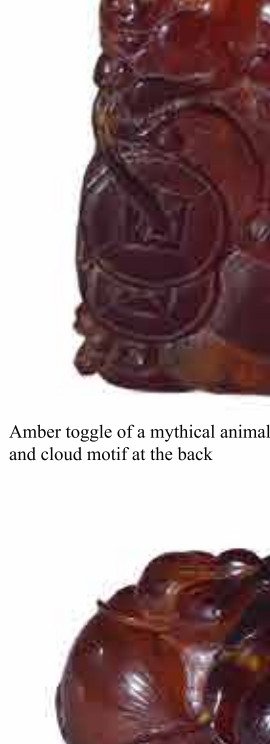


From Shen's Special Collection...

The poetic, the personable Amber toggles and other wearables

The amber pieces in this small collection are mostly in the form of Chinese toggle. A toggle is a personal wearable hanging ornament made of many different materials, such as jade, amber, coral, ivory, wood, tourmaline, and any other special gem stone and material, you name it. It is often carved in the size of one to two inches overall with the traditional Chinese auspicious motif, such as dragon, Chi-Lin, Bi-Xie, bat, figure, etc. In general, it was worn under clothes often by the waist where one could touch it often or take it out to play with it. You might also compare it to a western healing stone.

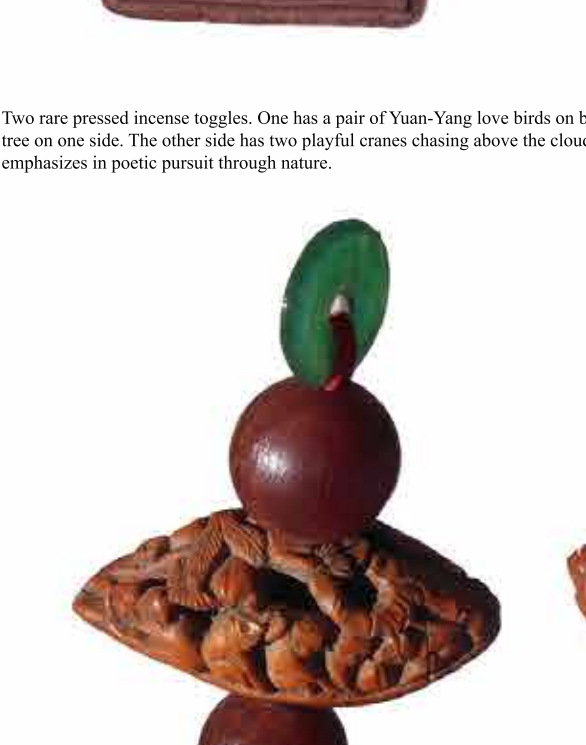
Amber has long been considered a stone with natural healing power. It is very popular among Chinese collectors for Buddhist art. Ancient Chinese medicine used this natural substance. This small collection of amber toggles consists of roughly 16 pieces with most from the Ming to Qing Dynasty in a wide range of subject. Shown here are selected examples. Although small in size, toggles are probably among the most popular carved forms for the collectors in Chinese art, particularly among the native Chinese collectors who have a special fondness towards this traditional art. Today these small precious personal intimates are mostly worn as a hidden necklace pendant under a shirt by both men and women.



Amber toggle of a mother monkey with her baby monkey lying on a lotus leaf pad.



Amber toggle of a mythical animal with a string of coins and cloud motif at the back



An exquisite amber toggle of clustered persimmons. In Chinese language, the pronunciation of persimmon is the same as the first character of the Buddha Shakyamuni. Therefore, the use of persimmon often embeds the meaning of Buddhism.



Amber toggle carved with two Li-Mao (Minks) playing.



A larger size toggle with a monkey on top of a reclining horse. The punch of the language represents an immediate advancement in official ranking. Such phrase is often used to congratulate one's advancement in career today.



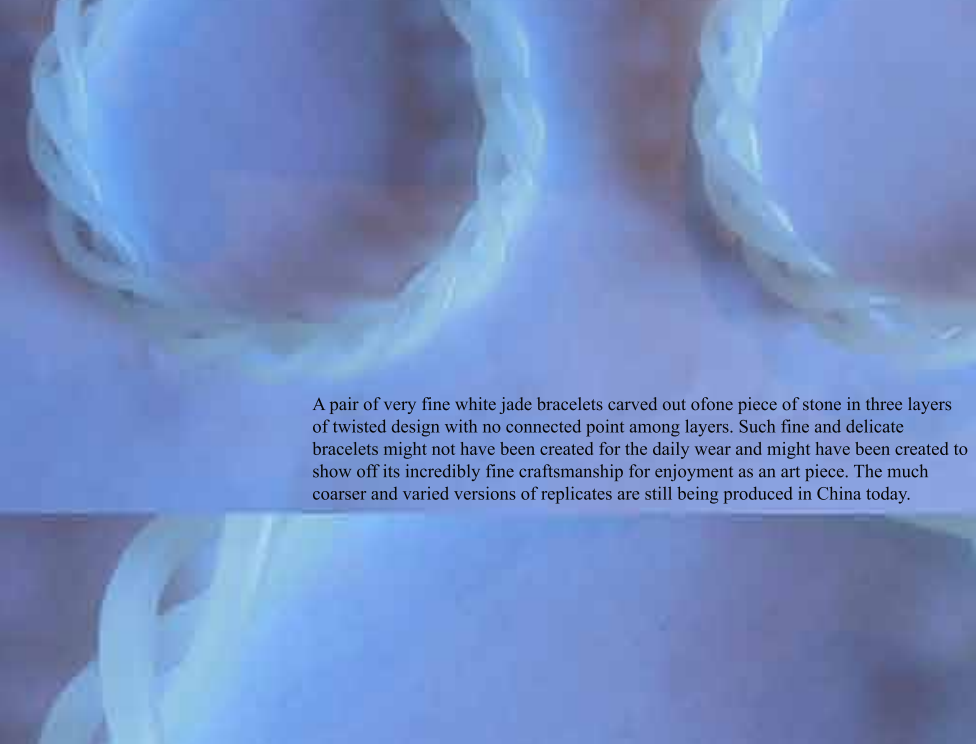
A very rare carved old bamboo toggle with a hooded old man holding a large longevity peach. Toggles made of bamboo are not seen often. Bamboo object is highly prized in Chinese art as the bamboo has long been considered an elegant symbol of higher morale standard by the Chinese literary for its bending yet unbreakable quality.



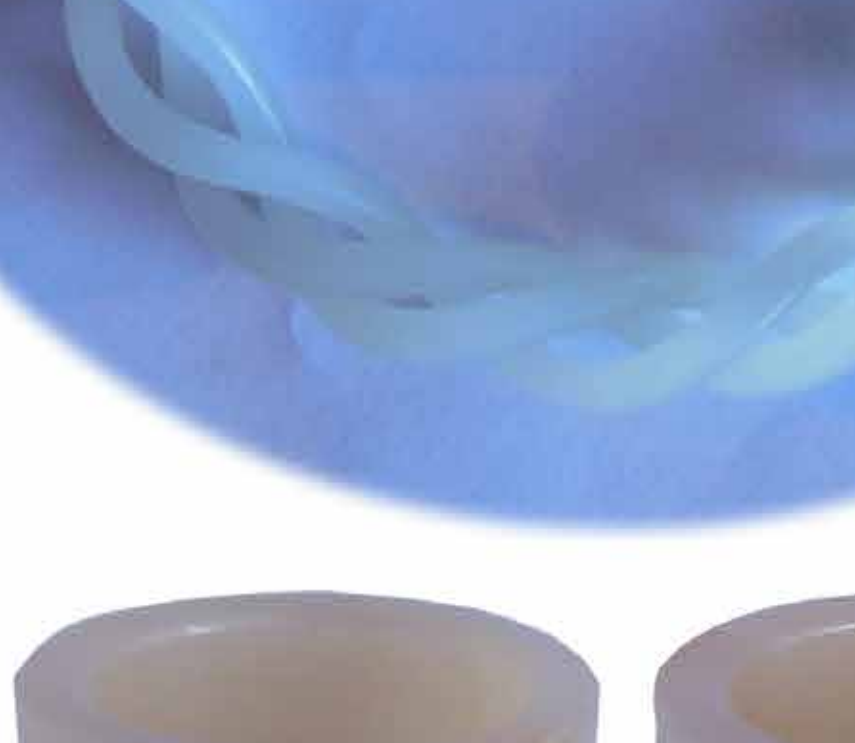
A cleverly carved old white jade toggle with a mother Li-Mao (mink) coddling with two young minks in two different colors in the stone. A fine carver would be able to properly and creatively use the material given to its maximum potential with good sense of design and aesthetic standard.



Two rare pressed incense toggles. One has a pair of Yuan-Yang love birds on both sides. The other one has delicate motif of a goose trying to bite a berry off a tree on one side. The other side has two playful cranes chasing above the clouds. This type of images and motives found in Chinese art reflect a culture that emphasizes in poetic pursuit through nature.



An old olive pit carved with a signature and a group of 17 monkeys among pine branches playing with peaches and doing different activities. Longevity peach and monkey together is among common Chinese art motives. It involves a story of monkey who stole the peach to present to the immortal Goddess Xi-Wang-Mu.



An unusual intricately carved lacquered thin wooden pouch. One side is carved with a Guan-Yin holding a leafy green underneath a bamboo grove; the other side is carved with a female musician playing a Pi-Pa instrument on a boat in between the willow and the water grass. The top of the lid is carved with a crane perching on a pine tree that symbolizes longevity and harmony. Such hanging case, also called "lany" in the west, was used to store either tobacco, incense, or other small personal intimate belonging, which often refers to similar items in Japanese art.



A beautiful and unusual carrying case made of two pieces of abalone and with a traditional style carved thick lacquer on top as the lid.



An elaborately carved Qing Dynasty toggle made of pink Bi-Xi (tourmaline) with two Fu-lions crouching a ball. Bi-Xi Empress was said to be a lover of anything made of Bi-Xi. Although there is plenty of production of tourmaline objects at the other parts of the world, old Chinese objects made of Bi-Xi are extremely rare.



A pair of very fine white jade bracelets carved out of one piece of stone in three layers of twisted design with no connected points among layers. Such fine and delicate bracelets might not have been created for the daily wear and might have been created to show off its incredibly fine craftsmanship for enjoyment as an art piece. The much corner and varied versions of replicates are still being produced in China today.



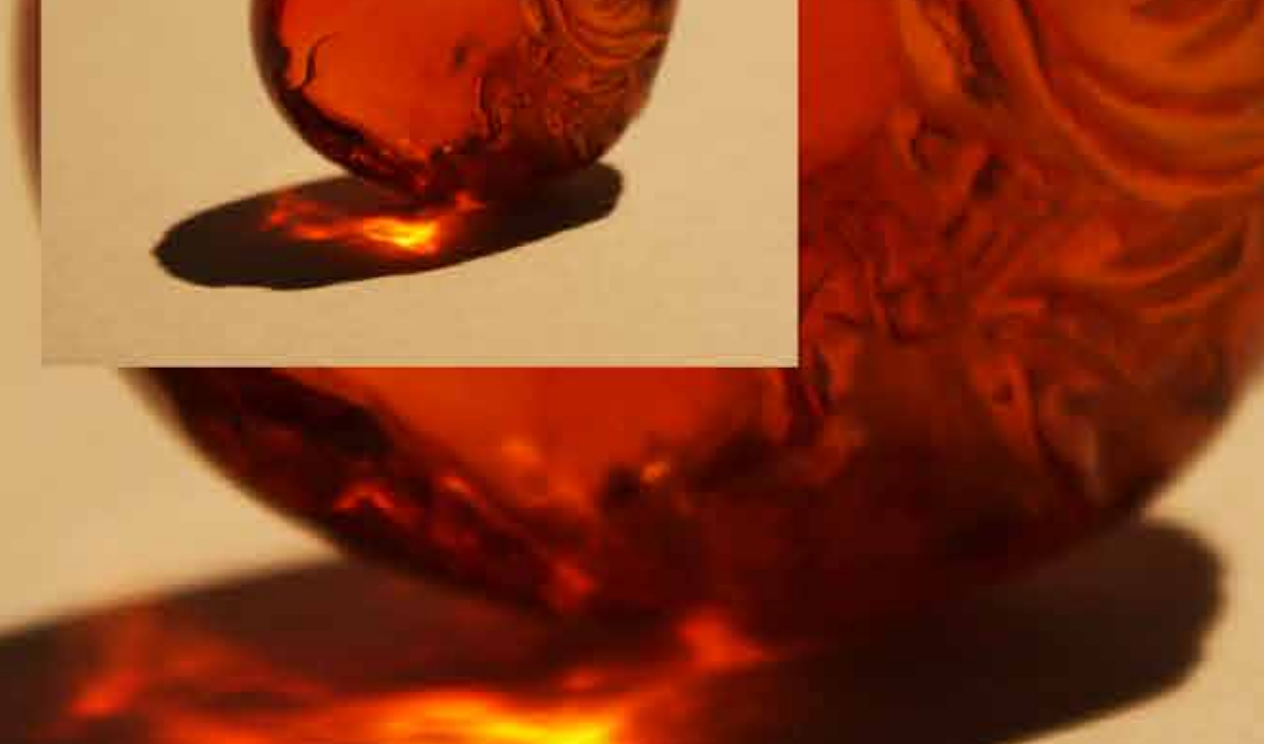
Another archer's ring made of white jade carved with eight horses. The "Eight Horses" is a highly regarded art subject in Chinese painting, particularly with the painting by the famed 18th century royal painter Wang Shu-Ning (1) and the near-modern master painter Xu-Bei-Hong (2). Archer's ring, also called "thumb ring", was worn by male for shooting arrows. In ancient China, for a young man to be considered an adult, archery is among all skills one must learn to master.



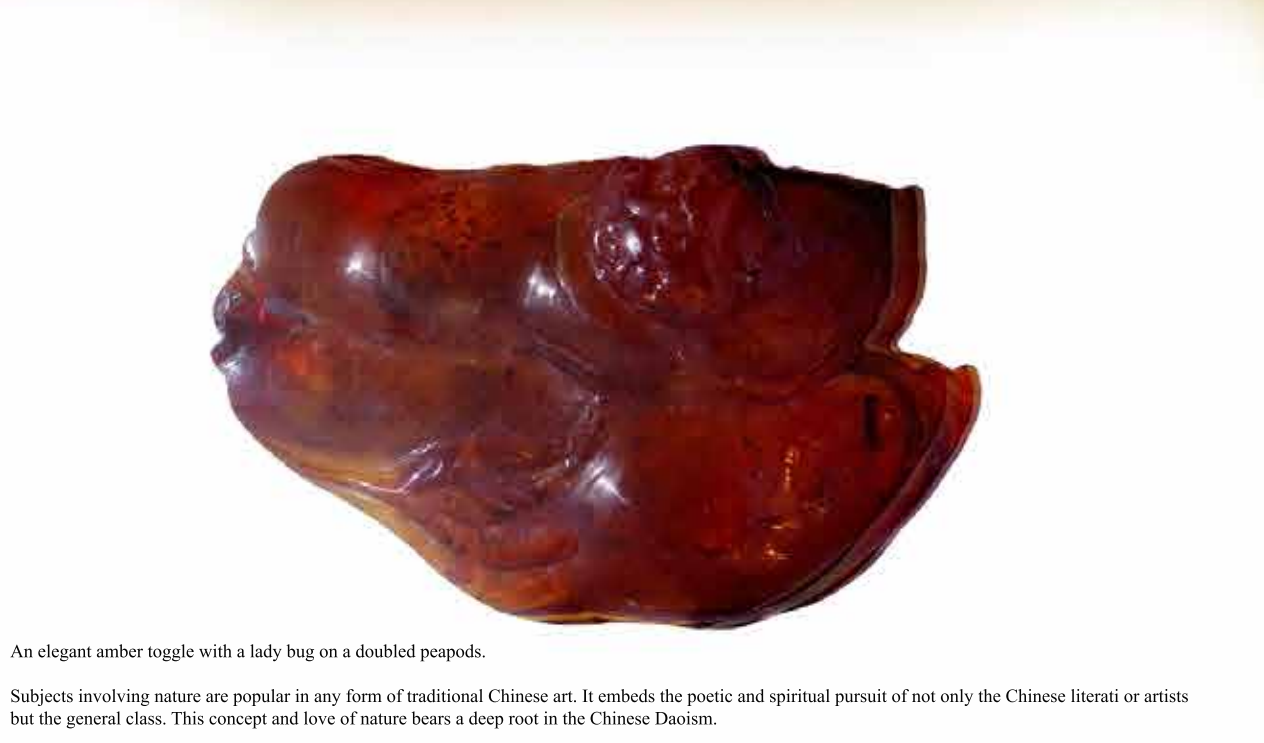
A court necklace made of light-blue crystal-clear grade aquamarine beads with a variety of jade beads, carved tourmalines, and seed pearls.



An intricately carved lavender jade toggle with a dragon chasing a ball that is possibly part of an old calligraphy brush or a pipe.



A front cover of a large old Tibetan silver prayer box case inlaid with turquoise stones



A large amber prayer beads made of Chinese "Golden Amber" beads with golden hue and fine clarity with each bead still slightly different from others. The "Golden Amber" was said to be used by the imperial family.

An unusual early snuff bottle or medicine bottle made of amber with stylized carving creature playing with a monkey.

A reddish amber toggle with carved Fu-Lion motif. Fu-Lion is a symbol to ward off the evil.

A crystal-clear amber toggle made of a pebble with carved Immortal Liu-Hai playing his pet toad. Such image is related to wealth. One often sees ornament of different materials with this motif or the three-legged toad alone placed at the entrance of a Chinese business premise to hopefully attract good business.

An elegant amber toggle with a lady bug on a doubled peapods.

Subjects involving nature are popular in any form of traditional Chinese art. It embeds the poetic and spiritual pursuit of not only the Chinese literati or artists but the general class. This concept and love of nature bears a deep root in the Chinese Daoism.