

Basic Detail Report



Horse

Date

25-220 CE

Medium

Ceramic

Description

A breeding program launched by Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) introduced northern horses that were larger and

stronger than those previously used. This sculpture demonstrates the desirable traits established during the Han dynasty such as attentive ears, bulging eyes, flaring nostrils, a manicured mane, and a knotted tail. The open mouth and raised front legs add to the liveliness of this horse. Horses have played a vital role in the history of China for thousands of years. Some evidence suggests that they were first domesticated as early as the 13th century BCE. The custom of bringing found and captured horses from other regions for the purpose of developing superior breeds became customary. In this way, the horse transcended its role as transport and beast of burden and came to represent prestige, power, wealth and success. The lavish tombs of Chinese emperors and nobility often contained large and full-sized terracotta horses. In the most elaborate cases, terracotta horses are found accompanying chariots and as components of terracotta armies.

Dimensions

2001.6.2a - Body: 23 × 30 in. (58.4 × 76.2 cm) 2001.6.2b - Head: 17 × 14 in. (43.2 × 35.6 cm)