

Basic Detail Report



Tusk Sculpture

Date

1870-1949

Medium

Ivory and wood

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. This delicate carved ivory is from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and represents eight Immortals of Chinese mythology and folk religion. On one side a Buddha is carved in front of a temple with a vase in his hands. There are nineteen figures of men and three animals. On each side there are one long legged bird. Nine men are carved on the right side and ten on the left, probably indicating the Lo-Han or eighteen companions of Buddha with one additional follower. The figures each hold different symbols, such as a temple, bell, staff, scroll, whip, flower and silk. The other side has twenty-five carved figures of dancers or followers. Both men and women are represented with some holding swords, umbrellas, lettered signs on long poles, rolled scrolls and a baby wrapped in a basket. This ivory tusk is carved showing the Buddhist believe in the embodiments of divine wisdom, virtue, and self-denial. It shows 20 of the 108 Luhan (followers of Buddha) which is the "magic figure", however any number less than 108 can be used. 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

34475: 69 1/4 in. (175.9 cm) 34476: 4 × 64 1/4 in. (10.2 × 163.2 cm)