

**NINA MOINI:** Well, the Year of the Horse has officially begun after yesterday's Lunar New year marked the end of the Year of the Snake. Lunar New Year is a holiday celebrated by many Asian cultures across the world, and each year is tied to a specific zodiac animal, as well as one of five elements.

2026 is the first time in 60 years that we're welcoming the Year of the Fire Horse. To usher in this new era, a new exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Art showcases the significance of the horse across 3,000 years of Chinese art. Joining me now to tell us more is curator Liu Yang. Yang is the chair of Asian Art and curator of Chinese art at Mia. Thanks so much for your time this afternoon, Yang.

**LIU YANG:** Thank you so much for having me.

**NINA MOINI:** I was reading a little bit about you. We actually had an MPR News story from 2011, I believe, when you were first hired on. And over the span of the last 15 years or so, I'm reading, that you have just helped so increase relationships and art from China and in Asia here to Minnesota. How has that experience been for you?

**LIU YANG:** Well, it's a wonderful time working at Mia. This museum is so wonderfully known as one of the best collection museums with the Asian art, particularly Chinese art. So I'm so happy joining this museum, and presented several shows, and contribute to the community.

**NINA MOINI:** Amazing.

**LIU YANG:** Really wonderful experience.

**NINA MOINI:** Yeah, 15 years and so much growth. And at this moment now, tell us a little bit about why you wanted to do a show to mark the start of the Year of the Horse.

**LIU YANG:** Every year, I should do a year of the certain animals. But as you know, that some animals are more popular with the works that are created through history. So, for instance, the dragon was a popular show. I did a show a Year of the Dragon a few years ago, three years ago.

Now it's the horse. Horse has been tremendously popular in Chinese art. So we have enough works to present that. And also, it's a lovely animal, not only loved by people in the East Asia, but I guess all over the world.

**NINA MOINI:** Sure. Tell us what it is about the horse, because there's art, I understand, in the exhibit spanning 3,000 years. Tell us about the horse as a constant symbol, and maybe if it's changed over time. I don't know.

**LIU YANG:** That's true. Yes, horse is recognized by people in the world as symbols of strength, speed, endurance, perhaps also freedom. However, in China, or in East Asian culture, the horse had multiple meanings, symbolic meanings.

So it not only covers the significance that I just mentioned, but historically, it also linked to military power, trade root, migration, and communication, as well as a messenger in the spiritual world or guardian or celestial force.

So that gives us such a rich meaning, and happens that we have a very rich collection that could present to-- in fact, I presented them in the 10 thematic groups, so each with over a dozen of works to illustrate that symbolic meaning.

**NINA MOINI:** And what about the exhibit? I understand there are more than 60 works in this exhibition. Is this something that you spent a lot of time curating and choosing? How are you able to present all of these 60 works?

**LIU YANG:** It's actually-- I thought that I could do a small show with the works in our collection, but it turned out that I find that I ended up with almost 70 works in that show. It's a very rich show. It's a joy to go through our collection, to select works.

Based on the works that we have, I divide them in two thematic groups. So it's a drawing. It's not so difficult to organize this show. The reason is that I threw this-- you mentioned that 15 years of working at Mia, I'm very familiar with the collection. So once we have this project, then I started thinking about what works should be included. And it's not that difficult to selecting works and then to put them into these 10 thematic groups.

**NINA MOINI:** And when you talk about the themes, are those more like feelings, or are they the type of artwork? Because I understand there's anything from paintings to bronze sculptures. What is the range of art that viewers can expect to see?

**LIU YANG:** Well, actually, each theme covers the works in different mediums. There are jades and pottery and ceramic works, bronze, and paintings, and even works in the other different mediums. So the criterion for me to create this 10 thematic themes really based on their symbolic meanings across the history.

For instance, we have horse as a zodiac animals, horse as a steed to the afterlife, horse as sacred median and the martial power, and horse as moral emblem and the imperial symbol, or horse as a martial steed and a hunting alley. So they all kind of are divided based on our collection. I'm sure that we can find more meanings, but this 10 thematic groups are really created based on our collections.

**NINA MOINI:** Amazing. And just lastly, I understand you're doing an event and a lecture tomorrow night around this. Can you give us a preview of what that might be like?

**LIU YANG:** Tomorrow would be a very popular evening. Well, not only my lecture to illuminate the show and to provide more information about each works in the exhibition, but also we have invited local dancing company to come to provide a very special performance.

Some dances were designed particularly for this subject, for horse. There's a horse dancing. So it would be very interesting. I remember that three years ago when we had the Year of the Dragon, we had a managed the same kind of program. It's packed with almost 300 people in the gallery, in the lobby to witness that.

**NINA MOINI:** Amazing. Thank you very much for stopping by *Minnesota Now* and sharing about this beautiful and amazing art, really appreciate your time, Yang.

**LIU YANG:** Thank you so much for interviewing me. Thank you.

**NINA MOINI:** Thank you. That's Liu Yang, creator of the new Mia exhibit titled Year of the Horse-- Hoofbeats through Time. It's on *ViewNow* through August 30, so plenty of time to see. That wraps it up for us on *Minnesota Now*. Join us here again tomorrow as we continue to track these winter storms forecasted for the state. And we'll talk to Minnesota emergency room doctor who was a medical consultant for the pit.