

Jade Mountain

BATEA 1554

The object I have chosen as one of my favourites is the Jade Mountain. The scene is of a scholar and servants with a pagoda and pine tree on one side, and on the other side there are two pine trees and two birds, one in flight. The pine trees symbolise long life, endurance and virtue and the cranes are a symbol of longevity, immortality and wisdom.

When I look at this piece, I imagine a scholar, after a career working in the imperial government, who has retired to the countryside for a quiet life away from the city where he can enjoy nature and spend his time writing poetry and painting. He is a small figure at the foot of the mountain. Perhaps he is a Daoist wishing to meditate and to purify his spirit in the heart of nature.

There is a poem inscribed on the upper right side of the mountain. It is a poem composed by the emperor Qianlong praising the *lingzhi* fungus, a type of mushroom used in traditional Chinese medicine. It requires immense care to cultivate and nourish this plant, and it symbolises immortality. Given the subject matter of the poem, it would be reasonable to assume that the two smaller figures on the mountain are collecting *lingzhi* fungus.

To me, this piece conveys a sense of peace and calm – both in the colour of the jade itself and in the scene depicted on it.

There are two types of jade – Nephrite and Jadeite. The colour ranges from white “mutton fat” through the celadon green of this object to a much darker spinach green.

Jade is extremely difficult to work because of its extreme hardness, and in the past special tools were needed to ‘carve’ shapes into the jade. I really admire and appreciate the effort and expertise that has gone in to creating this beautiful object.