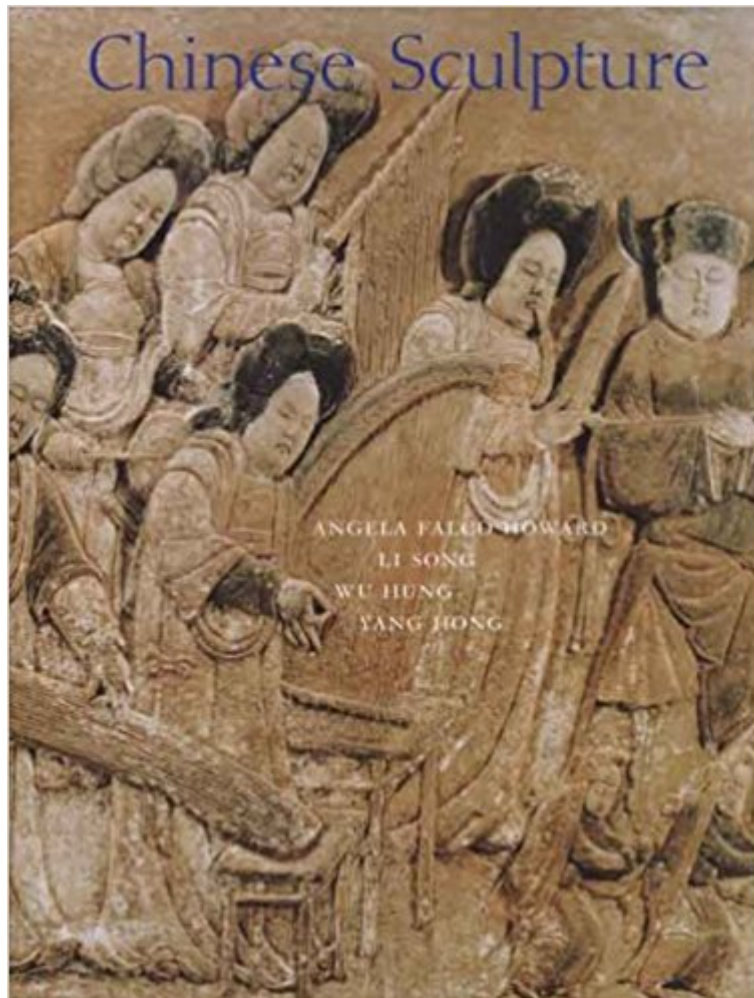




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Chinese Sculpture



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Synopsis

Sculpture is becoming known as one of China's great arts. Neolithic figurines, rows upon rows of underground terra-cotta statues, exquisite bronzes, Buddhas carved in cave walls; all these are part of a vast sculptural heritage. This gorgeous book, written by a team of eminent international scholars, is the first to offer a comprehensive history of Chinese sculpture. Spanning some seven thousand years, Chinese Sculpture explores a beautiful and diverse world of objects, many of which have come to light in recent decades. The authors analyze and present, mostly in color, more than five hundred examples of Chinese sculpture, dividing China's rich and complex sculptural legacy into two parts; secular (tomb and mortuary art) and religious (Buddhist, Confucianist, and Daoist art). Throughout, the authors highlight the inventiveness, purposes, and brilliant execution of Chinese sculpture and comment on how the country's culture nurtured the practical and intellectual choices that shaped its sculptural traditions over the millennia.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Angela Falco Howard is professor of Asian art at Rutgers University and former special consultant in Chinese Buddhist art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Li Song is the former editor of Fine Art Studies (Beijing) and was editor in chief of the volume on sculpture in the Encyclopedia of China. Wu Hung is Harrie A. Vanderstappen Distinguished Service Professor in Chinese Art History and director of the Center for the Art of Asia at the University of Chicago. Yang Hong is professor and research fellow at the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences,

and senior editor of Cultural Relics.

Thank you

This is an encyclopaedic work covering an immense field that still leaves rather several important areas untouched, or treated only cursorily. It is essentially a series of essays on various periods and genres of Chinese sculpture by various scholars each writing on his field of interest without, it seems, any editor pulling the various sections together or making sure that all important areas are covered. For example, the treatment of Song dynasty sculpture discusses almost exclusively works in stone, and devotes only a page or two to works in wood, which are strongly represented in most major museum collections and present a perplexing panoply of styles and iconographical characteristics. Equally unfortunate is the separate treatment by different authors of different genres of sculpture from the same period, without relating one to the other. For example, there is a fairly detailed discussion of terra cotta tomb figures during the Northern and Southern and Sui dynasties; the Buddhist stone sculpture from the same period is discussed in a separate chapter in a different section of the book. Nowhere in the book are these separate genres from the same period related to each other. They are presented as though there were created on two separate planets. Ms Falco Howard is clearly the major author and most accomplished scholar contributing to this volume, and her discussions are frequently quite illuminating. She is, however, very much a specialist, and seldom relates the material under discussion to other contemporary genres or cultural phenomena. Moreover, she frequently gets side tracked into endless discussions on temple architecture, which is quite marginal to the understanding of the sculpture, or, if there is indeed a relationship, Ms Falco Howard doesn't make it clear. Nevertheless, her contributions are substantially superior to those of the other authors, whose contributions often fail to mention important works and even genres. Frequently, the English is stilted and unclear. Why three stars (instead of two or one)? Lots of great pictures, and Ms Falco Howard can, at times, be insightful.

This is a superb volume; an absolute 'must' for anyone seriously interested in the history and development of Chinese sculpture. If its heft and cost put you off (521 pages), I can assure you that it's more than worth its weight in the information, insights, and excellent illustrations. Rarely does one find a volume on this subject that includes bronze, wood and stone sculptures that includes so much useful information. Enhancing one's understanding of the evolution of sculpture in China are references to the events in China's history that have caused the stylistic or iconographic changes

documented. Its authors are all respected experts in their fields but Angela Falco Howard, a special consultant in Chinese Buddhist art at the Metropolitan Museum, stands out as a particularly hard-working, dedicated scholar who not only knows her subject but writes extraordinarily well. Her knowledge of early China (particularly from the Han to the Tang) is formidable and her other major volume on early China is also highly recommended (unfortunately, a smaller former work on the Imagery of the Cosmological Buddha is out of print and very hard to find). If there are any docents or lovers of Chinese art out there, you are forewarned: this volume is so rich in useful information that it will be a classic you will want to return to over and over again. Just buy it.

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