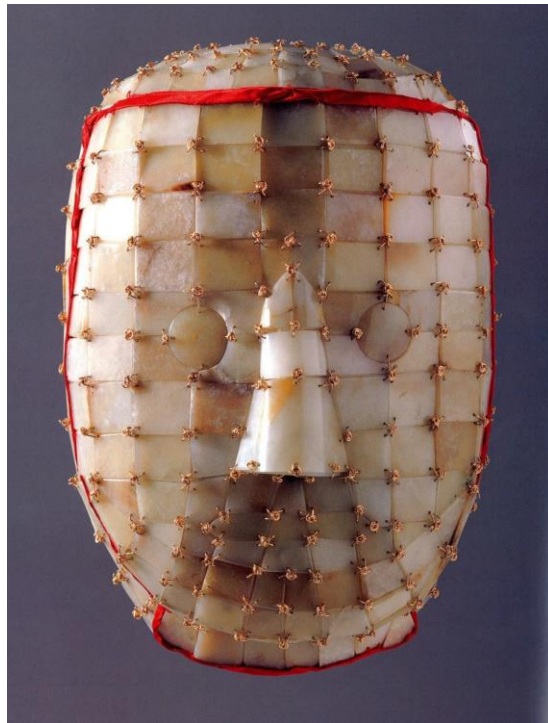


For Immediate Release

China Institute Gallery  
Presents  
***Dreams of the Kings: A Jade Suit for Eternity***  
***Treasures of the Han Dynasty from Xuzhou***  
May 25 – November 12, 2017



Part of the Jade Suit of the King of Chu Kingdom (ca. 175 BCE)  
Photo courtesy of Xuzhou Museum

NEW YORK – A rare shroud of precious stones designed to protect and glorify a king in the afterlife will be on view at China Institute Gallery’s new exhibition, ***Dreams of the Kings: A Jade Suit for Eternity, Treasures of the Han Dynasty from Xuzhou*** from May 25 – November 12, 2017. More than 76 objects originating from royal tombs dating from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 8 CE) will be exhibited in the U.S. for the first time. Ranging from terracotta performers to carved stone animal sculptures, the objects are extraordinary testimony to customs and beliefs surrounding life and death during the Western Han Dynasty, one of China’s golden eras. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated bilingual catalogue.

In 201 BCE, the first emperor of the Han Dynasty knighted his younger brother as the first king of the Chu Kingdom, which was centered in Peng Cheng, today’s Xuzhou, in northern Jiangsu Province. Ruling under the emperor’s protection, and given special exemption from imperial taxes,

elites in this Kingdom enjoyed a lavish lifestyle. Twelve generations of kings lived, died, and were buried in sumptuous tombs carved into the nearby rocky hills. Although many of the tombs were looted over the years, numerous treasures were discovered in later excavations testifying to the Chu kings' affluence as well as their beliefs in immortality and the afterlife. One of the most stunning finds was an elaborate jade burial suit, assembled from thousands of pieces of jade, the precious stone adored by the Chinese since the Neolithic period as an auspicious material that could ensure immortality.

*Dreams of the Kings: A Jade Suit for Eternity, Treasures of the Han Dynasty from Xuzhou* is curated by Li Yinde, Director Emeritus of the Xuzhou Museum, and directed by Willow Weilan Hai, Director of China Institute Gallery. The exhibition will travel to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri, from December 2017 – April 2018.

"People during the Han Dynasty regarded death as birth and longed for immortality," said Willow Weilan Hai, Director, China Institute Gallery. "To prepare for the afterlife, they constructed their tombs to be eternal residences. The exhibition is a rare window into the extraordinarily accomplished Han civilization through these remarkable objects of the highest artistry. We are most grateful to the Xuzhou Museum."

Together with Rome, the Western Han capital, Chang'an in present day Shaanxi Province, were the two largest cities in the ancient world. Poetry, literature and philosophy developed and flourished during the Western Han Dynasty. Among the accomplishments of the Chinese people during the Han Dynasty were the developments of paper, sundials, and astronomical instruments. Today, the majority of the population in China is descended from the Han people, the single largest ethnic group in the world.

## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

*Dreams of the Kings: A Jade Suit for Eternity, Treasures of the Han Dynasty from Xuzhou* is divided into four sections.

***The King's Guards*** will explore the sculptures of the guardians of the kings, including soldiers and a warrior on horseback that were made to protect the kings in their afterlife. The Chu Kingdom was known for their brave and skillful cavalry troops. One earthenware figure of a warrior on horseback was excavated from a pit with about 2,000 terracotta warriors at Shizishan, located about 400 meters away from the tomb of the king. The horse has the inscription "*feiji*" relating to the fierceness and swiftness of the Chu Kingdom's cavalry troops.

***Dreams of Eternity*** will focus on the jade burial suit, which fully covers the body with jade tiles. The suit was excavated in 1994–95 in Peng Cheng and consists of 4,248 tiles, more than any other jade suit discovered to date. One of the earliest ever made (ca. 175 BCE), it is bound with a rare gold thread, a signifier of the highest rank. According to the excavation records of tombs from the Chu Kingdom in Western Han Dynasty, only kings and queens of Chu used jade suits with gold thread for their afterlife. Silver and copper thread were used for those of lesser rank. The jade

used in the suit in the exhibition is known as Khotan, one of the most precious forms of the gemstone.

Other objects found near the kings in their tombs include a charming stone sculpture of a leopard. It was common practice for Western Han emperors and kings to raise and train leopards and tigers to assist in hunting. An earthenware figurine of a dancer may be a vivid portrayal of the performers in the palace of the Chu Kingdom, designed to entertain the king during his afterlife.

***Rapt by Jade*** will survey the importance of jade during the Han Dynasty. An intricately carved jade pendant with an S-shaped dragon has a hole drilled below the dragon's eye may have been used to tie the piece on the body as a form of jewelry to protect its owner. During the Han Dynasty, jade was also ground into a powder to be used as medicine.

***Life in the Afterlife*** will focus on the many everyday objects used in the afterlife ranging from bronze vessels and bathing objects to belt buckles.

### **Exhibition Publication**

The exhibition's 216-page catalogue in English and Chinese is edited by Willow Weilan Hai, Director of China Institute Gallery. It will include several essays by Li Yinde, Director Emeritus and Senior Researcher, Xuzhou Museum; Colin Mackenzie, Senior Curator of East Asian Art, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; and Wang Zijin, Professor of Beijing People's University.

### **Related Han Dynasty Exhibitions**

The Han Dynasty is experiencing a renaissance in 2017. Two related U.S. exhibitions are on view concurrently with the exhibition at China Institute Gallery: *Tomb Treasures: New Discoveries from China's Han Dynasty* at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco is on view from February 17 – May 28, 2017. *Age of Empires: Chinese Art of the Qin & Han Dynasties (221 B.C. – A.D. 220)* will be exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York from April 3 – July 16, 2017.

### **EXHIBITION-RELATED PROGRAMS**

#### **Curator's Lecture: Discovering Shizishan: Archaeology in the Chu King's Mausoleum**

Thursday, May 25, 2017, 6:30-8 p.m.

\$15 Non-Members/ \$10 Members/ Free for Friends of the Gallery

Li Yinde, Director Emeritus of the Xuzhou Museum, a renowned archaeologist, will share his experience excavating the Chu King's Mausoleum in Shizishan (Lion Mountain) and discuss Chu works of art. The lecture will be in Chinese with live English interpretation.

#### **Lecture: Dreaming of Kings in the Han Dynasty**

Wednesday, June 7, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

\$10 Non-Member/ Free for Members

Author and Professor Dr. Nancy S. Steinhardt will explore the architecture and decoration of Han dynasty tombs in the context of objects from the exhibition.

### **Ben Wang Lecture Series: Southeast the Peacocks Fly**

Thursdays, June 15 and 22, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

\$15 Non-Members/ \$10 Members (each lecture)

\$25 Non-Members/ \$15 Members (for the series)

In this two-session series, China Institute Senior Lecturer Ben Wang will explore the epic narrative poem *Southeast the Peacocks Fly*, written by an anonymous poet at the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty.

### **Lecture Series on Han Dynasty History and Culture**

October 2017

\$15 Non-Members/ \$10 Members [each lecture]

#### **First Session –Sima Qian and Shiji: Records of the Grand Historian**

Yu Renqiu, Professor of History and Director of the Asian Studies Program at Purchase College, State University of New York, will introduce this monumental book on ancient China written by Sima Qian (ca. 145 –90 BCE).

For more information and registration, please visit [www.chinainstitute.org](http://www.chinainstitute.org), or contact 212-744-8181.

### **Upcoming Exhibition at China Institute Gallery**

#### **Art of the Mountain: Through the Chinese Photographer's Lens**

February 8 – December 2, 2018

Mountains, in Chinese legends, are the pillars that hold up the sky. Mountains were seen as places that nurture life. Their veneration took the form of rituals, retreat from social society, and aesthetic appreciation through the art of their vast beauty – some of the many ways that nature played and continues to play a defining role in Chinese culture. The exhibition, consisting of three sections with over 70 photographs by more than 20 contemporary photographers, will present the geography, history, culture, life, and art that is associated with or derived from mountains. *The Lofty Mountains: The Famous Mountains of China* will introduce the geography, history, legends, and cultures that are associated with famous Chinese mountains; *The Pure Sound of Landscape: The Mountains and Chinese Landscape Aesthetic* will introduce the renowned Chinese landscape painting aesthetic and how it influenced contemporary photography; and *The New Landscape Photography* will showcase artists using photography and post-photographic visual effects to express their thoughts on the role of mountains in society.

### **China Institute's Move to Lower Manhattan**

China Institute, the nation's oldest and most highly recognized educational institution devoted solely to Chinese culture, moved from the Upper East Side to lower Manhattan last year. The 50,000 square foot space at 100 Washington Street houses the Institute's new 3,000 square foot gallery, library, classrooms, and offices.

### **About China Institute**

China Institute advances a deeper understanding of China through programs in education, culture, business, and art in the belief that cross-cultural understanding strengthens our global community.

In 2016, China Institute celebrated both its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China Institute Gallery. Founded in 1926 by a group of American and Chinese educators, China Institute in America is the oldest bicultural non-profit organization in the U.S. to focus exclusively on China. The organization promotes the appreciation of Chinese heritage and provides the historical context for understanding contemporary China. Programs, activities, courses, and seminars are offered on the visual and performing arts, culture, history, music, philosophy, language, and literature for the general public, children, and teachers, as well as for business.

### **About China Institute Gallery**

China Institute Gallery, established in 1966, is distinct among the museums of New York City. It was the first in the United States to showcase Chinese art exclusively on a regular basis. Today, China Institute Gallery is New York's only non-commercial exhibition space solely dedicated to Chinese art and is known for its innovative thematic and scholarly exhibitions, publications, and related art education programs.

China Institute is located at 100 Washington Street, New York, NY 10006, with a temporary entrance at 40 Rector Street. During exhibitions, China Institute Gallery is open Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students, free for members and children under 16, and free on Thursdays from 5 to 8 p.m. For more information, call 212-744-8181 or visit [chinainstitute.org](http://chinainstitute.org), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#).

### **About the Xuzhou Museum**

The Xuzhou Museum, established in 1959, is located at the northern foot of Yunlongshan (Cloudy Dragon Mountain) on the old site of the temporary palace used by the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95) during his southern inspection tours. Expanded three times over the years, the museum now consists of four parts: the main exhibition hall; the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) quarry site; the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220) mausoleum of the King of Pengcheng in Tushan (Soil Mountain); and the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) temporary palace of Gaozong, the Qianlong emperor, and its corridor of steles. The museum's rich collection of artwork spans the Neolithic period to the last imperial dynasties of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911), and extends to the contemporary period. Its outstanding collection of Han dynasty artifacts uniquely illustrates the characteristic Han culture of Xuzhou.

###

### **Press Contact:**

Nicole Straus Public Relations

Nicole Straus, 631-369-2188, 917-744-1040, [nicole@nicolestrausr.com](mailto:nicole@nicolestrausr.com)

Margery Newman, 212-475-0252, [MargeryNewman@aol.com](mailto:MargeryNewman@aol.com)