

# Examples from Shen's Special Collection...

## Religious Paintings and Portraits from Shen's Special Collection

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In Shen's Special collection, the religious paintings, mostly Daoist paintings, reflect a vast system in which China's own native religion Daoism, both its philosophy and application in how this religion, belief, and worship was carried out in the everyday life close to the common people. And more importantly, through these seemingly mystical and out of world immortal figures and stories they represent, a world of complex philosophy layered behind the cultural and historical significance which in turn nourished and influenced many Chinese life for centuries, including that of Chinese scholars, artists, and others in the different professions and walks of life.

Within Chinese Daoism itself, the applicable forms take the religion and the philosophy through the methodology of various functional fields. Among which, Chinese astrology and Chinese medicine which belonged to one entity and were not separated into different field in the ancient China until later time perhaps are the most prominent and accomplished ones today.

In the back ground is a painting, possibly by Wang Meng. The complex landscape above and beyond the pavilion shows the emotional output of the artist seeking spiritual relief through the curved and layered mountain.

In China, there is only one Daoist museum which houses over 300 pieces of similar paintings. These precious paintings from Shen's Special Collection, painted with all organic colors made from vegetation and precious stones and minerals such as Zhu Sha (red), lapis lazuli (iridescent blue) among others, perhaps are one of the few existing collections of old Chinese Daoist paintings in a large format outside of China. Some of the larger size paintings from this Special Collection came from the Guangxi (1871-1908) and Tongzhi (1861-1875) period. Others are older or newer.

There are few research paper and articles can be found for these paintings. One exhibition by Art Institute of Chicago in 2000 also exhibited an array of this Daoist paintings from various museums and collections in the world.

1 新闻 腾讯网字家博物馆 / <http://rnfodao.qq.com/a/20140630/031051.htm>  
2 <http://www.artic.edu/taosim/menu.php>  
3 <http://rnfodao.qq.com/a/20140630/031051.htm>

Followed immediately are a few examples of large to massive size paintings in vivid colors and fine details. Many of these paintings were used for ceremonial occasions as a back drop for the event, depending on whether it was a Buddhist ritual or a Daoist ceremony.



Below is a Daoist figure "Zhong Kui", a Ghost Buster who catches all the small demons.



This very large wooden plaque (on the stand) served as an event recorder, showing the Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722) who was very into certain type of astrology, including Western astrology, who demeaned all other sects of Chinese astrology that he did not like.



This pair of very long calligraphy couplets includes words about Chinese astrology

Showing below is a large size old wooden cake mold. This year, the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival falls on September 8th. During this day, moon is supposed to be the biggest and the brightest when all the families and friends get together to eat moon cakes and stay out late to appreciate the moon.

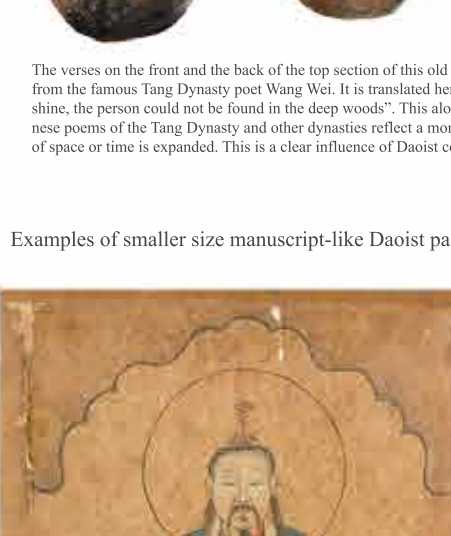
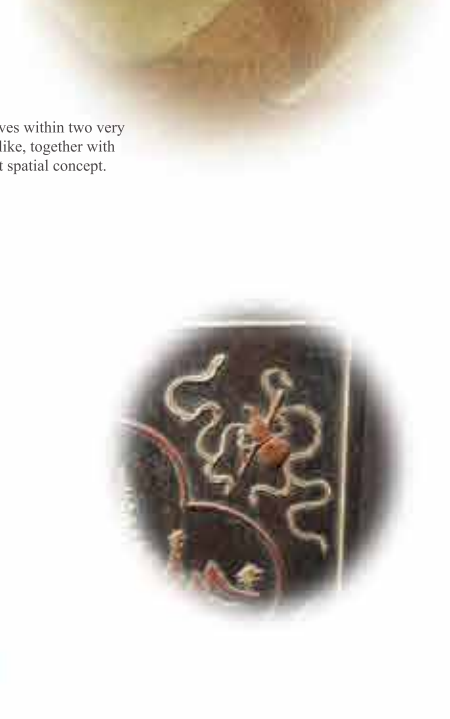
Legend has it that the immortal beauty "Chang-E", with her pet rabbit, was punished to stay at the cold moon to forever grind and make the longevity medicine. This medicine that she tried to make is "Zhu Sha" which was used in Chinese medicine but is toxic and forbidden to be used in the western world. This same "Zhu Sha" is used or used as part of the blend for the old red lacquer one sees on old Chinese furniture and objects.



The carved deer is of a typical Daoist motif for Longevity which was one of the pursuit in Daoism during some dynasties. One might see how Chinese Qi-Gong relates to this concept.

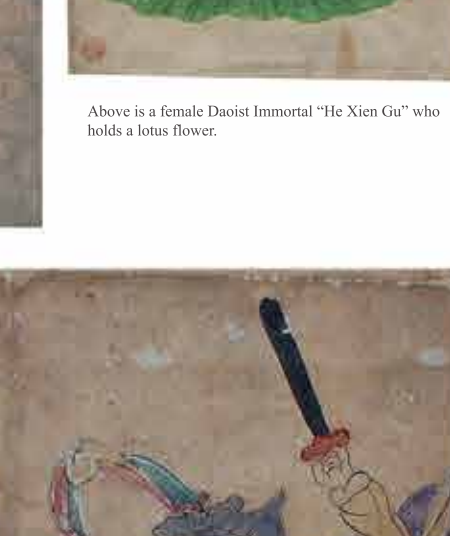


In this old table screen plaque made of ink stone, one can see the waves within two very gigantic landscape rocks. For centuries, Chinese painters and artist alike, together with many poets and writers, expressed their emotions through this Daoist spatial concept.



The verses on the front and the back of the top section of this old lacquered eye glass case came from the famous Tang Dynasty poet Wang Wei. It is translated here as: "The bright moon came to shine, the person could not be found in the deep woods". This along with many beautiful old Chinese poems of the Tang Dynasty and other dynasties reflect a moment or a mood in which a world of space or time is expanded. This is a clear influence of Daoist concept.

Examples of smaller size manuscript-like Daoist paintings.



Above is a female Daoist Immortal "He Xian Gu" who holds a lotus flower.

