

## OBJECT of the month

May 2022

### BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to the Dayton Art Institute's 'Object of the Month presentation'. My name is Rick and I'm a Museum Guide. I'd like to share with you a unique piece of art that I discovered recently on a visit to the museum, *Door with Flayed Lion* in Gallery 114 and made by an unknown artist somewhere between 1800 and 1900.

What might have this been made from? What is your overall impression of the work? This door, made of wood, is painted with a red-orange background and shows a lion skin hanging down from the top. The lion, in typical Buddhist style, is shown with its mouth wide open and baring teeth as though it was roaring.

You may notice the lion's skin to be a greenish hue with "v" shaped waves in orange, red and yellow going down its back and legs, which may suggest inner parts of the flayed animal. Its mane consists of about eleven orange right directional curls around the head and outlined in black. We can only see the lion's left eye as it is facing to the right of the torso. Sharply pointed lower teeth are visible within the lion's mouth with only one top tooth showing. All four paws are visible each with five toes.

The lion is a common motif in Tibetan Buddhism and the flayed skin of humans, animals and other beings are often depicted. The flayed animal skin speaks to the disciplined effort of practitioners in Esoteric Buddhism to overcome ignorance and attachment to the body. Bearing a fierce expression, the lion is a symbol of conquering selfish desires.

If you stand back and look at it from a distance, you may notice the two large hinges painted on its surface, similar to strap hinges but there's little indication about how the door may have actually been fastened. Painted in the same greenish hue as the lion's skin, they are decorated with elaborate dark curled designs.



# DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

Interestingly, each hinge emerges from opposite directions: the top one comes from the left of the door and the bottom one from the right side. Why might the artist have painted them this way? Was there perhaps a companion or a matching door meant to be displayed side-by-side?

Because of its small size, the door would not have been large enough for a regular sized portal but may have been one of a pair of doors, perhaps to an esoteric shrine. Tibetan temples often have peripheral shrines, particularly shrines for protective deities, and it is likely that this door was related to one of those shrines.

I hope you will visit the museum soon and see this magnificent Tibetan painted door. You can find it in our Tibetan Art Gallery, of our Patterson-Kettering Wing of Asian Art, Gallery 114. Thank you.

## END TRANSCRIPT

Click [here](#) to access the video presentation.

## FEATURED ARTWORKS\*

Artist unidentified (China for Tibet), *Carpet of Flayed Elephant*, about 19th century, wool, cotton and dye. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. Lent by Anthony d'Offay, photograph © Rossi & Rossi

Artist unidentified (Tibetan), *Flayed Man Rug*, mid-20th century, hand-woven wool. Private collection via [tumblr.com](#)

Artist unidentified (Tibetan), *Flayed Female Deity Carpet*, mid-19th century. Private collection via [bonhams.com](#)

Artist unidentified (Nepalese), *Snow Lion*, 1815, bronze. Dallas Museum of Art, TX. Gift of David T. Owsley via the Alvin and Lucy Owsley Foundation, 1997.139.1

Artist unidentified (Nepalese), *Mahalakshmi Riding Her Lion*, about 1750, opaque watercolor on paper. San Diego Museum of Art, CA. Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, 1990.166

Artist unidentified (Tibetan), *Yogambara*, 15th century, gilt metal with turquoise inlay. Private collection via [himalayanbuddhistart.wordpress.com](#)

## MEDIA CREDITS\*

[themet.org](#)

[tumblr.com](#)

[bonhams.com](#)

[dma.org](#)

[sdmart.org](#)

[himalayanbuddhistart.wordpress.com](#)

[intothemiddlekingdom.wordpress.com](#)

[flickr.com](#)

**\*Images used for educational purposes only**

**QUESTIONS?**

[edu@daytonart.org](mailto:edu@daytonart.org)