

SCHOLASTIC

ART[®]

FEBRUARY 1993

VOL. 23, NO. 4, ISSN 1060-832X.
PUBLISHED IN COOPERATION WITH
THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART,
FORMERLY ART & MAN

Chinese Art

Working
with
Sculpture

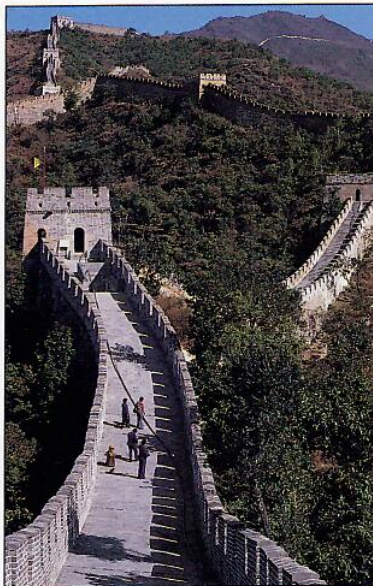


SCHOLASTIC



Ancient

What is the longest sculpture in the world? It is an enormous work of art that is 25 feet high and more than 1500 miles long. One answer is the structure you see below and on the cover. The Great Wall of China was built to be functional, but it could also be considered one of the world's greatest sculptures.



The Great Wall (above, far right, cover) is really many existing walls that were connected 2,200 years ago to form one long, curving barricade.

Cover and above from Superstock.

The famous images on these two pages tell us a great deal about China. The Great Wall shows us that the Chinese placed a high value on keeping out invaders, a reminder that China has the world's longest continuous civilization in one area. The Han horse (right) shows that in Chinese art, the goal is to convey an object's *essence*, rather than to imitate "real life." Much of Chinese art is *stylized*, emphasizing some features; leaving out others.

These works come out of a nation whose earliest recorded history began in 1300 B.C. At that time, China was largely made up of peasants who were ruled by competing warlords. In those early years, the Greeks and Romans also were scattered peasant peoples, although the ancient Egyptians had been a unified nation for two thousand years.

From 1300 B.C. to about 200 B.C., major changes occurred in the rest of the world. The Egyptians declined while the Greeks and then the Romans rose to world power. In 221 B.C., China also became a unified nation, under the rule of the first emperor, Shih Huang Ti.

Shih was a cruel dictator. He ordered the Great Wall built to protect China from invaders, although many thousands of workers died in the process. However, Shih did unify

SCHOLASTIC ART

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic, Inc., 1895-1982

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POSTAL INFORMATION

Scholastic Art (ISSN 1060-832X; in Canada, 2-c no. 9360) is published six times during the school year, Sept./Oct., Nov./Dec./Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr./May, by Scholastic Inc., 351 Garver Rd., P.O. Box 2700, Monroe, OH 45050-2700. Second-class postage paid at Monroe, OH 45050-9998 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTERS: Send notice of address changes to SCHOLASTIC ART, 2931 East McCarty St. P.O. Box 3710 Jefferson City, MO, 65102-3710.

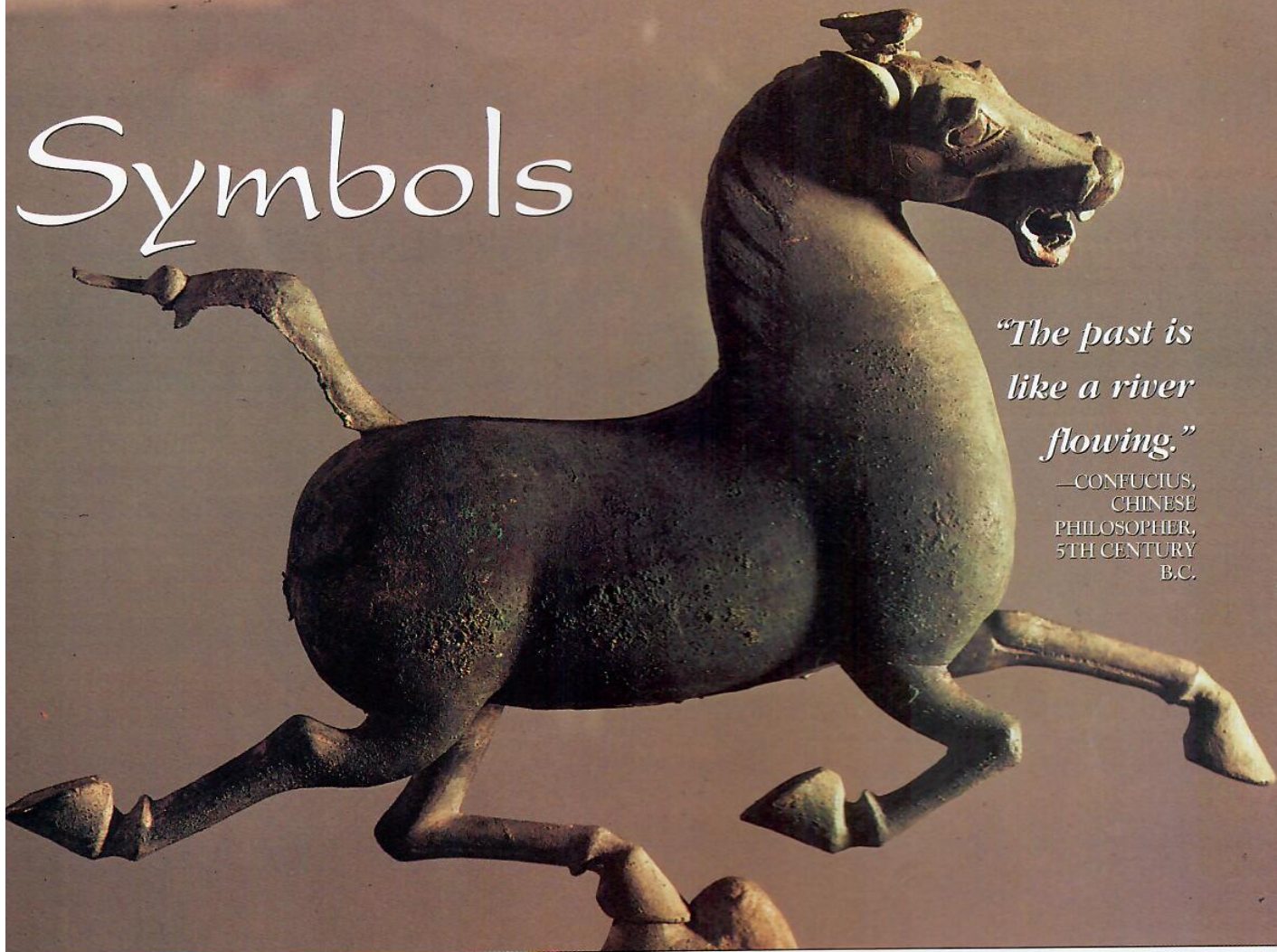
PUBLISHING INFORMATION

U.S. prices: \$6.95 each per school year, for 10 or more subscriptions to the same address. 1-9 subscriptions, each: \$13.50 student, \$22.00 Teachers' Edition, per school year. Single copy: \$1.75 student, \$3.50 Teachers'. (For Canadian pricing, write our Canadian office, address below.) Second-class postage paid at Monroe, OH 45050-9998 and at additional mailing offices. Communications relating to subscriptions should be addressed to SCHOLASTIC ART, Scholastic Inc., 2931 East McCarty Street, P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-9957. Canadian address: Scholastic-TAB Publications, Ltd., 123 Newkirk Rd., Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 3G5. Available on microfilm through Xerox University Microfilms, Inc. 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Also available on microfiche through Bell & Howell Micro Photo Division, Old Mansfield Rd., Wooster, OH 44691. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 1992 by Scholastic Inc. All Rights Reserved. Material in this issue may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or format without special permission from the publisher.

Modern

Map above and diagram on page 7 by James McMahon

Symbols



*“The past is
like a river
flowing.”*

—CONFUCIUS,
CHINESE
PHILOSOPHER,
5TH CENTURY
B.C.

China under the Ch'in *dynasty*. (A *dynasty* is a family that passes leadership on through the generations.) After Shih's death, the Chinese people rebelled and founded the Han dynasty, which brought prosperity and cultural growth to China for 400 years (206 B.C.-A.D. 200).

In other parts of the world during the first two centuries A.D., the Roman Empire flourished and Christianity was established. Europeans knew of China's wonderful products—silk, porcelain, and other goods—which were far superior to anything made in Europe.

The next important dynasties were T'ang (618-906) and Sung (960-1279), which corresponded to the Middle Ages in Europe. Under

the T'ang, printing was developed; under the Sung, the Chinese invented gunpowder.

Over the next 700 years, three more dynasties ruled China. During this time, the Portuguese opened up trade with China. In 1620, the Pilgrims landed in what is now America. In 1911, the last emperor was overthrown and China established its first republic.

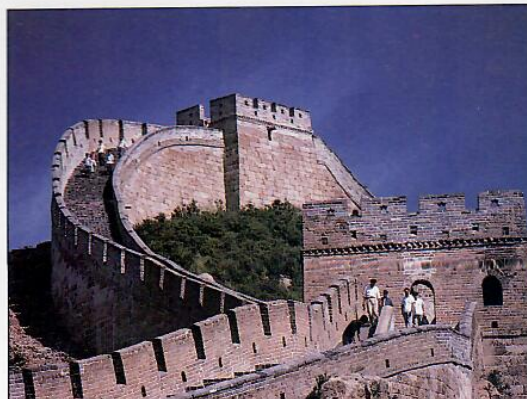
Unlike most other cultures, the Chinese have maintained their land and ways for centuries. Looking at Chinese art means learning to see changes within this long continuity.

Elements of this famous “flying” horse from the Han Dynasty have been *stylized—distorted, simplified, or stretched—to show the animal's power, grace, and speed.*

Bronze Horse of Kansu. Han Dynasty (2nd century B.C.). National Chinese Museum. Photo Erich Lessing/Art Resource.

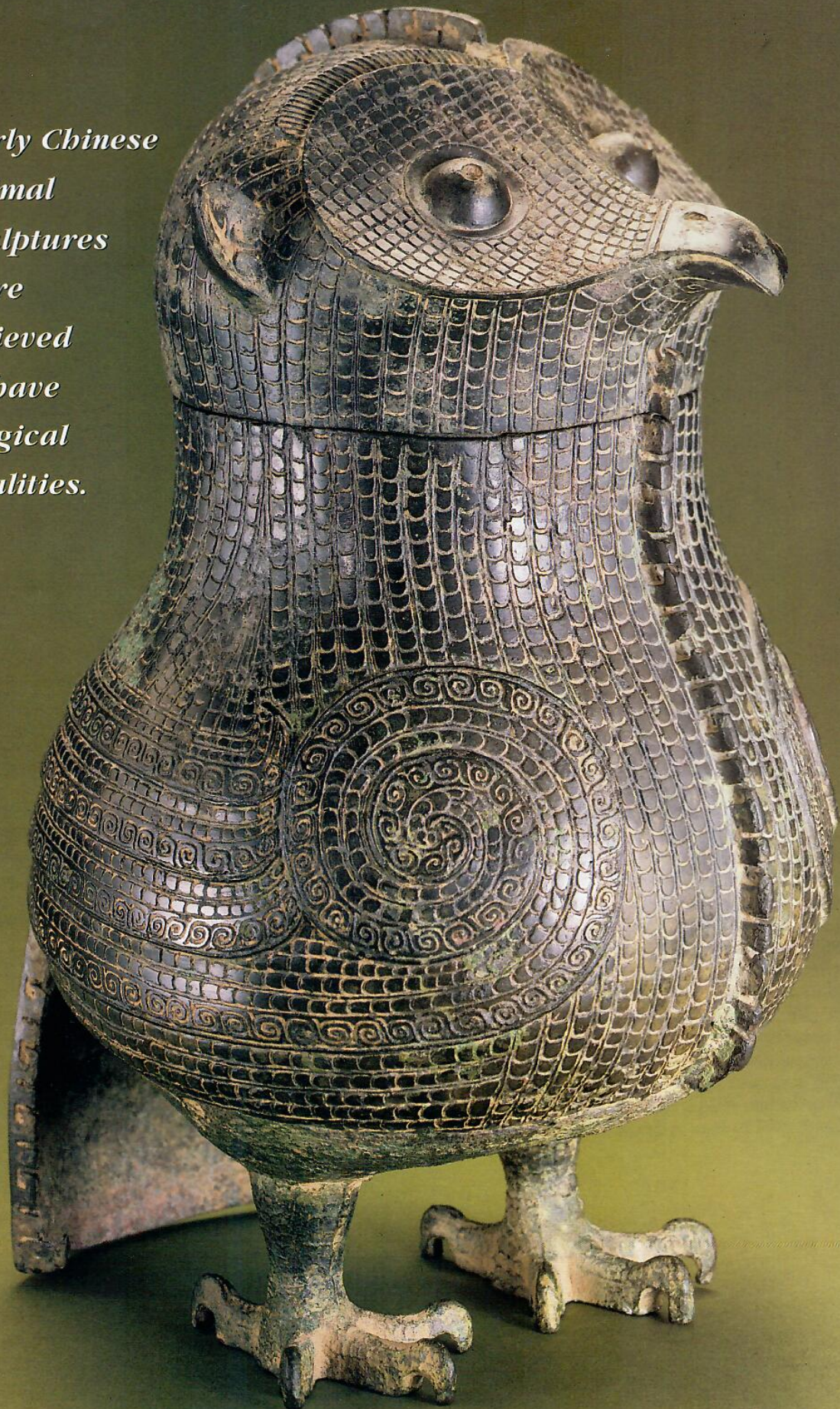
Meanings

Text by Rachel C. Kranz



Mike Yamashita/Westlight

*Early Chinese
animal
sculptures
were
believed
to have
magical
qualities.*



Harmony with Nature

Animals have always been a favorite subject of Chinese sculptors. These two were created during the Shang Dynasty (18th-12th centuries B.C.) and the Chou Dynasty (12th-3rd centuries B.C.). Historians today believe that these bronze animal sculptures were used in religious rituals to reinforce humans' relationship with the natural world. Sculptures were placed in tombs to give the dead person some of the animal's qualities—the elephant's strength; the lion's courage; the bird's soaring ability. These stylized sculptures often took the form of real animals—birds, cats, tigers, owls—and were covered with an intricate pattern of raised marks and symbols.

Some of these surface designs were based on nature, like the shapes suggesting feathers on the owl or the stripe marks on the tiger. Other designs were symbolic, like the *lei-wan*, or "thunder spirals"—curving spiral patterns representing thunderclouds—featured on the body of the owl. As with most Chinese art, the figures have been stylized—some features have been exaggerated, some simplified, some left out completely, drawing our attention to the shape of the work rather than to its realistic content. In the same way, the intricate, layered patterns of designs emphasize the essence of each creature—the tiger's power, stealth, and strength; the owl's great curious eyes. In these works, the human, animal, and spirit worlds are all part of one another. The design and decoration have a religious significance, expressing the Chinese view of the universe.

After the Shang passed from power, they were succeeded by the Chou dynasty. This was known as the classical period in Chinese history. Confucius and Lao-Tzu (Lao-DZU), two major Chinese philosophers and religious leaders, were part of this time.

Confucius (551-479 B.C.) believed that peo-



ple were naturally good, and that if they were given the right rules to follow, they would happily do so. Confucian philosophy is a system of rules to live by in order to fit harmoniously into a structure headed by a ruler, and made up of families. The Chou people lived by this system of clear, rigid guidelines, but their concern with displaying status eventually affected the quality of their artwork.

Lao-Tzu lived during the 5th century B.C. Like Confucius, he believed people were naturally good. But he believed that instead of giving people rules, everyone should find his or her own way by living close to nature and following its harmonies. This he called the Tao (dow), or the Way; his philosophy is called Taoism (dowism). As you can see from the tiger above, the Chou were inspired by natural shapes and continued to decorate them with the surface patterns developed by the Shang.

These Shang and Chou bronze animals were also wine vessels designed to be used in religious rituals.

Above: Chinese tiger, Chou Dynasty (9th century B.C.), cast bronze. Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Left: Owl-shaped wine vessel, Shang Dynasty, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

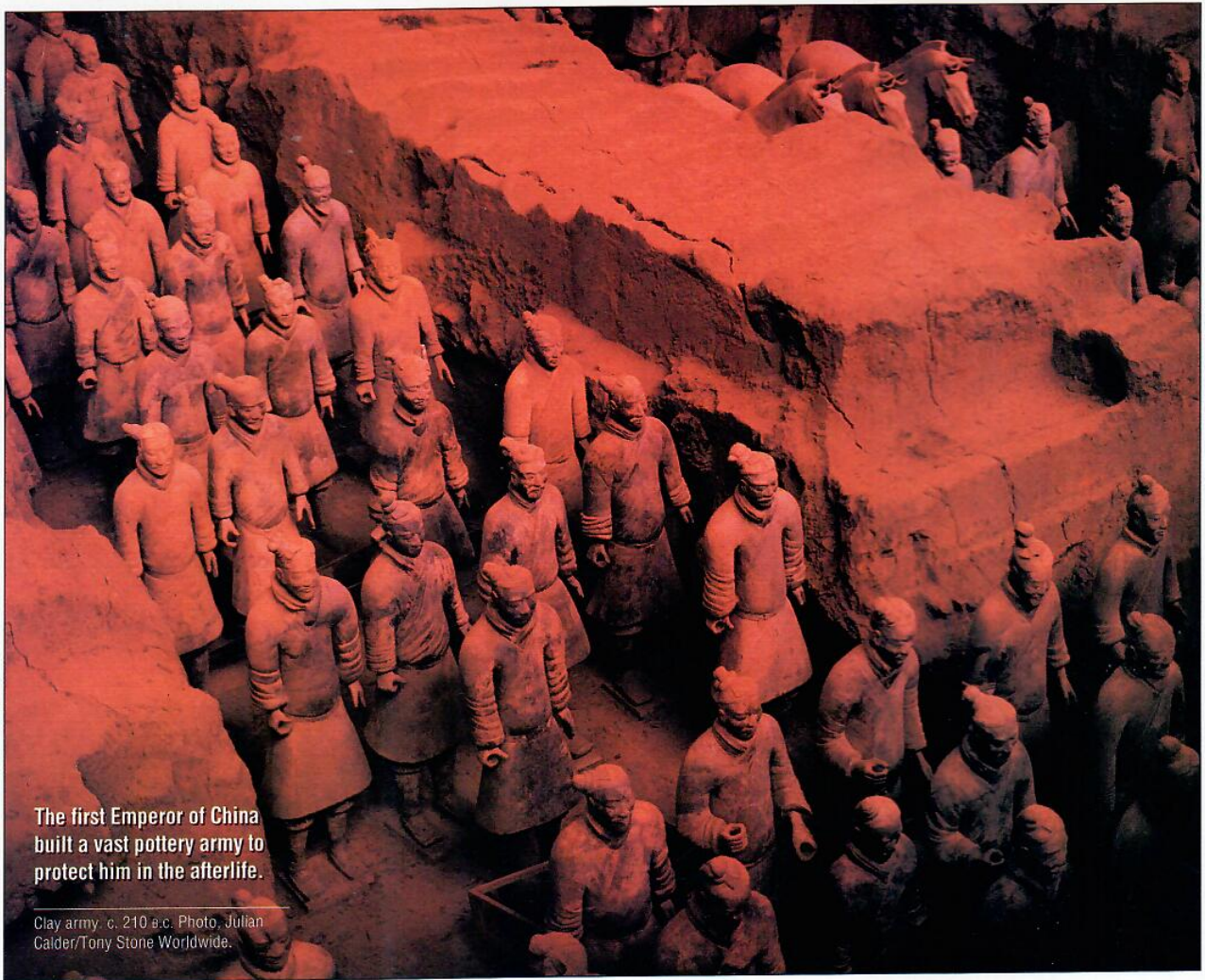
Which animals do you think these two sculptures were based on?

MASTERPIECE
OF THE MONTH



Preview

An Army from the Past



The first Emperor of China built a vast pottery army to protect him in the afterlife.

Clay army, c. 210 B.C. Photo, Julian Calder/Tony Stone Worldwide.

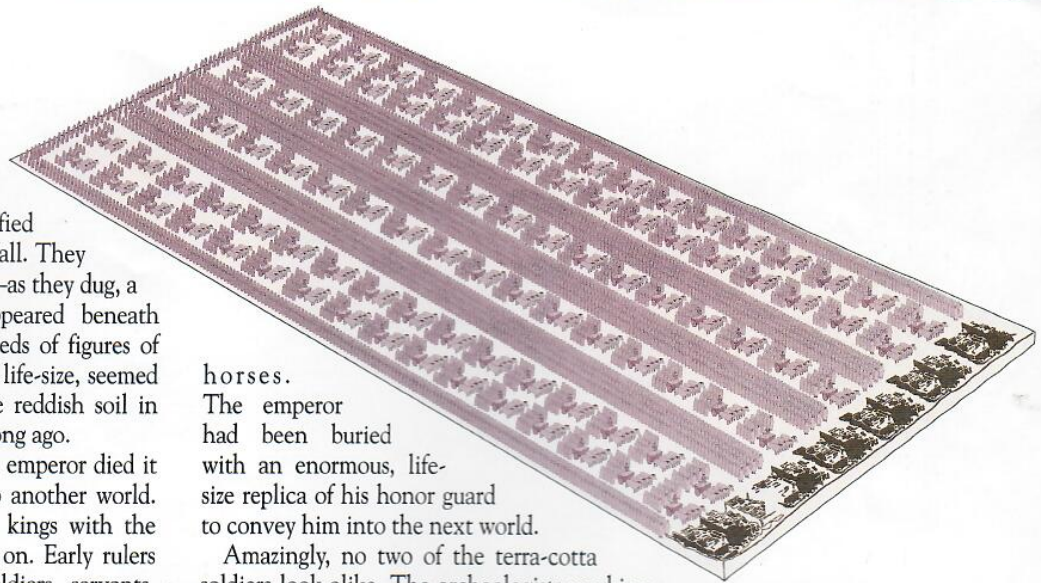
*This life-size clay army has been standing guard
for more than two thousand years*

In the spring of 1974, some workers were digging for a well near the tomb of Shih Huang Ti, the Ch'in Dynasty emperor who unified China and built the Great Wall. They came upon an amazing sight—as they dug, a huge underground vault appeared beneath them. At the bottom, hundreds of figures of men, horses, and chariots, all life-size, seemed to be climbing up out of the reddish soil in which they had been buried long ago.

In ancient China, when an emperor died it was believed that he went to another world. So the Chinese buried their kings with the things they might need later on. Early rulers probably had their actual soldiers, servants, and horses buried with them. Later, *images* were put in the tombs instead as substitutes.

Before 1974, no one had ever seen the legendary burial complex of Shih Huang Ti, but there were written descriptions. Around 100 B.C. a Chinese historian wrote, "As soon as Shih became Emperor of Ch'in, he began enormous underground projects. More than 700,000 men constructed an elaborate tomb and dug many pits filled with miniature cities, precious stones, and sculptures."

The discovery of these clay figures in 1974 confirmed archeologists' beliefs that the emperor's tomb was only a small part of a vast burial complex. There were more areas, including a three-acre underground vault holding a huge pottery army of soldiers, royal chariots, and sculpted



horses.

The emperor had been buried with an enormous, life-size replica of his honor guard to convey him into the next world.

Amazingly, no two of the terra-cotta soldiers look alike. The archeologists working on the project have a theory about why: "We believe the emperor ordered the artists to model realistic portraits of each warrior so the same soldiers could continue to guard him after death." Perhaps the guards were happy to pose for the models, out of relief that they were not going to be buried alive themselves! The individual personalities were expressed through the realistically modeled faces, while the bodies are somewhat stylized and appear to be almost identical.

Along with the terra-cotta figures, other sculptures made of gold, jade, bamboo, and bronze were found at the soldiers' feet. Weapons, farm tools, and other objects were discovered in the vault, along with metal swords so well preserved that they were still intact, 22 centuries later.

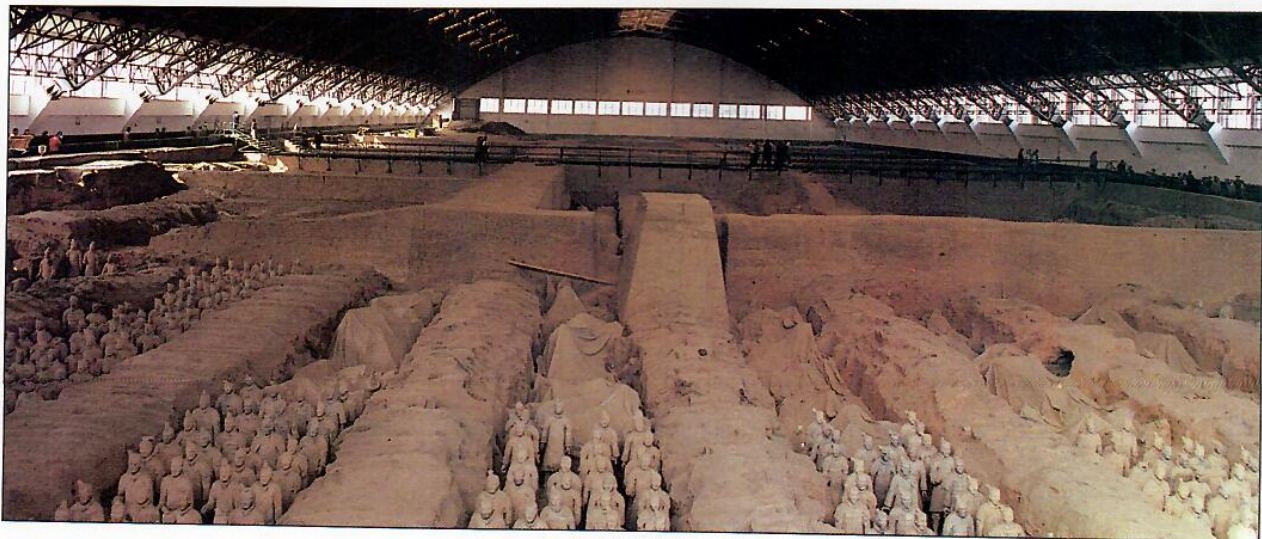
The army fills three acres. So far, only the area shown in black (above) has been excavated. The rest of the soldiers, chariots, and horses are still buried deep under the earth.

Left: Detail of soldier's face. Photo, George Holton/Photo Researchers, Inc.



The bodies of the soldiers with their removable hands and heads are similar. But each of the 6,000 faces, like the one shown on the left, is different.

Photo © Carl Purcell, 1988.



SCHOLASTIC
ART

MASTERPIECE
OF THE
MONTH #4



Terra-cotta army, Burial complex of Emperor Shih Huang Ti, Ch'in Dynasty, Begun c. 210 B.C. Photo Super Stock.

The Chinese Emperor's Pottery Army

ART SPOTLIGHT

AMERICAN ANIMALS:

Horses are a favorite subject of modern American and ancient Chinese sculptors.



Circus Horses

Like the Chinese Han Dynasty horse on page 3, this 19th-century American carousel horse is based on a “real” horse. But just how realistic looking is this animal? Like the Chinese wine vessels on pages 4-5, this horse is primarily *functional*. It’s a toy meant to be ridden by children. And like all the Chinese pieces in this issue, it has been simplified and stylized to draw attention to its *abstract shape*. This wooden sculpture was carved to capture a horse’s *essence* rather than imitate the look of the actual animal.

The focus is on the silhouette, or outline, which emphasizes the horse’s powerful, outstretched legs; its flowing mane; and arched, expressive head. The horse is made up of flowing curves rather than straight lines, so that when we look at it we

can imagine its rounded muscles.

In the 19th century, America’s trade with China increased, and Asian art motifs began to enter into American culture. Perhaps the Pennsylvania artist who created this horse was influenced—consciously or unconsciously—by the design he or she had once seen on a China plate or an inlaid cabinet.

This wooden horse was carved to be part of a carnival merry-go-round.

Carousel Horse, c. 1888. wood. Watercolor painting from the Index of American Design, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Horses of Steel

When contemporary American sculptor Deborah Butterfield first began making her horse sculptures, she did a series in white plaster, then she did some “dark horses” made of mud and sticks. She thought of these horses as portraits of herself, which expressed both her light and her dark sides.

The artist sculpts her life-size horses, like *Palma* (right), out of “found” materials—scrap steel, copper wire, and various metal objects. Like the ancient Chinese artists, Butterfield is not interested in copying reality. Rather, she wants her work to help people to see reality in a different way—to “picture the way the world might appear to another species.”

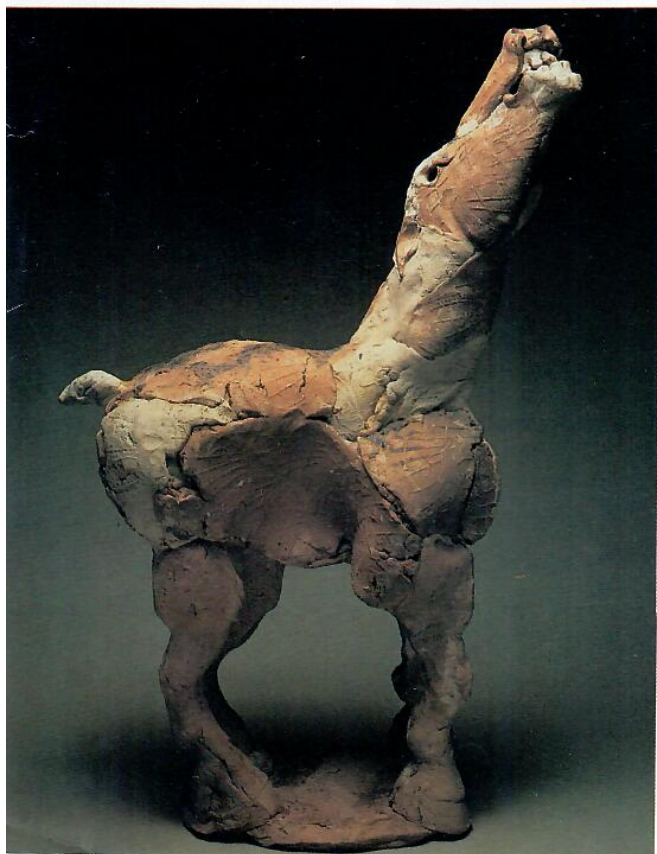
Compare *Palma* to the other two horses on these pages. Why does this one look different? While the other two horses are carved or modeled out of a solid material, Butterfield’s horse incorporates “negative space”—the area inside the sculpture. The horse is built up around a



hollow shell, from within, but somehow the outer structure helps the viewer imagine the emptiness inside. As in Chinese sculpture, the play of opposites—outside and inside, negative space and positive shape—adds to the mystery of this work.

This contemporary horse is made from steel, copper wire, and slate.

Deborah Butterfield, b. 1949.
Palma, 1990. Steel. Photo courtesy of the Edward Thorp Gallery, N.Y., NY.



Horse Laugh

Does this clay horse (left), modeled by contemporary American sculptor Jim Leedy, have much in common with the elegant Chinese animal sculptures we’ve seen earlier in this issue? Why do you think this work is called *Whimmy*?

Jim Leedy has always been fascinated by early Chinese pottery as well as by the bronze animal sculptures made in the Shang period (see pages 4-5). Like Chinese artists, Leedy has covered his horse sculpture with

marks and figures, creating a realistic object decorated with an abstract design.

Also like the Chinese, Leedy has stylized his horse’s shape. But *Whimmy* is a very contemporary animal. Instead of flying gracefully through the air, Leedy’s horse stands heavily on thick, stylized legs, topped off by a short neck, a long head, and a stumpy little tail. Apparently, the ancient Chinese artists tended to idealize nature while this modern artist sees more of nature’s dark side.

And like the prehistoric artists whose sculptures have inspired him, Jim Leedy has left his own personal mark on his work. Look at the surface closely and you can almost see the artist’s hands shaping the clay.

This prehistoric, ancient-looking clay horse was created in the 1980s.

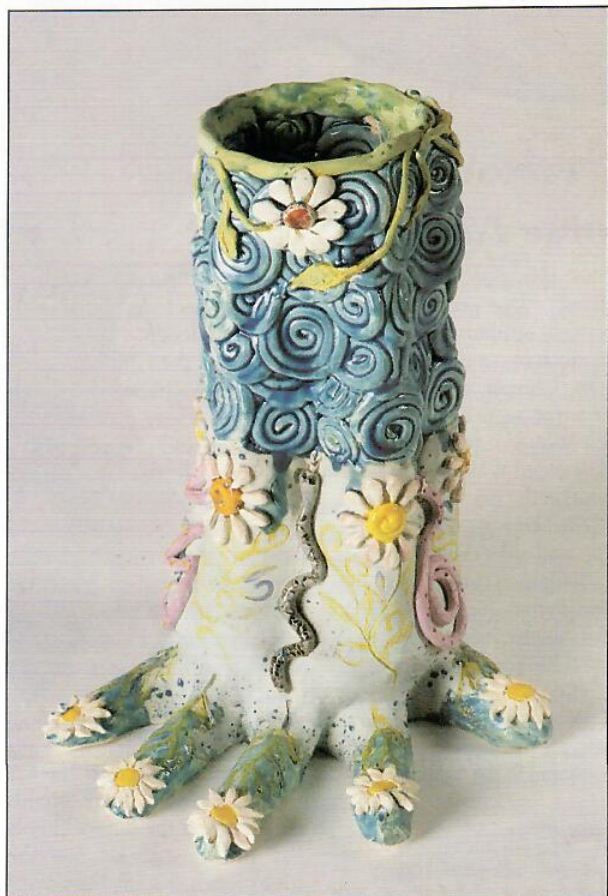
Jim Leedy, *Whimmy*, 1981.
Terra cotta and porcelain. Courtesy, Leedy-Voukos Gallery, Kansas City.
Photo, Al Surratt.



Maria Capolongo: SCULPTING NATURAL FORMS



Nature is the theme of the unusual ceramic pot below, but have you ever seen nature presented in quite this way? This Scholastic Art Award-winning sculpture was created last year by 15-year-old Maria Capolongo of Mahar Regional High School in New Salem, Massachusetts. Maria says she is “definitely going to be an artist, there’s no doubt in my mind.” When she’s not creating art, she plays two instruments, is on the student council, and participates in several sports.



■ What got you interested in art?

A lot of things. I’ve been drawing, painting, and sculpting since I can remember and both my parents are artists. My dad works as a designer. He’s also a cartoonist and a painter. My mother paints portraits and landscapes. I guess you could say I was born into a world of art.

■ How did you come to do this ceramic sculpture?

It was a class assignment. My art teacher wanted us to create a pot. Part had to be made using the coil method and part had to be slab—using flat clay.

Although I originally created my sculpture to be a pot, recently my mother put flowers in it. So I guess my pot is now a vase.

■ Where did you get the idea for your pot?

I like my art to be totally original. When I paint, I don’t paint like everyone else. I love modern painting because it’s not traditional. I think the same ab-

stract ideas and shapes can also be expressed in clay.

For this project, everything I did came right out of my head. My goal was to create something totally different, so instead of making the bottom of the pot flat, I made the bottom into a hand. I also indented the sides of the base so it would be shaped like a star, not the usual cylinder. Then I put a lot of flowers on it like daisies and things. I love the shape and color of daisies.

■ How did you actually begin?

First, I started by making the base into a hand. Then I added the slab part of the pot onto the hand, and I indented the sides.

For the top half of the pot, I invented my own coil method. I rolled out strips of clay and coiled each one up. I made about 40 small coils. Then I stuck and molded the coils together. I smoothed out the inside with slip so there would not be any holes or gaps showing through the sides.

I like working in three dimensions. You can only look at a painting one way, but you look at a sculpture from all different angles.

■ **Then how did you proceed?**

After I built the pot, I wanted to put a design on it. There are three-dimensional daisies on each finger, where the fingernail would be. Then I made stems that ran down the fingers, so it looked like the flower was growing on the finger. I put daisies about a third of the way up the pot where the clay stuck out. In the indents, I put snakes.

The reason I used snakes is because this pot has an environmental theme. Since there were flowers all over it, and the bottom represented a person, I decided I wanted to add animals. The only creatures I could fit in these indented valleys were snakes. I like snakes anyway, so I was happy to put them in there.

The last thing I did was to put a ring of daisies, kind of like a chain, at the top of the pot. I wanted the daisies to look like a vine, then have the flowers and leaves grow from it.

■ **Did you glaze and fire your sculpture?**

Yes. I used a very elaborate color scheme but when I fired the pot, none of the colors came out the way I wanted at all. I was hoping the designs would pop out, and the greens would be brighter. Instead, the colors were more neutral than I wanted. They weren't what I expected, but they grew on me. Now I like them. That's the trickiest thing about glazing. Colors look one way in the book, but they come out another way.

■ **How long did it take you to finish the sculpture?**

I must have worked on the pot



at least two hours a day for a month. I'd work on it for 45 minutes during class time, then I'd come back for an extra hour.

■ **Have you done other sculptures or ceramic pieces?**

Yes. I'm now working on a sculpture. It's not a class assignment; I'm doing it on my own. The sculpture is a bust with a head, a neck, and eye sockets. But the sockets won't have eyes in them. And instead of a traditional bust with one face, I'm going to place faces all over the head. The final look will be a big head with thirty different faces on it. The idea came to me one day and I'd like to try it.

■ **What do you like about working with clay?**

I like the feel of clay. It's more physically appealing to me than drawing and painting and I like working in three dimensions. You can only look at a painting one way, but you look at a sculpture from different angles. There are more surprises for the viewer.

■ **What does art mean to you?**

Everyone comes to this earth to do something. I believe I was born to be an artist. I'm here to give my ideas and my creativity. It's what I enjoy the most and what I think I'm the best at. I love doing it. I think I can actually make a career out of this.

We select our Artist of the Month from among Scholastic Art Award winners. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules books. *Scholastic Art* magazine does not have a separate competition.



SCULPTING AN ANIMAL SPIRIT

Transform an ordinary pet into a highly stylized work of art.

Materials

- White casting plaster
- Containers for molds (paper milk/orange juice containers—all sizes)
- Strong container for mixing plaster
- Electric beater or whisk
- Spatula
- Plastic gloves/dust mask
- Carving utensils (table knife, spoon, putty knife)
- Modeling tools (sharp nails, hard wooden sticks, sculpture or pottery tools)
- Soft bristle brushes
- School pencils
- Newspapers
- Paint to add patina to the surface (“ages” the surface)

The Chinese animal sculptures you saw on pages 4-5 were originally used in religious rituals. They held the food and wine that the ancient Chinese sacrificed to the gods they most respected—their ancestors.

The shapes of these vessels were simplified and stylized to make them more functional. And their surfaces were covered with inscriptions about the ancestor (perhaps a grandfather, a great-aunt, or a parent).

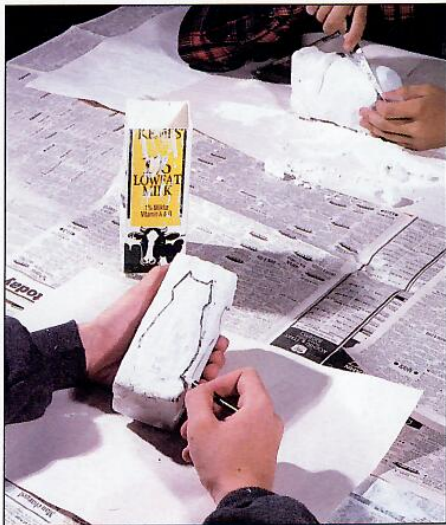
In this workshop, you’ll take an animal you see every day—a cat—simplify and stylize its form, and decorate its surface with an interesting pattern.

Starting Out

Step 1. Find/bring in photos of cats in closed, tight compositions (magazines, encyclopedias, and library books). Collect several sizes of paper milk cartons. Mix plaster (following the manufacturer's instructions) and fill containers. Allow five days drying time.

Step 2.

Choose one or two cat photos that will work with your plaster block. Using the photo as a guide, draw a light outline on the block. You will have to



simplify and stylize parts to achieve a tight and compressed composition. Avoid thin pieces that project out. The tail, legs, and head should sit close to the body.

Step 3.

Slowly begin to carve off small pieces. Work on all sides of the sculpture. Turn the sculpture frequently so no one side is completely finished while the others are half-finished. Block out the general shape of the cat; round the corners to avoid having the sculpture look too square or rectangular. Use a modeling tool to further define the form. While carving, refer to the photograph and constantly look at all four sides. Consider your work a *sculpture of a cat* rather than a photographic representation of a cat. You may wish to add surface texture, emphasize facial expression, or add low relief whiskers. Color may be added, then rubbed off the surface into the incised areas.



Wearing protective masks, mix plaster in paper milk cartons. (Plastic cartons will delay drying.)

Some Solutions

Consider the format of your sculpture. Will your work be horizontal, square, or vertical? What features will you emphasize to capture the essence of a cat? How will you show grace, sleekness, curiosity? Will you distort or exaggerate parts of your animal? Will your sculpture have a focal point (the face, eyes, tail)? You'll be carving a geometric block to create organic (rounded) shapes.

Your sculpture should have more than one "good" side. What kind of texture will it have—smooth, rough, shiny, dull? If you add a surface design, will it be incised (cut in) or raised? Will your pattern be linear, repeated, or overall (cover all areas)?



Prepared by Ned J. Nesti Jr., Morrison (IL) High School.
Photos by Larry Gregory.

ARTS ALIVE

Can you find ancient Chinese works in this issue that remind you of these two contemporary sculptures?



Backs

Compare the sculpture above, *Backs* by Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz (Abba-CAN-owicz), to the pottery soldiers on pages 6-9. Both works contain a number of life-size figures; both seem to repeat the same human form over and over and, in both works, each individual figure is different. The Chinese army was created centuries ago; *Backs* was made in the 1980s. But both sculptures have the same kind of

timeless, prehistoric feeling.

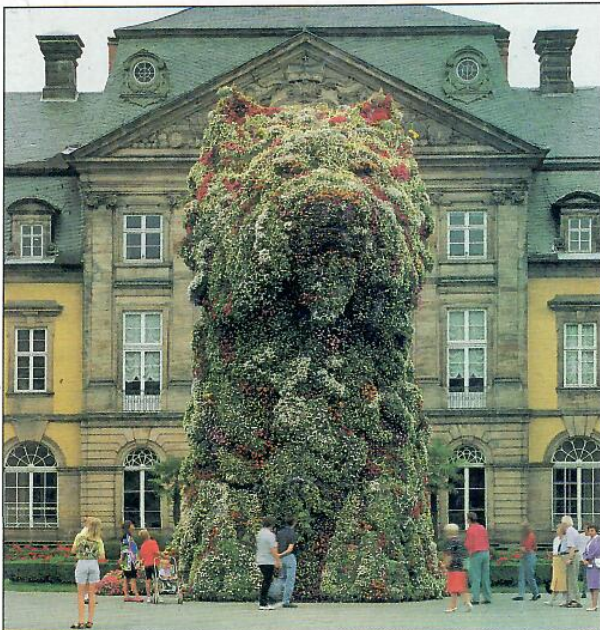
Magdalena Abakanowicz was born in Poland before World War II and grew up while her country was occupied by German troops. Many of the grim sights she witnessed are reflected in haunting sculptures like *Backs*, made up of 80 headless, handless, legless, hollow burlap shells cast from a single mold.

Abakanowicz says, "At first I made six backs, but then I saw I

What is the subject of the large sculpture shown above? Does reading the title help?

Magdalena Abakanowicz b. 1930. *Backs*, 1978-1982. Private Collection.

needed 80 to show a crowd, a tribe, a herd, like animals. Yet within that tribe each one is different. I wanted to show that we seek comfort in a group, but each of us is very much alone."



Animals of Today

Is the enormous animal shown on the left a flowering bush, a monument, or a sculpture?

The answer to this question is, all of the above. *Puppy*, a giant sculpture made of living flowers and built in front of a German palace, was created by American artist Jeff Koons. *Puppy* was made by planting flowers in soil packed into a steel framework.

Do you think this sculpture

(*Puppy* needs to be watered every day) was created as a joke, or as a serious work of art? Jeff Koons has done other overly "cute" animal sculptures—giant bunny rabbits, carved bears, rows of puppies. Perhaps Koons is comparing *Puppy* to famous European landscape art, the elaborate flower shows, or the growing popularity in Europe of American-style theme parks.

Compare *Puppy* (left) with the Chinese animal sculptures you've seen in this issue.

Jeff Koons b. 1961. *Puppy*, 1992. Steel, flowers, soil. 40' high. Private collection.