

Basic Detail Report



Tusk Sculpture

Date

1870-1949

Medium

Ivory

Description

Ivory remains a hotly debated topic for museums. The rampant poaching of endangered elephants has rightfully led to an international ban on the trade of ivory, but many museums around the world house collections of historic ivory carvings. The carved figures on this tusk represent the Eight Immortals of Chinese mythology and folk religion: 1. Lu Dongbin, the leader of the eight who carries a magic devil-slaying sword. 2. Lan Caihe, patron deity of florists, who can make all plants grow. 3. Zhang Guolao, patron deity of old age, who rides a donkey which is kept in his pocket when not in use. 4. Li Tieguai (Iron Crutch), patron deity of medicine, whose soul found refuge in

beggar's body when his own was accidentally destroyed. 5. Zhongli Chuan, who carries a fan that can make the dead live again. 6. Cao Guojiu, patron deity of actors, carries clappers used in opera performances. 7. Han Xiangzi, patron deity of musicians, plays a flute, missing here. 8. He Xiangu, the only woman of the group, is an expert in the use of herbs; she holds a lotus flower. The other figures represent other Taoist immortals, including two who play the Chinese board game of Weiqi (called Go in Japanese). As part of our human story, the artworks carved from this medium need to be shared rather than consigned to storage rooms as long as people are aware of the devastating cost that this artform has on the elephant population.

Dimensions

81 1/2 in. (207 cm)