprising that during the Tang Dynasty this mania would permeate and greatly influence the mingqi (burial) artistic repertoire. In terms of technical and artistic achievement, as sculptural representations of the fashions of the time, the highest quality painted pottery mingqi tended to be more successful than those glazed. In fact, while sancai objects required greater expenditure of material and labour, the application of the rich glaze meant instead, that the replication of fine details in drapery and physiognomy was generally overseen, while for the unglazed painted pottery the artisans felt best able to explore the details and overall decoration that fascinated the Tang aristocracy.

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## Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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H.629

Origin: China

Circa: 8 th Century AD to  
9 th Century AD

Dimensions: 12.75" (32.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: Great Britain

During the Tang dynasty, China enjoyed a period of consolidation, achievement, and confidence. Tang art tends to reflect this assurance in its realism, energy, and dignity. Pottery of this era is often compared to that of Classical Greece for the sophisticated achievements in sculpting and modeling. This statue resembles a portrait of a living creature with its lifelike features and expressive head. To add to the realistic effect, a mane made of real hair would have been attached to the statue at the groove along the horse's neck and a tail added to the rear. Strong, noble, and splendid, this finely painted terracotta horse conveys the love and admiration that Tang society felt toward its steeds. As horses were often symbols of the afterlife, this funerary statue seems to be ready to bear his owner into the afterlife. Horses held particular significance with Tang rulers and aristocrats, who relied on them for military preparedness and diplomatic policy. In addition, horses were also revered for their religious significance: ancient tradition linked them to the dragon, designating them as supernatural creatures. Clearly, this horse was a beloved creature buried alongside the deceased to accompany him throughout eternity. Wearing a harness and saddle, the horse is ready to gallop across the eternal fields of the afterlife, carrying the spirit of the deceased upon its back. - (H. 629)

## Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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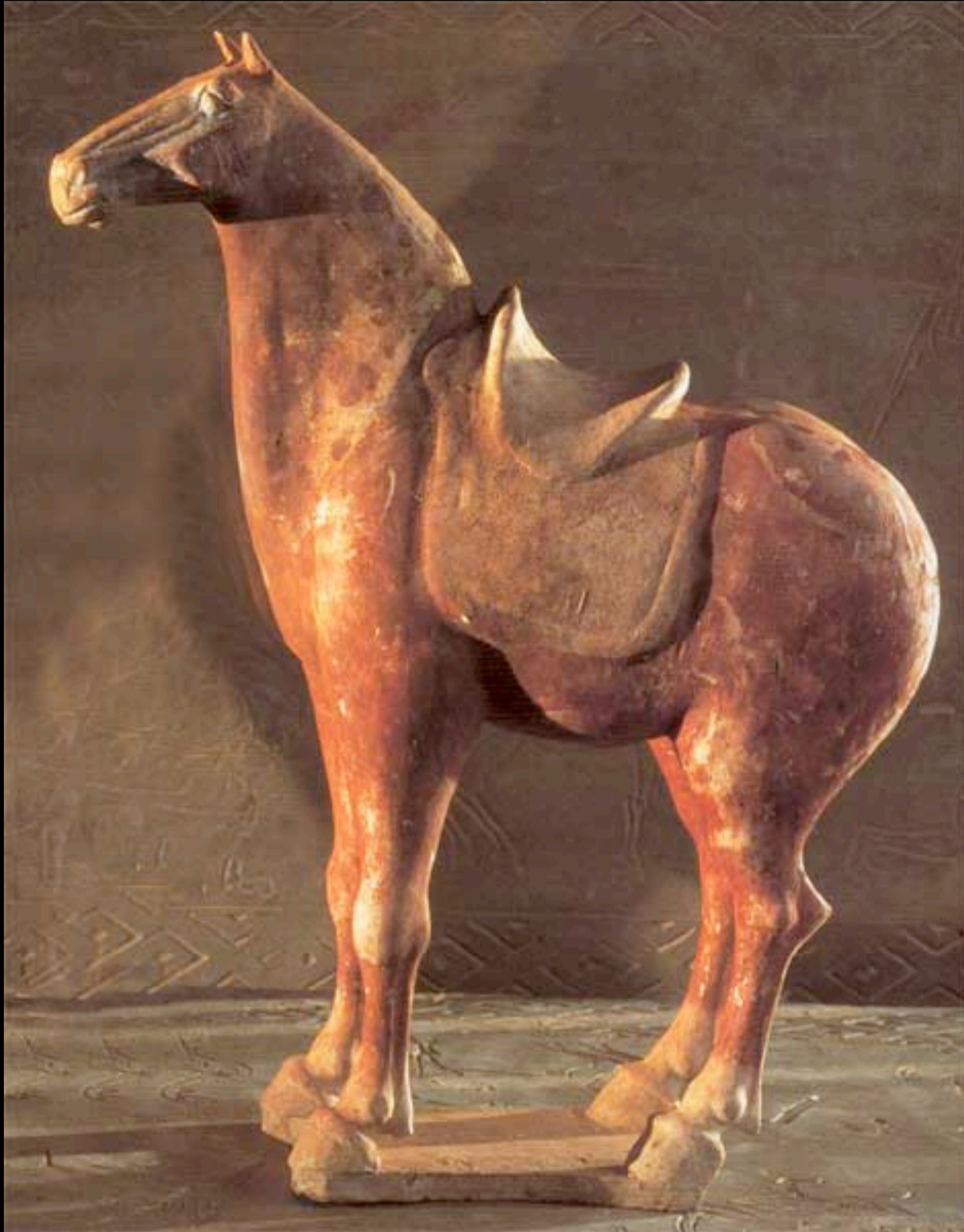
PF.6171  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions: 16" (40.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States

This type of horse is known as “Fongxiang,” after the area near the city of X’ian, the modern name for the ancient Tang capital Chang’an. Fongxiang horses are primarily painted in subdued hues of red, white, and occasionally yellow. Such horses are also distinctive for their typically strong necks and relatively small aquiline heads. Also, their bodies are invariably well rounded, especially their haunches. This Fongxiang horse has an elegant, multicolor coat. The majority of his body is painted a brilliant crimson while his neck and head are white. Most charming is the painted, well-defined eyes that imbue the sculpture with an aura of life. When gazing into the eyes of this delightful sculpture, we become aware of the reverence the Chinese held for this majestic creature. - (PF.6171)

## Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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PF.6172

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions: 16.25" (41.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: United States



This type of horse is known as “Fongxiang,” after the area near the city of X’ian, the modern name for the ancient Tang capital Chang’an. Fongxiang horses are primarily painted in subdued hues of red, white, and occasionally yellow. Such horses are also distinctive for their typically strong necks and relatively small aquiline heads. Also, their bodies are invariably well rounded, especially their haunches. This Fongxiang horse has an elegant, multicolor coat. The majority of his body is painted a brilliant crimson while portions of his neck and hind are white, decorated with a spotted pattern that almost appear to be flowers blossoming on the coat of this horse. When gazing into the eyes of this delightful sculpture, we become aware of the reverence the Chinese held for this majestic creature. - (PF.6172)

## Tang Sculpture of a Horse



H.834  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 12.75" (32.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang dynasty, China enjoyed a period of consolidation, achievement, and confidence. Tang art tends to reflect this assurance in its realism, energy, and dignity. Pottery of this era is often compared to that of Classical Greece for the sophisticated achievements in sculpting and modeling. This statue resembles a portrait of an individual horse with its lifelike modeling and expressive facial features. To add to the realistic effect, a mane made of real hair would have been attached to the statue at the groove along the horse's neck and a tail added to the rear. Strong, noble, and splendid, this brightly painted terracotta horse conveys the love and admiration that Tang society felt toward its steeds. As horses were often symbols of the afterlife, this funerary statue seems to be ready to bear his owner into the afterlife on his bright orange saddle. Horses held particular significance with Tang rulers and aristocrats, who relied on them for military preparedness and diplomatic policy. In addition, they were also revered for their religious significance: ancient tradition linked them to the dragon, designating them as supernatural creatures. Clearly, this horse was a beloved creature buried alongside the deceased to accompany him throughout eternity. Wearing harnesses painted in black with orange highlights, the horse is ready to gallop across the eternal fields of the afterlife, carrying the spirit of the deceased upon its back. - (H.834)

## Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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H.833  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 12.5" (31.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang dynasty, China enjoyed a period of consolidation, achievement, and confidence. Tang art tends to reflect this assurance in its realism, energy, and dignity. Pottery of this era is often compared to that of Classical Greece for the sophisticated achievements in sculpting and modeling. This statue resembles a portrait of an individual horse with its lifelike modeling and expressive facial features elaborated with touches of paint. This work is remarkable for the amount of the original pigment that has survived the ravages of time, specifically apparent on the orange saddle and black numnah (saddlepad) and reigns. Strong, noble, and splendid, this terracotta horse conveys the love and admiration that Tang society felt toward its steeds. As horses were often symbols of the afterlife, this funerary statue seems to be ready to bear his owner into the afterlife on his saddle. Horses held particular significance with Tang rulers and aristocrats, who relied on them for military preparedness and diplomatic policy, as the quote implies. In addition, they were also revered for their religious significance: ancient tradition linked them to the dragon, designating them as supernatural creatures. Clearly, this horse was a beloved creature buried alongside the deceased to accompany him throughout eternity. He is ready to gallop across the eternal fields of the afterlife, carrying the spirit of the deceased upon its back. - (H.833)

## Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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H.860  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 12.25" (31.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang dynasty, China enjoyed a period of consolidation, achievement, and confidence. Tang art tends to reflect this assurance in its realism, energy, and dignity. Pottery of this era is often compared to that of Classical Greece for the sophisticated achievements in sculpting and modeling. This statue resembles a portrait of an individual horse with its lifelike modeling and expressive facial features. Individual hairs of the mane and tail have been carefully painted onto the surface, in addition to the horse's eye and reins and harness, heightening the naturalism of the work. Furthermore, this work is notable for the position of the horse's head, gently turned to the side, with an arched neck. Strong, noble, and splendid, this terracotta horse conveys the love and admiration that Tang society felt toward its steeds. As horses were often symbols of the afterlife, this funerary statue seems to be ready to bear his owner into the afterlife on his saddle, which still bears some remnants of the original orange polychrome that once brightly colored it. Horses held particular significance with Tang rulers and aristocrats, who relied on them for military preparedness and diplomatic policy. In addition, they were also revered for their religious significance: ancient tradition linked them to the dragon, designating them as supernatural creatures. Clearly, this horse was a beloved creature buried alongside the deceased to accompany him throughout eternity. This horse is ready to gallop across the eternal fields of the afterlife, carrying the spirit of the deceased upon its back. - (H.860)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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H.913

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Dimensions: 8.5" (21.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Glazed Terracotta

Location: UAE



This elegant horse is a perfect example of the mastery of T'ang funerary art. Coated in a simple green glaze that has developed a frosted patina over the centuries, this horse stands on all fours with its head slightly turned to the side as if investigated some distant rustling. The refined molding of this sculpture captures the power and grace of this majestic creature in its refined modeling and defined musculature. This elegant sculpture attests to the revered status of the horse while simultaneously revealing the artistic mastery of Tang sculptors. - (H.913)

# Tang Glazed Sculpture of a Horse

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H.915  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 8.125" (20.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States

This elegant horse is a perfect example of the mastery of Tang funerary art. Coated in an earthy brown glaze with hints of green, this horse stands on all fours with its head slightly turned to the side as if investigated some distant rustling. The refined molding of this sculpture captures the power and grace of this majestic creature in its refined modeling and defined musculature. This elegant sculpture attests to the revered status of the horse while simultaneously revealing the artistic mastery of Tang sculptors. - (H. 915)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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H.951  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 13.25" (33.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang dynasty, China enjoyed a period of consolidation, achievement, and confidence. Tang art tends to reflect this assurance in its realism, energy, and dignity. Pottery of this era is often compared to that of Classical Greece for the sophisticated achievements in sculpting and modeling. This sculpture resembles a portrait of an individual horse with its lifelike modeling and expressive facial features. To add to the realistic effect, a mane made of real horsehair would have been attached to the groove along the horse's neck and a tail added to the rear. Strong, noble, and splendid, this brightly painted terracotta horse conveys the love and admiration that Tang society felt toward its steeds. As horses were often symbols of the afterlife, this funerary statue seems to be ready to bear his owner into the afterlife on his orange saddle and numnah that appears to imitate the striped pattern of a zebra's coat. Horses held particular significance with Tang rulers and aristocrats, who relied on them for military preparedness and diplomatic policy. In addition, they were also revered for their religious significance: ancient tradition linked them to the dragon, designating them as supernatural creatures. Clearly, this horse was a beloved creature buried alongside the deceased to accompany him throughout eternity. Wearing harnesses painted in black with pink highlights on his hooves, nose, neck, and rear, the horse is ready to gallop across the eternal fields of the afterlife, carrying the spirit of the deceased upon its back. - (H.951)

# T'ang Polychrome Horse with Removable Saddle

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H.941b  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 12" (30.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

This impressive sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original white pigment in tact. Traces of red are visible inside the nose and on the mouth. Most impressive is the removable saddle which graces the animal's back. The saddle is painted orange and may have once supported a rider who is now lost to us. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creature. As much as horses played an integral role in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this finely rendered sculpture. - (H.941b)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle

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H.942  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 12" (30.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States



This impressive sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original white pigment in tact. Traces of red are also visible inside the nose and on the mouth. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddle that graces his back. Painted orange, this incised saddle may have once supported a rider who is now lost to us. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.942)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle



H.943 (LSO)  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 11.5" (29.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

This striking and colourful horse dates from the Tang dynasty, arguably the most important period in Chinese history, which saw China's greatest flowering in terms of artistic and social developments. This was precipitated by the collapse of the Sui Dynasty in 618 AD, upon which the ambitious Li family seized power and ushered in what historians generally agree to be one of China's greatest golden ages. It was a period of imperial growth, whereupon China expanded along the trade routes and canal system laid down by the Sui emperors, while developing civil infrastructure to deal with administrative affairs. Although the period was certainly martial insofar as the army was continually mobilised, it was not a militaristic state such as that practiced under the much later Ming Dynasty. Indeed, the stability produced at "home" while China's boundaries were expanding gave rise to an unprecedented flowering of artistic and cultural wealth.

Some of China's greatest poets, playwrights and artists worked during this period, laying down foundations that would later come to define this greatest of empires. Attitudes were liberal, and women enjoyed considerable freedoms not usually afforded under more rigid administrations. Artistically speaking, Tang traditions benefited from a diverse range of aesthetic sources, including India, the Middle East and Central Asia. The new look was assisted by technological developments as well, including the refinement of block printing, which brought writing and art to a far wider audience. For our purposes, however, the most significant artistic innovations were in terms of sculpture. Whereas the Han dynasty attained a high level of sophistication in their art, it tended to be more expressionistic and less naturalistic. The Tang artists reversed this trend, for while there are certainly interpretative elements in Tang art, they are superimposed over a truly detailed appreciation for realism and representation. The most fertile arena for Tang sculpture must be the grave statues, the five pairs of figures (two Lokapala warriors, two horses, two camels, two spirit guardians and two civic officials) that were placed in high-status graves to accompany the deceased to the hereafter. Of these, it is perhaps the horses that are the most beautiful and refined.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Chinese empire was built on – or from – the backs of horses. The movement of troops along the communication roads and in the direction of Central Asia necessitated rapid movement of cavalry (founded as a force in the Shang dynasty one and a half thousand years earlier) that took advantage of the fabulous steeds that were traded with the tribes of the Central Asian steppe region. Traders along the Great Silk Road also used such animals. Horses came to be associated with dragons, and indeed to be their close kin. Equestrian portraiture reached a new standard during this period, with superb rendering of musculature, detailing, line and form, sometimes backed up with the application of natural fibres (to mane and tail) or polychrome paint, as in the current case. The most famous Chinese sculpture of all time, incidentally, dates to this period - the so-called Six Chargers of Emperor Taizong, which were also designed as grave sculptures. This superb example is in a standing position with its right forefoot slightly extended, with a high, arched neck and eager stance. The details are executed in relief, including the eyes, ears, nose, hooves and the texturing of the mane and tail. The whole is painted with a beautiful orange-red paint, a paler version of which was used to decorate the detachable saddle. Judging from the manner in which it has been portrayed, it is a warhorse prepared for battle. This is a lovely and sophisticated sculpture, from a highly significant phase of Chinese history. - (H.943 (LSO))

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle



H.944  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 11" (27.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

This impressive sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original brown pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddle that graces his back. Painted orange, this incised saddle may have once supported a rider who is now lost to us. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.944)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle



H.979  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 14.25" (36.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

This impressive sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original white pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddle that graces his back. Painted yellow, this saddle may have once supported a rider who is now lost to us. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.979)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle

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H.1032  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 20.75" (52.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States



This impressive, large sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original white pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddle that graces his back. Painted in a soft green hue, this textured saddle may have once supported a rider who is now lost to us. Traces of polychrome are also visible inside the nose and along the mouth. The horse also features a prominent cowlick rising between his ears and arching forwards. All these rare features are sought after by collectors. When one imagines this horse as it might have originally appeared, with vibrant hues and a similarly modeled rider, the illusion would have been uncanny. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creature. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.1032)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle

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H.1033  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 21.25" (54.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

This impressive, large sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original white pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddle that graces his back. Painted in a soft white hue, this saddle may have once supported a rider who is now lost to us. Traces of polychrome are also visible inside the nose and along the mouth. The horse also features a prominent cowlick rising between his ears and arching forwards. All these rare features are sought after by collectors. When one imagines this horse as it might have originally appeared, with vibrant hues and a similarly modeled rider, the illusion would have been uncanny. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creature. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.1033)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle

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H.851  
Origin: China  
Circa: 608 AD to 916 AD  
Dimensions: 14.125" (35.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States

This impressive sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddle that graces his back and may have once supported a sculpted rider. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.851)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle

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H.852  
Origin: China  
Circa: 608 AD to 916 AD  
Dimensions: 14.875" (37.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States

This impressive sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the removable burgundy saddle that graces his back and may have once supported a sculpted rider. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.852)

## Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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X.0405

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Dimensions: 15.125" (38.4cm) high x  
16.125" (41.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: Great Britain



During the Tang dynasty, China enjoyed a period of consolidation, achievement, and confidence. Pottery of this era is often compared to that of Classical Greece for the sophisticated achievements in sculpting and modeling. This statue resembles a portrait of an individual horse with its lifelike modeling and expressive facial features. Strong, noble, and splendid, this painted terracotta horse conveys the love and admiration that Tang aristocrats felt toward its steeds. Horses held particular significance with Tang rulers and aristocrats, who relied on them for military preparedness and diplomatic policy.

The horse here depicted is of a large and spirited breed much sought after by the Chinese. Originating in the grasslands of Inner Asia, such horses were much larger than the pony native to China, hence valued for their speed and nobility. Indeed owning a horse became a privilege in Tang China when, in 667 an edict decreed that only aristocrats (of both sexes) could ride horses.

Clearly, this horse was a beloved creature buried alongside the deceased to accompany him throughout eternity. Wearing harnesses, a saddle, and a painted numnah, the horse is ready to gallop across the eternal fields of the afterlife, carrying the spirit of the deceased upon its back. - (X.0405)

## Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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X.0406

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Dimensions: 15.75" (40.0cm) high x  
16.5" (41.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: Great Britain

The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horse allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered.

During the Tang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art. This horse has an elegant red coat as well as a painted numnah, or saddle blanket. When gazing into the eyes of this delightful sculpture, we become aware of the reverence the Chinese held for this majestic creature.

The horse here depicted is of a large and spirited breed much sought after by the Chinese. Originating in the grasslands of Inner Asia, such horses were much larger than the pony native to China, hence valued for their speed and nobility.

Indeed owning a horse became a privilege in Tang China when, in 667 an edict decreed that only aristocrats (of both sexes) could ride horses. Therefore the proliferation of earthenware models for the afterlife as status symbols for the aristocratic elite would seem to have been encouraged also by such a strict limitation in life. - (X.0406)

## Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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X.0407

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Dimensions: 15" (38.1cm) high x

16.125" (41.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: Great Britain

During the Tang dynasty, China enjoyed a period of consolidation, achievement, and confidence. Tang art tends to reflect this assurance in its realism, energy, and dignity.

During the Tang dynasty, the accumulation of numerous wealthy and worldly individuals with large amount of leisure time in a few cities created a true metropolitan elite that demanded an abundance of exotic luxury items, thus defining a new aesthetic taste and fashion.

This statue resembles a portrait of an individual horse with its lifelike modeling and expressive facial features. To add to the realistic effect, a mane made of real hair would have been attached to the statue at the groove along the horse's neck and a tail added to the rear. Strong, noble, and splendid, this brightly painted terracotta horse conveys the love and admiration that Tang society felt toward its steeds. As horses were often symbols of the afterlife, this funerary statue seems to be ready to bear his owner into the afterlife on his saddle. Horses held particular significance with Tang rulers and aristocrats, who relied on them for military preparedness and diplomatic policy. The horses depicted here belongs to a large and spirited breed much sought after by the Chinese. Originating in the grasslands of Inner Asia, such horses were much larger than the pony native to China, hence valued for their speed and nobility. Indeed owing a horse became a privilege in Tang China when, in 667 an edict decreed that only aristocrats (of both sexes) could ride them.

Clearly, this horse was a beloved creature buried alongside the deceased to accompany him throughout eternity. Wearing harnesses painted in black with orange highlights, the horse is ready to gallop across the eternal fields of the afterlife, carrying the spirit of the deceased upon its back. - (X.0407)

## Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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X.0408

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Dimensions: 15.5" (39.4cm) high x

16.125" (41.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: Great Britain

The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horse allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered.

During the Tang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from tombs of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art. This horse has an elegant red coat as well as a painted numnah, or saddle blanket. In addition, its head is turned to the side, a rare feature that is highly desired by collectors. When gazing into the eyes of this delightful sculpture, we become aware of the reverence the Chinese held for this majestic creature.

As sculptural representations of the fashions of the time, the highest quality painted pottery mingqi tended to be more successful than those glazed. While sancai objects required greater expenditure of material and labour, the application of the glaze meant that the replication of fine details in drapery and physiognomy would have got lost or overseen in favour of the rich glaze. Because of the requirements of the glazing process, sancai pieces tended to be less freely sculpted while for painted pottery the artisans felt best able to explore the details of the face, the garments and over all decoration and the other accoutrements that fascinated the Tang aristocracy

The horse here depicted is of a large and spirited breed much sought after by the Chinese. Originating in the grasslands of Inner Asia, such horses were much larger than the pony native to China, hence valued for their speed and nobility. Indeed owing a horse became a privilege in Tang China when, in 667 an edict decreed that only aristocrats (of both sexes) could ride horses. - (X.0408)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle



X.0424

Origin: China

Circa: 7 th Century AD to 8 th Century AD

Dimensions: 25.25" (64.1cm) high x

26.25" (66.7cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: Great Britain



The Tang Dynasty was a golden age of Chinese culture. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulership. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China on the backs of camels, carrying exotic luxury items from distant lands. Foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers of the Tang China, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan centre of over two million inhabitants. The Tang Dynasty was a relatively stable period of great prosperity representing one of the greatest cultural flourishings in human history. During the Tang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art.

The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. Their rapid mobility allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered, believed to be relatives of dragons, a theory reflecting their sacred status within society.

This impressive, large sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original white pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddle with engraved details that graces his back. This saddle appears to have once been painted orange and likely would have once supported a sculpted rider. The horse's ears stand at attention. Its striking eyes are well defined. Its nostrils are flared and its mouth is open, suggesting the horse has just come to rest after a vigorous journey. These rare features, in particular the open mouth and removable saddle, are highly sought after by collectors. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creature. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (X.0424)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle

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H.1084

Origin: China

Circa: 7 th Century AD to 8 th Century AD

Dimensions: 22.75" (57.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: Great Britain

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse with Removable Saddle

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H.1083

Origin: China

Circa: 7 th Century AD to 8 th Century AD

Dimensions: 22.6" (57.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese art

Style: Early Tang Dynasty

Medium: Terracotta

Location: Great Britain

The Tang Dynasty was a golden age of Chinese culture. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulership. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China on the backs of camels, carrying exotic luxury items from distant lands. Foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers of the Tang China, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. The Tang Dynasty was a relatively stable period of great prosperity representing one of the greatest cultural flourishings in human history.

The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the speed and stamina of the horse. Their rapid mobility allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol pony) encouraged the development of the Silk Road.

The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered, believed to be relatives of dragons, a theory reflecting their sacred status within society. The adoration that Chinese society held for the horse during the Tang era can be seen in their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art.

This graceful sculpture of horse dates to the early part of the Tang Dynasty. The legs, torso, and head of the horse were individually molded and then attached together to form the completed work. The body of the horse has been painted white, while the detachable saddle has been colored a light red hue that was probably originally much more vibrant. The detachable saddle and other stylistic features, such as the stance and the tilt of the neck, are rare and highly valued by collectors. A rider carved from a less durable material such as wood may have once rested atop the saddle. - (H.1084) - (H. 1083)



# Pair of Painted Pottery Horses with Detachable Saddles



LA.524b  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 13.75" (34.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

The T'ang Dynasty was a golden age of Chinese culture. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulership. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China on the backs of camels, carrying exotic luxury items from distant lands. Foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers of the T'ang China, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. The T'ang Dynasty was a relatively stable period of great prosperity representing one of the greatest cultural flourishings in human history. The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the speed and stamina of the horse. Their rapid mobility allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol pony) encouraged the development of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered, believed to be relatives of dragons, a theory reflecting their sacred status within society. The adoration that Chinese society held for the horse during the T'ang era can be seen in their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art. - (LA.524b)

# Painted Pottery Horse with Detachable Saddle

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LA.565  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 700 AD  
Dimensions: 23" (58.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain



Our horse perfectly exemplifies the early artistic production of the Central Plains (Henan and Shaanxi provinces) during the 7th century AD, when more detailed sculptures of caparisoned horses were placed in the tombs of the wealthy as companions for the afterlife. This impressive sculpture -its legs, torso, and head individually moulded and then attached together- still retains much of the original white pigment intact. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddle with engraved details that was once painted orange. The horse's ears stand up in caution, its striking eyes well defined, a portion of its mane combed in front of the ears and split into a part. Its nostrils are flared and its mouth is semi-open, suggesting the horse's impatience to depart for a long vigorous journey. These rare features, in particular the open mouth, mane and removable saddle, are highly sought after by collectors. - (LA. 565)

# Pair of Tang Terracotta Horses with Removable Saddles

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H.1033a  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 21" (53.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

These impressive, large sculptures of a horses still retain much of their original white pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddles that grace their backs. Our horse facing left is painted in a soft green hue, while his mate facing left is painted in a soft white hue. These textured saddles may have once supported riders who are now lost to us. Traces of polychrome are also visible inside the nose and along the mouth. The horses also feature a prominent cowlick rising between their ears and arching forwards. All these rare features are sought after by collectors. When one imagines these horses as they might have originally appeared, with vibrant hues and a similarly modeled riders, the illusion would have been uncanny. These gorgeous sculptures are a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creature. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.1033a)

## Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse



DL.2089

Origin: Shanxi Province

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions: 15.7" (39.9cm) high x  
30.7" (78.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

This elegant, painted horse is no exception. The downward curve of the face echoes that of the splendid mane. It is easy to imagine this fine steed galloping across the horizon, en route to some distant province to deliver an official message with its glorious red saddle. Alternatively, it may have been the treasured possession of a noble aristocrat who partook in polo matches. Surely this horse, crafted with loving care and attention to detail, was admired as much in life as it is in its sculptural form. - (DL. 2089)

# Tang Terracotta Sculpture of a Prancing Horse

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HDC.613  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 18.5" (47.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: United States

Our horse perfectly exemplifies the early artistic production of the Central Plains (Henan and Shaanxi provinces) during the 7th- early 8th centuries AD, when more detailed sculptures of caparisoned horses were placed in the tombs of the wealthy as companions for the afterlife. This impressive sculpture with a carefully groomed mane and tail -its legs, torso, and head individually moulded and then attached together- still retains much of the original paint intact. The elongated prancing legs would have been strengthened in the core with an iron armature, covered up by clay and subsequently painted; the saddle –painted in orange- was added to the moulded figure. Horses with saddles appear frequently already in tombs dated to the Northern Wei period, where they would have symbolized the presence of the deceased. Furthermore, the quite unique - seldom found in mingqi- rendering of his pelt with a maculated effect would suggest a dappled bay steed specific to Central Asia, sometimes portrayed in silk panel screens dating to the Tang dynasty, such as the one found in tomb 188 in Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

#### Reference:

For the silk portrait from Astana see , J. Y. Watts et al, *China, Dawn of the Golden Age, 200-750 AD*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004: No.177, p. 284.

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- (H.721) - (HDC.613)

# Tang Painted Terracotta Horse

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CK.0306

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions: 13.4" (34.0cm) high x

14.2" (36.1cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Terracotta

Location: UAE



During the T'ang dynasty, China enjoyed a period of consolidation, achievement, and confidence. T'ang art tends to reflect this assurance in its realism, energy, and dignity. Pottery of this era is often compared to that of Classical Greece for the sophisticated achievements in sculpting and modeling. This sculpture resembles a portrait of an individual horse with its lifelike modeling and expressive facial features. Strong, noble, and splendid, this brightly painted terracotta horse conveys the love and admiration that T'ang society felt toward its steeds. As horses were often symbols of the afterlife, this funerary statue seems to be ready to bear his owner into the afterlife on his red saddle and numnah decorated with black stripes, a pattern reminiscent of the hide of a zebra. This horse also features a slightly open mouth, gums highlighted with red paint; a characteristic highly sought after by collectors. Horses held particular significance with T'ang rulers and aristocrats, who relied on them for military preparedness and diplomatic policy. In addition, they were also revered for their religious significance: ancient tradition linked them to the dragon, designating them as supernatural creatures. Clearly, this horse was a beloved creature buried alongside the deceased to accompany him throughout eternity. Wearing harnesses painted in black, the horse is ready to gallop across the eternal fields of the afterlife, carrying the spirit of the deceased upon its back. - (CK.0306)

# Tang White Painted Pottery Horse

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RP.150

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions: 21.75" (55.2cm) high x

21.25" (54.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Terracotta

Location: UAE

# Tang White Painted Pottery Horse

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RP.151

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions: 21.5" (54.6cm) high x

21" (53.3cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Terracotta

Location: UAE

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse

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HDC.211  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: United States

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# Tang Horse and Riders

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# Tang Sculpture of a Horse and Foreign Rider

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H.688

Origin: China

Circa: 600 AD to 700 AD

Dimensions: 20" (50.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: UAE

This general type of Chinese burial art is known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. Many of these works reflect Chinese contact with a variety of foreigners including Jewish merchants, Persian traders, and various tribes from Central Asia who were essential for their supply of fine steeds. The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the defense of the borders from nomadic invaders as well as the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Furthermore, horses were believed to be relatives of the mythological dragon, reflecting their sacred status within society. This sculpture depicts a foreigner riding horseback; his hat, nose, and beard reveal his foreign status. Most probably, he was a merchant from the Turkish tribes of Central Asia working the Silk Road. Perhaps he has brought this steed to China in order to trade for precious silk. The early dating of this work is reflective of the stylization of the horse's head and legs that were characteristic of the preceding Sui Dynasty. Overall, this sculpture is a testament to the revered status of the horse in Chinese culture, a love that reached new heights of expression during the T'ang Dynasty. - (H.688)

# Tang Sculpture of a Horse and Foreign Rider

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H.689  
Origin: China  
Circa: 600 AD to 700 AD  
Dimensions: 20" (50.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: UAE



This general type of Chinese burial art is known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. Many of these works reflect Chinese contact with a variety of foreigners including Jewish merchants, Persian traders, and various tribes from Central Asia who were essential for their supply of fine steeds. The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the defense of the borders from nomadic invaders as well as the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Furthermore, horses were believed to be relatives of the mythological dragon, reflecting their sacred status within society. This sculpture depicts a foreigner riding horseback; his hat, nose, and beard reveal his foreign status. Most probably, he was merchant from the Turkish tribes of Central Asia working the Silk Road. Perhaps he has brought this steed to China in order to trade for precious silk. The early dating of this work is reflective of the stylization of the horses head and legs that were characteristic of the preceding Sui Dynasty. Overall, this sculpture is a testament to the revered status of the horse in Chinese culture, a love that reached new heights of expression during the Tang Dynasty. - (H.689)

# Tang Polychrome Horse and Female Rider

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H.947  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 11.25" (28.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang Dynasty, horses were revered creature, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian pastimes became popular. This sculpture, depicting a lady-in-waiting riding on the back of a horse, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. She wears a dress that still retains most of its original orange pigment that once decorated the work. We can imagine this lady prancing around on this horse, perhaps taking part in an important ceremony. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H. 947)

# T'ang Polychrome Horse and Rider

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H.946  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 11.75" (29.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Style: T'ang Dynasty  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the T'ang Dynasty, horses were revered creature, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian pastimes became popular. This sculpture, depicting an old man, complete with wrinkled features, riding on the back of a horse, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. He wears a robe that still retains most of its original orange pigment that once decorated the work. We can imagine this distinguished old man, perhaps a philosopher or poet, prancing around on this horse, taking part in an important ceremony. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H.946)

# Tang Polychrome Horse and Female Rider



H.933  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang Dynasty, horses were revered, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian pastimes became popular. This sculpture, depicting a lady-in-waiting riding on the back of a horse, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. A striking amount of the original polychrome still remains intact, clearly visible on the red horse's body and on the flowing green robe the woman wears. We can imagine this lady prancing around on this horse, perhaps taking part in an important ceremony. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H.933)

# Tang Polychrome Horse and Female Rider



H.934  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 12.5" (31.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States



The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the defense of the borders from nomadic invaders as well as the conquest and submission of distant lands. In part, the need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) led to the creation of the legendary Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Furthermore, horses were believed to be relatives of the mythological dragon, reflecting their sacred status within society. They were prized for their rarity and became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian pastimes became popular. This sculpture, depicting an attendant riding on the back of a horse, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. A striking amount of the original polychrome still remains intact, clearly visible in the white body of the horse and the black harnesses and numnah, as well as the attendant's orange robe. We can imagine this attendant prancing around on this horse, perhaps taking part in an important ceremony. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H. 934)

# Tang Polychrome Horse and Female Rider

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H.967  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang Dynasty, horses were revered creature, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian activities were popular pastimes. This sculpture, depicting a lady-in-waiting riding on the back of an ochre-colored horse, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. Her dress still retains a majority of its original bright orange polychrome. The horse's numnah and harnesses are painted black, as are his hooves. His nose and mouth are highlighted in vibrant red. We can imagine this lady prancing around on this horse, taking part in an important ceremony or polo match. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H.967)

# Tang Polychrome Horse and Rider

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H.964  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 13" (33.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang Dynasty, horses were revered creature, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian activities were popular pastimes. This sculpture, depicting a hooded man riding on the back of a rose-colored horse, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. His cloak still retains a majority of its original black pigment, highlighted with red stripes. The horse's harnesses are also represented by strokes of black paint while his nose and mouth are enhanced by vibrant red. We can imagine this rider marching with his steed in part of an important ceremony. Holes in his hands suggest that he was once carrying a staff or spear that has long since deteriorated over the centuries. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H.964)

# Tang Polychrome Horse and Female Rider

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H.969  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang Dynasty, horses were revered creature, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian activities were popular pastimes. This sculpture, depicting a hooded man riding on the back of a white steed, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. His cloak still retains a majority of its original black pigment, highlighted with red stripes. The horse's harnesses are also represented by strokes of black paint while his nose and mouth are enhanced by vibrant red. We can imagine this rider marching with his steed in part of an important ceremony. Holes in his hands suggest that he was once carrying a staff or spear that has long since deteriorated over the centuries. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H.969)

# Tang Polychrome Horse and Female Rider



H.970  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States



During the Tang Dynasty, horses were revered creature, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian activities were popular pastimes. This sculpture, depicting a hooded man riding on the back of a white steed, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. His cloak still retains a majority of its original white pigment, highlighted with red stripes. The horse's harnesses are also represented by strokes of black paint while his nose and mouth are enhanced by vibrant red. We can imagine this rider marching with his steed in part of an important ceremony. A hole in his right hand suggests that he was once carrying a staff or spear that has long since deteriorated over the centuries. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H.970)

# Tang Horse with Removable Saddle and Female Rider



H.1015  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 15.75" (40.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

During the Tang Dynasty, horses were revered, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian pastimes became popular. This sculpture, depicting a lady-in-waiting riding on the back of a gray horse with its head held downwards, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this work is the removable saddle and rider that detach from the body of the horse in one piece. Some of the original polychrome still remains intact, clearly visible in the lady's burgundy dress and the white numnah, or saddle blanket. We can imagine this lady prancing around on this horse, perhaps taking part in an important ceremony. She wears a long-sleeved dress, a type of which was used in a popular dance where the lady swirls the excess fabric around in the air. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H. 1015)

# Tang Polychrome Horse and Female Rider

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X.0410

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Dimensions: 16.125" (41.0cm) high x  
12.25" (31.1cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Style: Tang Dynasty

Medium: Terracotta

Location: Great Britain

During the Tang Dynasty, horses were revered creature, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian activities were popular pastimes. This sculpture, depicting an elegantly dressed man riding on the back of a white horse, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. His cloak still retains a majority of its original red pigment, as do his lips and the black headdress that crowns his head (similar to a cap worn by civic officials). We can imagine this rider marching with his steed as part of an important ceremony. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (X.0410)

# Tang Polychrome Horse and Female Polo Player



LA.528  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 16.25" (41.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

During the Tang dynasty, the accumulation of numerous wealthy and worldly individuals with large amount of leisure time in a few cities created a true metropolitan elite that demanded an abundance of exotic luxury items, thus defining a new aesthetic taste and fashion.

As sculptural representations of the fashions of the time, the highest quality painted pottery mingqi tended to be more successful than those glazed. While sancai objects required greater expenditure of material and labour, the application of the glaze meant that the replication of fine details in drapery and physiognomy would have got lost or overseen in favour of the rich glaze. Because of the requirements of the glazing process, sancai pieces tended to be less freely sculpted while for painted pottery the artisans felt best able to explore the details of the face, the garments and over all decoration, hairstyle and the other accoutrements that fascinated the Tang aristocracy.

The horse depicted would have belonged to a large and spirited breed much sought after by the Chinese. Originating in the grasslands of Inner Asia, such horses were much larger than the pony native to China, hence valued for their speed and nobility. Indeed owning a horse became a privilege in Tang China when, in 667 an edict decreed that only aristocrats (of both sexes) could ride them.

Leisure-rich aristocrats then amused themselves playing sports (in this case polo) and hunting. And such activities were not limited to men but more than often involved the participation of women. This female rider, with her high waisted long red tunic, and an arm raised, her hand possibly brandishing a stick that is no more there, as to hit the ball, beautifully reflects the aura of novelty and gender exploration that permeated the Tang period. The colourful dresses, hairstyles and ornamentation provide us with an insight into the aesthetic tastes and fashion consideration of the time, carrying us into a past-time of amusements of exotic flavour. - (LA.528)

# Tang Polychrome Horse with Fat Lady

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DL.2092  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions: 11.4" (29.0cm) high x  
9.44" (24.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE



During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings, known as mingqi, have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. Of the various types of mingqi, there is perhaps none more charming than the beautiful sculptures of elegant female courtiers, sometimes known as "Fat Ladies" for their fleshy faces. These gorgeous women reflect the appreciation of the female form during the Tang Dynasty. Such courtiers are described in the numerous love poems written during this era, considered a golden age of Chinese culture.

In this example, the lady-in-waiting is seated on a horse. Considerable traces of the original polychromy remain, in particular a dark pigment has been used to indicate the saddle and the reins. The status of the rider is indicated by the delicate floral motifs which adorn her long-sleeved dress. The border which frames the top of the costume and falls down over her clasped hands is adorned with delicate red dots. This stunning lady wears her hair in an elaborate coiffure arranged in a large bun that crowns her head. Such women may represent wives, princesses, or attendants. Their beauty inspires us as we are transported back to another time. This gorgeous sculpture has been to the next world and returned to our modern era to tell us her tale. She speaks of the enormous wealth and sophisticated culture of the Tang Dynasty, one of the greatest periods of artistic creation in human history. - (DL.2092)

# Tang Polychrome Horse with Fat Lady



DL.2094  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions: 12" (30.5cm) high x  
11.4" (29.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Style: Tang Dynasty  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings, known as mingqi, have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. Of the various types of mingqi, there is perhaps none more charming than the beautiful sculptures of elegant female courtiers, sometimes known as “Fat Ladies” for their fleshy faces. These gorgeous women reflect the appreciation of the female form during the Tang Dynasty. Such courtiers are described in the numerous love poems written during this era, considered a golden age of Chinese culture.

In this example, the lady-in-waiting is seated on a horse. Considerable traces of the original polychromy remain, in particular a dark pigment has been used to indicate the saddle and the reins. The status of the rider is indicated by the delicate floral motifs which adorn her long-sleeved dress. The hair is fashionably arranged in an elaborate coiffure. Such women may represent wives, princesses, or attendants. Their beauty inspires us as we are transported back to another time. This gorgeous sculpture has been to the next world and returned to our modern era to tell us her tale. She speaks of the enormous wealth and sophisticated culture of the Tang Dynasty, one of the greatest periods of artistic creation in human history. - (DL.2094)

# Tang Polychrome Horse with Fat Lady

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K.0312  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: UAE

# Tang Polychrome Horse with Fat Lady

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CK.0313  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: UAE

During the Tang Dynasty, horses were revered, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian pastimes became popular. This sculpture, depicting a lady-in-waiting riding on the back of a horse, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. A striking amount of the original polychrome still remains intact. We can imagine this lady prancing around on this horse, perhaps taking part in an important ceremony. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (CK.0312) - (CK.0313)

# Han Polychrome Horse and Polo Player

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RD.053

Origin: China

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions: 32.3" (82.0cm) high x  
26.9" (68.3cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Style: Western Han Dynasty

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: UAE

# Han Polychrome Horse and Polo Player

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RD.051

Circa: 206 AD to 220 BC

Dimensions: 34.4" (87.4cm) high x  
28.4" (72.1cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art



The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horse allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Horses were believed to be related to mythological dragons, reflecting their sacred status within society. During the unification of China under the Han Dynasty, bands of mounted nomadic warriors from the north threatened the country. In order to thwart their attacks, the Chinese sought to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the Mongol ponies used by the invaders), eventually leading to the creation of the Silk Road. This small sculpture of a mounted soldier reveals the crucial military role of the horse. When compared to the diminutive stature of the rider, the importance of the horse becomes readily apparent. This creature provided security and strength, allowing the empire to secure its borders and expand its influences across Central Asia. The magnificent regalia of the horse, including a brilliantly painted saddle in red and green/gold, reflect the respect this animal received. The warrior as well is gorgeously decorated with a painted red tunic and gray chest armor. He would have originally held a wooden spear or bow in between his hands that has rotted away over the centuries. This remarkable sculpture is a creation of immense cultural and historical significance that attests to the critical role of the horse in ancient Chinese civilization. - (RD.051)

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