



JANUARY 2011

A Chinese Birthday Celebration

Chinese wall hanging

Guo Ziyi and a Tableful of Honors



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and see Chinese
sculpture and ceramics
in the gallery of
Asian art.

Detail, wall hanging: *Guo Ziyi and A Tableful of Honors*. 1870-1911. China. Silk ground, silk and metallic-wrapped embroidery threads, cotton lining. 121 x 85¾ inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Bequest of Eleanor DeForest Boteler, BMA 1956.231

More than 1200 years ago in China, an old man named Guo Ziyi celebrated his 80th birthday. In earlier years he had been a daring commander of hundreds of thousands of soldiers who fought to protect the Chinese people from rebels and invaders. Now, having seen much bloodshed and sorrow in his long life, General Guo Ziyi wanted nothing more than a few years of peace and happiness.

This wall hanging, made of bright red silk, invites you to the General's 80th-birthday celebration. Guo Ziyi and members of his family, all embroidered with beautifully colored thread, gather under a grand pavilion to receive their guests.

Imagine arriving at the outer gate (at the bottom of the picture) where two guards stand duty. To your right a young gentleman and his servant appear on a white spotted horse. To your left a woman makes her way toward the gate in a wheelchair. Two fearsome stone lions on pedestals guard the entrance to the second gate as yellow flags flap in the breeze overhead. As you pass into the main court, you hear the sweet sound of flutes coming from the musicians' pavilions on either side. Beautiful women entertain the General with graceful dances as you wait your turn to bow before Guo Ziyi and extend birthday greetings.

Along both sides of the border, guests bear birthday gifts of coral, rocks, and even a rhinoceros horn. At the lower edge, two white cranes, symbols of long life, fly above the waves of the sea.

CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Compare the placement of figures on this wall hanging with the way people squeeze together in group snapshots at large birthday parties. How has the maker of this wall hanging allowed you to see each figure clearly? How do the pavilions and gates organize the figures so that they don't appear randomly scattered about? Create a large group picture that places each person in a unified setting while allowing each to be seen independently.

For more detailed information and close-up views of this wall hanging, visit the BMA's interactive microsite, In Praise of the Prince of Fenyang at <http://www.artbma.org/interact/pachyderm/fenyangbma>

PRINT THE IMAGES ON PAGE 2 AND 3 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.

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Wall hanging. *Guo Ziyi and A Tableful of Honors.*

1870-1911. China. Silk ground, silk and metallic-wrapped embroidery threads, cotton lining. 121 x 85¾ inches.
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