Fire and Earth
Early Chinese Pottery
Endowed with rich deposits of earth and clay, China claims one of the oldest and most exalted traditions of ceramic production in the world. Drawn from the renowned Chicago-based MacLean Collection, Fire and Earth: Early Chinese Pottery features 42 exquisite and transcendent examples of this illustrious cultural phenomenon. This exhibition encompasses two types of early Chinese pottery: vessels used for ritual and everyday functions, and funerary mingqi (明器, “spirit goods”), figures and models crafted to provide the dead with comfort and guardianship. Highlights include graceful dancers, musicians, horses, stamped tomb bricks, and delicately glazed stoneware. Exploring stages of technological innovation and regional nuance, Fire and Earth illuminates the astonishing naturalism and expressiveness of early Chinese pottery.

With rarely-seen wares from the Neolithic Longshan Culture (ca. 3000–1700 BCE) to the Tang Dynasty (618–906), Fire and Earth not only brings 3,000 years of vivid Chinese civilization to your community, but also a platform for exploring the sacred rituals and daily practices of non-Western cultures. This exhibition provides a wide array of programming possibilities to connect ancient practices to the daily lives of your visitors.

"Chinese pottery is characterized by mastery of technique, sophistication of form, and unparalleled creativity. The objects in this exhibition are some of the finest outside of China."
- Tongyun Yin, Co-curator

EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Number of Works
42

Organized by
The MacLean Collection

Curators
Richard A. Pegg, PhD, and Tongyun Yin, PhD

Requirements
High security; 150–200 linear feet

Booking Period
12 weeks

Tour
January 2022–December 2024

Publication
The MacLean Collection: Early to Medieval Chinese Pottery with essays by Tongyun Yin and Zheng Wei (forthcoming)