



## Precious Rarities: Ming and Qing Rhinoceros Horn Carvings in the Shanghai Museum

**Date:** Since 2025-05-30

**Location:** The Shanghai Museum on People's Square, Exhibition Gallery (3F)

**Organizers:** The Shanghai Museum

### Overview

Hailed in ancient texts as "the beauty of the southern land" and "originating from the remote Jiude region", rhinoceros horn is renowned for its smooth and delicate texture, serene and lustrous color, and distinctive natural grain. It has long been revered as a material of exceptional craftsmanship. Rhinoceros horn carving in China had already matured by the Han dynasty, evolved further through the Tang and Song periods, and attained its zenith as a unique art form in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Its artistry drew inspiration from and integrated the designs and techniques of gold, jade, lacquer, bamboo, wood, and ivory carvings, resulting in a rich and refined repertoire of themes and patterns. Among these works, rhinoceros horn cups stand as the quintessential form. They not only continue the ancient tradition of crafting libation cups from horn but also embody the values of Chinese craftsmanship: maximizing the

The Shanghai Museum is one of the major public institutions housing Ming and Qing rhinoceros horn carvings. This exhibition presents over a hundred rhinoceros horn artifacts from our collection, complemented by related objects in diverse mediums, to highlight the craftsmanship behind these extraordinary yet lesser-known traditional carvings from various perspectives. Beyond showcasing the resplendent designs and virtuosic mastery of these rare treasures, the exhibition also seeks to offer artistic inspiration and cultural nourishment for contemporary craft practices.

## Highlights



Rhinoceros Horn Cup with Archaistic Pattern and  
*Chi*-dragon Handle



Rhinoceros Horn Cup with Mantis-and-cabbage-  
leaf Design



Lotus-leaf-shaped Rhinoceros Horn Cup with a Hollow Straw Handle and Design Symbolizing Incorruptibility



Rhinoceros Horn Cup with Dragon-flying-through-flowers Design







Rhinoceros Horn Cup with a Scene of the Red Cliff



Rhinoceros Horn Cup with Motifs Symbolizing Immortals





Rhinoceros Horn Cup with a Scene of Visiting Friends with *Qin* (zither)



Rhinoceros Horn Cup with Pines on a Cliff and a Stream



Rhinoceros Horn Cup with a Scene of Boating under the Red Cliff



Rhinoceros Horn Carving of Maitreya and Children



Rhinoceros Horn Cup Featuring Six Dragons



Rhinoceros Horn Carving of an Immortal on a Raft



Rhinoceros Horn Cup with Wavy Clouds and Mythical Sea Creatures



Rhinoceros Horn Cup with Seal Script Inscription





Rhinoceros Horn Square *ding* (vessel) with Flat Legs and Animal-mask Pattern



Rhinoceros Horn Seal with Dragon Knob



Rhinoceros Horn Hairpin with Plum Blossom Design



Rhinoceros Horn Cup with Magnolia Blossom Design



White-glazed Cup with Floral Sprig Design, Dehua ware



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