

Press Release

Frankfurt am Main, 23.10.2019

亞歐堂 MEET ASIAN ART  
**OF DRAGONS, UNICORNS AND MOON RABBITS: ANIMAL AND MYTHICAL  
CREATURES IN ANCIENT CHINA**  
**24 October 2019 to 30 August 2020**

Opening: Wed, 23 October 2019, 7 pm

The world of creatures belongs to the most fascinating themes within China's visual culture. The depiction of nature, especially animals, became an important form of expression in the Middle Kingdom more than 2,500 years ago. In the context of the exhibition and event forum MEET ASIAN ART at the Museum Angewandte Kunst, this cabinet exhibition presents selected objects from the Museum's vast Asian Collection that are crafted in a wide range of materials and encompass more than 2,000 years of Chinese cultural and intellectual history.

The representation of animals in Chinese art and culture is extraordinarily diverse and often far from the romantic ideal of the tranquil and sublime nature. The exhibition OF DRAGONS, UNICORNS AND MOON RABBITS presents different animal depictions, while fictional creatures appear even more frequently than actually existing fauna. The earliest encyclopaedic collection of hundreds of mythic animals and odd creatures is known as Shanhaijing 山海經 ("Classics of the Mountains and Seas"). The book first appeared sometime between the fourth and second century B.C. and was based on oral storytelling.

The visual appearance of animals begins with barely recognizable creatures, which appear alongside perfectly abstract ornamental forms on early ritual bronzes. About a thousand years later, a new and completely lifelike depiction of horses, dogs, pigs and other animals surrounding humans appears – paradoxically, on grave pottery. The deceased were accompanied into the grave by figures of this kind in order for them to symbolically stand by their side as familiars in the afterlife.

Even more than the real animal world, mythical creatures dominate the visual field in later centuries and have ever since shaped Chinese everyday life as symbols of luck: The dragon symbolizing the emperor and fertility, the benevolent and child blessing creature Qilin, the miracle-working three-legged toad appears as well as the deer and crane as riding animals for the immortals.

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### **What is 亞歐堂 MEET ASIAN ART?**

With MEET ASIAN ART, the Museum Angewandte Kunst has been dedicating a permanent place of exchange, discovery, understanding and discussion to Asian art since 2016. Changing exhibitions from the Museum's collection of Asian art find a place here in the form of cabinet exhibitions.

At the same time, MEET ASIAN ART is more than just an exhibition space: as a forum for events and presentations, it always offers new insights into Asia's contribution to the art of the world.

Curator: Dr. Stephan from the Schulenburg

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**Director**

Prof. Matthias Wagner K

**Location**

Museum Angewandte Kunst  
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**Information**

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www.museumangewandtekunst.de

**Opening hours**

Tue, Thu - Sun 10 am - 6 pm, Wed 10 am - 8 pm

**Admission**

12 Euro, reduced 6 Euro

**Press contact**

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**Press downloads**

www.museumangewandtekunst.de