

## *Moving Buddha: Imagining Sculpture in China*

**18.00 - 19.00, Friday 8 November 2013**

Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre, The Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House,  
Strand WC2R 0RN London

Followed by a Reception in the Entrance Hall

**Speaker:** Professor Stanley Abe, Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies, Duke University



Modern reproductions of Buddhist sculpture for sale at an antiques market in Beijing. Photo: Judith Farquhar

Sculpture as we know it did not exist in China. Stone stele and figural objects were produced in abundance for commemorative and religious functions. But these objects were not collected and displayed as sculpture. My lecture will discuss the emergence of Chinese sculpture as two parallel developments. In China from as early as the eighteenth century ancient Buddhist and Daoist images were preserved as antiquities. By the mid-nineteenth century small Buddhist and Daoist images were available in the Chinese antiquities market and were being acquired by private collectors. Foreign residents and visitors to China were unaware of such antiquities and as late as 1904 writers on Chinese art could declare that China had no tradition of monumental sculpture. It was only in 1906 that Okakura Kakuzo acquired the first significant group of Buddhist and Daoist images for a foreign collection, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. These were imagined as sculpture in the context of the fine art museum. Interestingly, the majority of Chinese images known from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are not genuinely ancient. Many are pious copies based on ancient styles; others are old but restored at a later date, many in the Ming dynasty. Other images are modern works, new votive works as well as forgeries for profit. The whole range of objects from old and rare antiquities to pious copies and restored works to modern productions were not easily distinguishable. Some were imagined as religious objects, some as antiquities, and others as sculpture.

**Stanley Abe** is Associate Professor in the Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies, Duke University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, and has been a Visiting Fellow at King's College, Cambridge University. His publications include essays on Buddhist practice in a Northern Wei dynasty Dunhuang cave temple, Greek influence on Buddhist art, and the collecting of Chinese sculpture. His book *Ordinary Images* (2002), a study of Chinese Buddhist and Daoist images from the second to the sixth centuries C.E., was the recipient of the 2004 Shimada Prize for distinguished scholarship in the history of East Asian art.

Organised by: Professor David Park (The Courtauld Institute)

**Ticket/entry details:** Open to all, free admission: no booking required