

INDIAN AND HIMALAYAN SCULPTURE

JOHN SIUDMAK
ASIAN ART



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INCLUDING PROPERTY FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE LATE SIMON DIGBY
AND PRIVATE COLLECTION, SINGAPORE

EXHIBITION

HELD AT

C. G. Boerner Gallery
23 East 73rd Street
New York, NY 10021
Tel. 212 772 7330

Thursday 10 March 2016
Saturday 19 March 2016
10 am - 6 pm

CATALOGUE NO. 5

FRONT COVER: NO. 32
BACK COVER: NO. 34

JOHN SIUDMAK
Flat 3, 3 Sydney Street
London SW3 6pU
tel. + 44 (0) 20 7349 9316
mob. + 44 (0) 7918 730 936
email. john@johnsiudmak.com
www.johnsiudmak.com

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition offers a wide range of objects and sculptures, especially those fashioned in clay, of which there are eight. Mostly they are small, often of miniature size, but of great rarity and beauty. The rhinoceros depicted on the sealing produced from a steatite seal has been reproduced very accurately and reveals a close interest in nature in a great urban centre like Mohenjo Daro. The two female fragmentary busts from Buxar, are very exaggerated in comparison. The two fragmentary plaques from Sugh in Haryana are very sophisticated, and represent a barely known school. The skill of the Chandraketgarh artist is evident in the Sri Lakshmi plaque, the Yakshi fanned by attendant, the detached head of a Rakshasa from a rattle, the complete rattle, and the abduction scene. The terracottas being offered here were acquired in the late 1980s or early 1990s when a large quantity came on the market. The gold ear ornaments were for actual use, though the large crystal one may have had only a ritual use.

Moving on to Tibet there is an iron *phur-pa*, a ritual dagger from Gyantse monastery, two *tokshas* and various gilded objects. From the other side of the Himalayas in Kashmir is a remarkable four-sided Vishnu shrine with four identical standing Vishnu figures finely carved from grey chlorite. Three or four-headed versions of the god are attested to in sculpture, but this is a unique depiction in good condition. Two miniature chessmen in stone from Kashmir, of which one is published, are also of great rarity. There are two sculptures from Mathura, one the head of a female attendant, the other a composite square panel with a seated triton, whose coils are swallowed by a pair of confronting *makaras*.

There are three fine Pala bronze pieces, one a small figure of Sri Lakshmi from a Vishnu shrine, notable for its very fine silver inlay, the second, a seated Buddha in Kurkihar style, and the third a bronze seated Maitreya, which has been gilded, a rare find. Finally, there is a serene seated silvery bronze Buddha in the style of Anuradhapura,

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1

**INDUS VALLEY
TERRACOTTA SEALING**

PROBABLY MOHENJO DARO
CA. 1800-1500 B.C.
LENGTH: 3.8 CM, 1½ IN
HEIGHT: 1.5 CM, 5⁄8 IN
DEPTH .3 CM, 1⁄8 IN

The rectangular tablet is stamped on both sides with the same scene of a rhinoceros standing to the right facing two bracketed pictograms, coated with a red slip.

Cf. Marchall, J. 1931, pl. CXVI, figs. 10, 11 and 13 for three similar sealings, which were found in three different locations at Mohenjo Daro. Acquired early 1990's.

2

REDDISH-BROWN RINGSTONE

MAURYAN PERIOD, PROBABLY TAXILA
CA. THIRD CENTURY B.C.
DIAMETER: 8.3 CM, 3¼ IN
DEPTH: 1.8 CM, 5⁄8 IN
APERTURE 2.5 CM, 1 IN

The ringstone is of standard design. The sloping sides of the aperture are carved in low relief with four identical standing nude mother goddesses, framed by honeysuckle palmettes of plain budding form alternating with those incorporating fan-shaped blossoms. The top carved with a narrow band of nine lizards or crocodiles in anti-clockwise procession, and an outer band of cross and bar motifs between narrow twisted cable pattern stripes.

This ringstone compares with another example with figures of larger scale published in Siudmak, 2014, cat no.4 with three mother goddesses alternating with candalabra-like trees. The two versions of the Western Classical honeysuckle motif seen in the present example are the more commonly encountered forms. This auspicious motif is ubiquitous in early Indian art and architecture, and merges with the Indian lotus. A lizard or crocodile is reported by Gupta 1980, on a fragment of a ringstone, pl.34c. He notes the association of the reptile with precursors of the Shakti cult.

The ringstone is a fine example of its type, which has been found at many locations in historical north India, and which was probably produced within a narrow time frame. Usually carved from a grey or reddish soft stone, they are characterised by their jewel-like quality. Their exact function is unknown, but most scholars have connected them to a fertility cult.

