

Basic Detail Report



Crate

Date

1936-1949

Medium

Wood and metal

Description

The Palace Museum was established in Beijing's recently unoccupied Forbidden City in 1925 as a repository for

around 1,860,000 cultural artifacts - ancient bronzes, jade artifacts, gold and silver religious icons, paintings, calligraphy, and more - all of which were formerly owned by China's deposed imperial family. In 1931, Imperial Japan used a false flag operation as an excuse to invade Manchuria. Suspecting that Japan would not stop there, the director of the Palace Museum began planning to crate and move the museum's most valuable holdings out of Beijing so that they could not be looted. This crate is among the approximately 13,500 crates made for the Palace Museum's holdings. An additional 5,500 crates moved sensitive materials from other repositories. In 1933, with Japan pushing south, the crates were brought by carts and then trains to warehouses in Shanghai for three years while the Nationalist government built a new repository for them in Nanjing. As Japanese forces continued to descend southward and took control of Shanghai in November 1937, just 190 miles from Nanjing, the crates again needed to be moved. The subsequent evacuation ranks among the most daring efforts ever undertaken to protect a nation's artistic heritage. In three shipments, the crates were taken by ship up rivers and rapids, by truck through narrow, snowy mountain passes, and - in rare instances - by hand across muddy terrain, all to find safe storage for them in the farthest western reaches of the country. In 1945 when the war finally ended, most of the works were stored in Leshan, Anshun, and Chongqing.

Dimensions

Base (a): 19 × 35 5/8 × 19 in. (48.3 × 90.5 × 48.3 cm) Lid (b): 1 1/4 × 35 × 19 1/4 in. (3.2 × 88.9 × 48.9 cm)