

A GOLDEN AGE
of CHINA
QIANLONG EMPEROR, 1736-1795

盛世乾隆



Chinese Portrait of Emperor Qianlong in ceremonial robe 清人画弘历朝服像轴 (detail) Qing dynasty, Qianlong period 1736-1795 / coloured ink on silk / 242.2 x 179.0 cm (image) The Palace Museum, Beijing

27 MARCH –
21 JUNE 2015

EXPLORE THE EXHIBITION

MANCHU EMPEROR

Find the painting:

Giuseppe CASTIGLIONE

Qianlong Emperor in ceremonial armour on horseback

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period 1739

- Notice the bows, arrows, quiver and saddle featured in the painting. Find similar objects in the display cases near this painting. What clues can you find that these objects belonged to the Emperor?
- What do you notice about the size of the paintings in the exhibition? Why do you think the paintings are this size?

FORBIDDEN CITY – THE PALACE MUSEUM

Find the painting:

Envoys from vassal states and foreign countries presenting tribute to the Emperor, 1736–95

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period 1736–95

- What do you think the phrase *Envoys from vassal states* means?
- Locate the diagram of the Forbidden City on the wall in the exhibition and identify the main buildings represented in the painting.
- What countries can you see represented in this painting?
- What are some of the gifts being brought to the Emperor?

SON OF HEAVEN

Find the painting:

Giuseppe CASTIGLIONE, *Portrait of Qianlong Emperor in ceremonial court robe*

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period 1736

- Use information from the label to work out how old the Qianlong Emperor was when this painting was made.
- Use information from the label to identify what country the artist, Giuseppe Castiglione was from.
- In what way does the shape of the sleeve on the ceremonial robe remind us that the Manchu were skilled horseman?
- Why do you think the symbol of the dragon is repeated on the Emperor's robe?

Find the nearby display of ceremonial court robes:

- Use the 'Look and find activity provided to identify symbols and their meanings on the ceremonial court robes in the exhibition.

IMPERIAL ART UNDER THE EMPEROR'S PATRONAGE

Find the painting:

Giuseppe Castiglione *Pine, Hawk and lingzhi*

Qing dynasty, Yongzheng period 1724

- Read the label to find out what the pine tree, mushroom and hawk represent.

Look at the objects in the surrounding display cases.

- What objects did the Qianlong Emperor collect and why do you think he liked them?
- Which object in this section of the exhibition do you find most interesting and why?

IMPERIAL ART OF RELIGION

Find the painting:

Qianlong Emperor portrayed as an incarnation of Manjushri, Bodhisattva of Wisdom (in Puning Temple, Hebei province)
Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period 1736–95

- What symbols or clues can you see to suggest that this painting has religious significance?
- Why do you think the Qianlong Emperor wanted to be portrayed as this figure?

Find the sculpture:

Buddhist statue of Guanyin, Bodhisattva of Compassion with Qianlong reign mark
Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period 1736–95

- Find and identify the precious materials used to create this work.
- Which of the religious objects in the exhibition do you find most interesting and why?

CHINESE SCHOLAR, ART CONNOISSEUR AND COLLECTOR

Find the painting:

Qianlong Emperor appraising: One or two?
Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period 1736–95

- Observe the objects represented in the Emperor's study, including brushes, brush holder and inkstand. Find similar objects in the display cases near this painting.
- Read the labels to find out what they were used for. Identify the symbols on these objects and their meaning.