



Votive Sculpture (Tsha-tsha)

Date

18th to 19th Century

Medium

Clay and pigments

Description

This object is a tsha-tsha, a devotional sculpture from Tibet which is made from clay using a mold. It depicts the bodhisattva Vajrapani, known in Buddhism as one of the three earliest protective deities surrounding the Gautama Buddha. Given the ease of creating these pieces, they are prevalent in Tibet and would be owned by most individuals there. A larger sculpture such as this might decorate a monastery or a personal shrine, but smaller tsha-tshas are reserved for personal shrines and travel. In all cases, these sculptures serve as wards against evil. They can depict a wide variety of Buddhas and deities. They are made by carving a mold from wood or stone,

creating a clay from loess, plant fiber, and water, pressing the clay into the mold, leaving them to dry then trimming their edges slightly, and finally painting them. For artists, creating these is seen as a merit-accumulating action.

Dimensions

9 3/8 × 7 1/4 × 2 1/2 in. (23.8 × 18.4 × 6.4 cm)