

USC Pacific Asia Museum

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MEDIA PREVIEW

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USC PAM COURTYARD

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**USC PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM SHOWCASES THE ART OF IMPERIAL CHINA
IN AN EXHIBITION THAT EXPLORES NOBILITY OF MING DYNASTY**

Exhibition features recent archaeological finds and cultural properties of 15th-century China,
most on public view for the first time in the U.S.

ROYAL TASTE: THE ART OF PRINCELY COURTS IN 15TH-CENTURY CHINA
February 26–June 26, 2016



Blue-and-White Stem Cup

Before 1437

Porcelain w/underglaze cobalt blue decoration, H. 4 1/8 in. (10.4 cm),
D.. 6 1/8 in. (15.6 cm)

Excavated from the tomb of Prince Zhuang of Liang, Zhongxiang, 2001
Courtesy of Hubei Provincial Museum



Statue of Celestial Marshal Gou of the Thunder Gate
16th century

Gilt bronze and polychrome, H. 28¾ in. (73 cm)
Wudang Museum

Pasadena, CA — In February 2016 the USC Pacific Asia Museum (USC PAM) will present *Royal Taste: The Art of Princely Courts in 15th-Century China*, an exhibition that considers the lives of nobility in late imperial China. The exhibition explores the luxurious lifestyles and religious practices of princely courts in early- and mid-Ming China (1368–1644) and features more than 140 outstanding works of pictorial, sculptural, and decorative arts. Glimmering jewelry and hairpins, important devotional statues, beautiful textiles and porcelain, and painted masterpieces reveal some of the lesser-known aspects of the palatial lives, religious patronage, and afterlife beliefs of Ming princes, whose world has long been a mystery.

Royal Taste features archaeological finds from dozens of royal tombs—now in museum collections in the Hubei province in China—as well as imperially commissioned statues housed at Daoist temples on Mount Wudang, the birthplace of Tai Chi. Through these significant loans, all of which are traveling to the U.S. for the first time, the exhibition provides a fuller understanding of the visual and religious worlds of Ming princes, and demonstrates the vital role of their sophisticated courts in shaping Ming material culture.

This exhibition first appeared at the Hubei Provincial Museum in Wuhan, China. The U.S. presentation is organized by The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art and curated by Dr. Fan Jeremy Zhang, The Ringling’s Helga Wall-Apelt Associate Curator of Asian Art, in collaboration with the Hubei Provincial Museum. At USC PAM *Royal Taste* brings together works from the Hubei Provincial Museum and its affiliated institutions, the private collection of Dr. Tei Fu Chen, and USC PAM’s permanent collection.

Museum Director Christina Yu Yu, Ph.D states, “This is the first time the USC Pacific Asia Museum has mounted an international traveling exhibition of such magnitude and importance.” She continues, “*Royal Taste* is one of many initiatives we are planning in order to elevate USC PAM into one of the country’s leading university museums.”

“The range and quality of the objects excavated from the regional princes’ tombs demonstrate the might of the Ming dynasty, which consolidated most of China as known today,” says Associate Curator Yeonsoo Chee. “The exquisite beauty and superb craftsmanship of the gold objects are a testament to the artistic sophistication of the early Ming dynasty.”

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW:

To guard the central throne in Beijing, the Ming emperors bestowed fiefs to more than sixty princes in different provinces. For generations, these regional courts enjoyed great feudal and financial privileges. *Royal Taste* features archaeological finds from the royal tombs of Prince Zhuang of Liang Kingdom, Prince Jing of Ying Kingdom, and the Princes of Jing Kingdom in modern Hubei province. The presentation also includes religious statues from Mt. Wudang, a site that received continuous imperial patronage after the Yongle emperor (reign 1403–1424) selected Zhenwu as his dedicated Daoist deity to worship.

At USC PAM, *Royal Taste* is presented in three sections. The first area features gold, silver, and jade objects from the tombs of regional princes. A second section showcases objects related to the lifestyle of nobility, such as textiles, ceramics, and paintings. The final section of the exhibition presents religious objects related to Tibetan Buddhism and Daoism.

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS:

- Forty works from the tomb of Prince Zhuang of Liang (d. 1441) in Zhongxiang city, which is one of the most significant discoveries of Ming archaeology in the past fifty years. Important finds, such as an imperial certificate of the royal marriage and luxury court gifts of gold and silver, provide a rare glimpse into the court life of Ming China.
- Thirty objects from royal tombs of the Jing Kingdom in Qichun County, including a variety of personal jewelry made of gold and gems of extreme beauty.
- Fifteen religious statues from the sacred Daoist Wudang Mountain, featuring imperial-granted Daoist statues of the Perfected Warrior, Jade Maiden, and Heavenly Saver.

- Twenty-five pictorial and decorative works from the permanent collection of the Hubei Provincial Museum, including masterpieces by famous Ming painters Dai Jin (1388–1462), Lü Ji (1477–unknown), Wu Wei (1459–1508).

“There’s a remarkable wealth of the material world of Ming princes yet to be given enough scholarly attention,” said Dr. Fan Zhang. “The royal patronage from the regional courts truly had a significant impact on the art-making and consumption of late imperial China. One of the largest exhibitions of courtly art from this period ever presented in the U.S., *Royal Taste* offers a fantastic showcase of the courtly art and life of provincial Ming China.”

ABOUT USC PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM

USC Pacific Asia Museum is Southern California’s only museum exclusively devoted to the arts of Asia and the Pacific, and the only U.S. university museum dedicated to the subject. Since 1971, the museum’s mission is to further intercultural understanding through the arts of Asia and the Pacific Islands.

For more information, please contact 626.449.2742 or visit pacificasiamuseum.usc.edu

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