

Large Gilt Bronze Figure of an Immortal

Taoism, a set of beliefs originating in ancient China and containing both religious and philosophical elements, has been the subject of innumerable examples of Chinese art over the millennia. Some of the most popular of these artworks depict the Eight Immortals, former poor



or working-class people who, after being subjected to difficult conditions, were rewarded for their perseverance by the various gods popular at the time. These works highlight the Taoist virtues of compassion, frugality, and humanity, each of which a common religious virtue the world over, and are beautiful artworks. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer a **Large Gilt Bronze Figure of an Immortal** (\$2/3,000) in our January Gallery Auction, which represents a fine example of the Taoist art-making tradition.

The **Large Gilt Bronze Figure of an Immortal** (\$2/3,000) is a sculpture of a Taoist Immortal Li Tieguai, dressed in flowing robes,

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leaning on his crutch. Li Tieguai is depicted as a thin, frail figure, with a long crutch that supports his weight. Beneath his robe, he wears sandals and firmly grips his crutch with both hands to support his weight, while the crutch winds around his right leg and eventually extends behind his back, providing a sort of chair. He has a long, flowing beard connected to an upward twisted mustache, both of which contrasts sharply with his bald head. Li Tieguai's face is defined by a sharp brow line, accentuated by a thin headband and a stoic expression.

Li Tieguai is one of the most popular of the Taoist Eight Immortals and one of the most widely known Chinese mythological figures. As one of the Eight Immortals, Li Tieguai exists somewhere between Western conceptions of deity, folk hero, and saint, and there are a significant number

of shrines dedicated to him throughout China. Similar to Greek mythology, the Eight Immortals are believed to live on a mountain, Mount Penglai, a legendary location supposed to exist somewhere in the sea between China and the Korean peninsula, which is described as a religious utopia.

While Li Tieguai is often described as being irritable, his wide popularity stems from his practice of providing divine medicine and other forms of support to the poor and downtrodden. Appearing as a beggar, Li Tieguai is usually depicted with his magical gourd, which dispenses an endless supply of medicine capable of treating any illness, and his iron crutch. In fact, his name, which translates literally as "Iron Crutch Li," is derived from this iconographic emblem, which he must use due to a chronic leg injury.

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Li Tieguai, like most of the Immortals, was a common person who acted with grace and humility while being subjected to unusual and unfair events, causing the gods to bestow them with divine status. Before becoming immortal, Li Tieguai was said to have practiced extreme religious devotion, often neither eating or sleeping for long periods, and living in a cave. After becoming immortal and taking the body of a destitute beggar who had just died of starvation, Li Tieguai was given his magical gourd full of medicine and was tasked with traveling from town to town, healing the sick and uplifting the persecuted. For this reason, his iron cane is sometimes featured outside traditional Chinese apothecaries and some devout Taoists frequently seek out his blessing through the Taoist priesthood.

Large Gilt Bronze Figure of an Immortal (\$2/3,000) will be offered at Michaan's Auctions January Gallery Auction on Friday, January 19th, which features numerous cars in excellent condition in addition to fine examples from the Fine Art and Asian Art departments. The auction is led by a 2023 Tesla Model X in Plaid Trim with only 3,901 miles, a 1966 Ford Mustang Hardtop Coupe, as well as a 1955 Ford Thunderbird. Also included is a painting attributed to George Knapton, a notable oil painting by Joseph Henry Sharp, and a 14k yellow gold charm bracelet.

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