

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

# Family Guide

Family  
Guide

Journey to a

## Chinese Garden Court



Discover the beauty of nature around you—right within the Museum's walls!



Use this guide to find and explore

## THE ASTOR COURT, A CHINESE GARDEN COURT

in the Met's Asian art galleries. Continue your journey through East Asia and find artworks inspired by nature in the Japanese and Korean art galleries!



### YIN-YANG

Opposites play in this garden—outside and inside, light and dark, natural and man-made. These opposites in nature work together to create the changes and rhythms in our lives. This is the ancient Chinese idea known as yin-yang. What other opposites do you notice?

The Astor Chinese Garden Court, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), 17th-century style; China; Taihu rocks, granite terrace, ceramic tile flooring, roof tiles, and door frames, various woods (nan wood columns, pine beams, ginkgo latticework), brass fittings; Purchase, The Vincent Astor Foundation Gift, 1981





### IT'S A FACT

This courtyard was inspired by one created in China nearly 400 years ago! A team of craftsmen traveled from China to New York City to build it. They even brought all the materials they needed and did not use a single nail in their construction!

### WHO WANDERED THROUGH THIS GARDEN?

Chinese scholars were educated men who were respected for knowing their culture's traditions. Being close to nature was important to them. In the Chinese art galleries, look for pictures of scholars in gardens that look like this one.

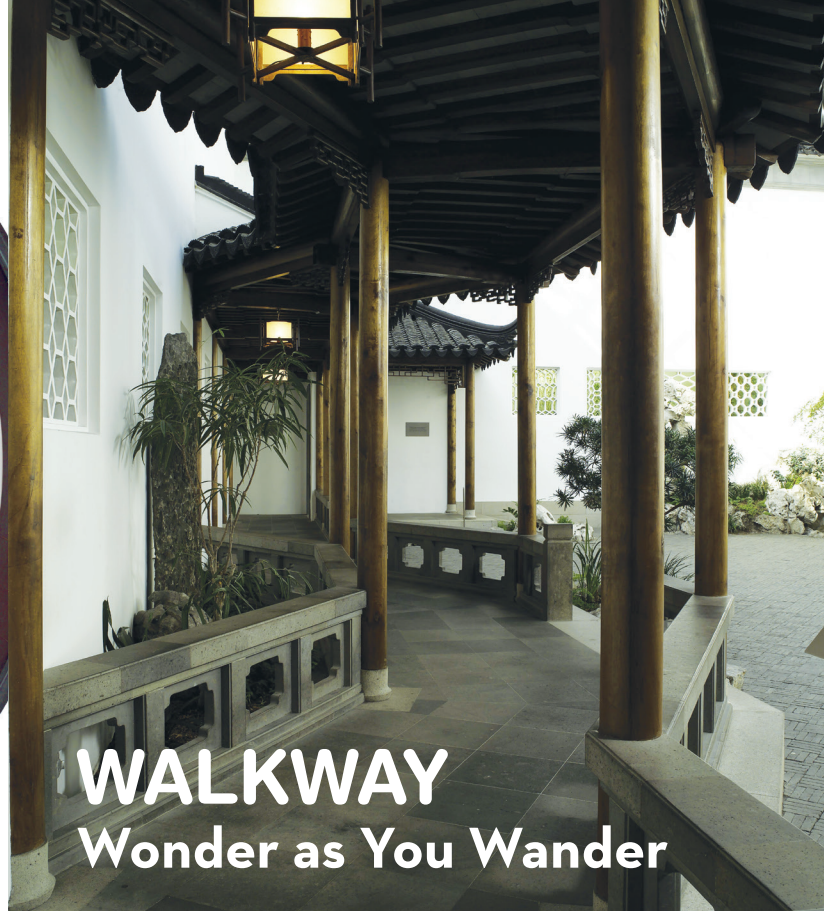




## **MOON GATE**

**Enter Another World**

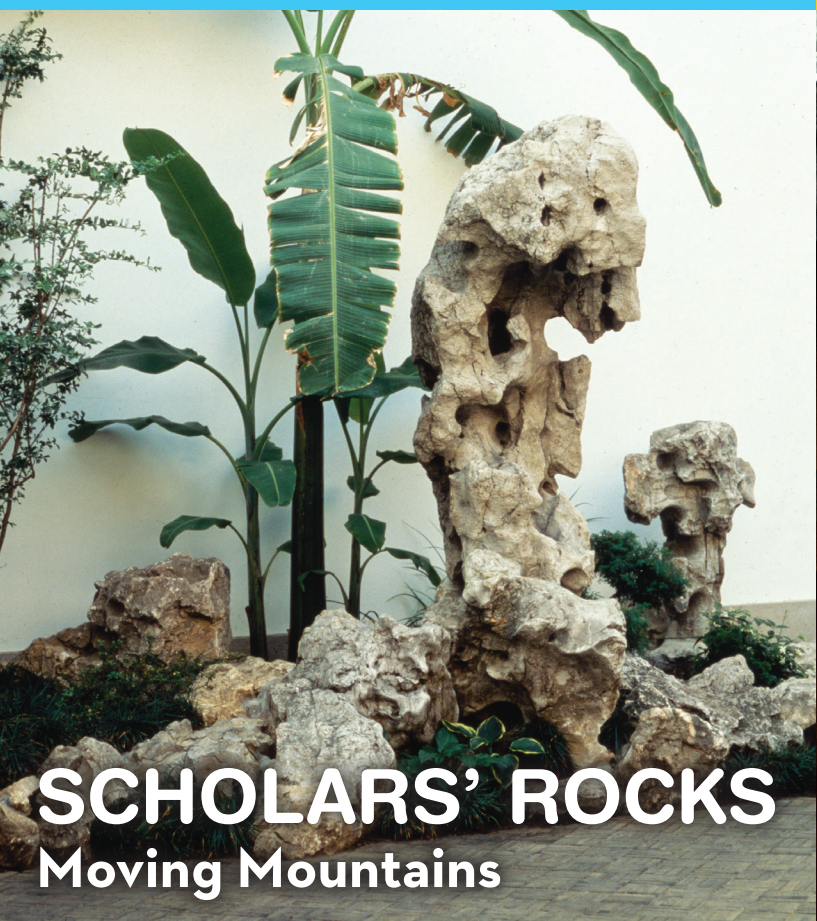
Gallery 217 • Astor Chinese Garden Court



## **WALKWAY**

**Wonder as You Wander**

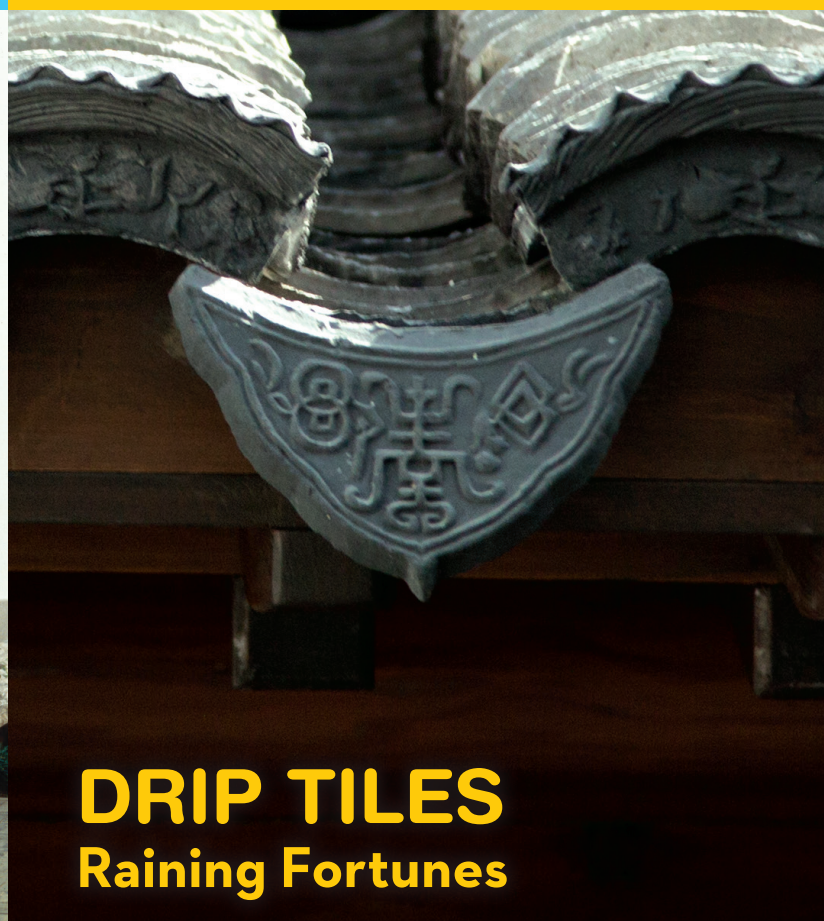
Gallery 217 • Astor Chinese Garden Court



## **SCHOLARS' ROCKS**

**Moving Mountains**

Gallery 217 • Astor Chinese Garden Court



## **DRIP TILES**

**Raining Fortunes**

Gallery 217 • Astor Chinese Garden Court



### IMAGINE

Long ago, Chinese scholars studied, painted, played instruments, and wrote poems in gardens like this one. Imagine *you* are a scholar. What inspires you?

### LOOK

Look out from the covered walkway. What do you see? The tile floor becomes an ocean, while the rocks rise upwards like islands or mountain peaks. Which view from the walkway do you like best? What do you hear? The sound of trickling water might remind you of a babbling stream.

### WRITE

Write your own poem about nature.

### IMAGINE

Leave behind the hustle and bustle. Glimpse through the circle, past the rectangular doorway, to discover the magical garden beyond.

### LOOK

Notice the Chinese writing, or **characters**, above the entrance. These read: **“In Search of Quietude.”** Talk to family and friends about what these words might mean.

Pause and take a deep breath before you step into the garden.

### DID YOU KNOW?

This entrance to the garden is called a **moon gate** because it's round like the moon! In Chinese architecture, circles are often paired with squares. The circle symbolizes the universe. The square, with its four sides, represents the earth and its four directions—north, south, east, west.

Look for circular and square shapes as you enter the garden.

### IMAGINE

It starts to rain. Rainwater drips off the pointed ends of the roof tiles like a curtain of beads. What do you hear? Where will you take shelter?

### LOOK

Look at the tiles along the edge of the slanted roof. Find the tiles that are shaped like triangles and have pointed ends. They're called **drip tiles**.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The design on the tiles shows the Chinese character for **long life**, or *shou* (pronounced *show*), with coins and squares that stand for **wealth** and **good fortune**. When rain falls on the tiles it drips these **“three happinesses”** down onto the garden and the people below.

### WRITE

Try your hand at writing the Chinese character for water (*shui*) 水.

### LOOK

Find a rock that towers above the others. The more top-heavy and interestingly shaped the better! Look closely to discover the many holes. Rocks like these are highly prized because they remind Chinese scholars of magical caves that might lead to hidden worlds.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The rocks in this garden are called **scholars' rocks**. They inspired scholars at their desks and in their gardens. Craftsmen arranged the rocks here to look like the Chinese character for mountain (*shan*) 山.

### STRIKE A POSE

Owners of gardens like this one imagined the shapes of animals, dragons, and other creatures in the rocks. What creature do you see in the rocks?

Pose like that creature.

What sound might it make?

## Nature, Nature Everywhere

China, Korea, and Japan—known as East Asia—are neighbors. Travel through the East Asian art galleries and see the theme of nature in many works of art.

### FIND

Mountains  
Flowers and plants  
Rocks  
Water  
The moon



## Hearing a Garden

Use the gallery map in this guide to find **Gallery 229**.

**IMAGINE** you're wandering through a Japanese garden on a hot summer's day. You might refresh yourself with cool water from a stone **basin**, or container.

Listen for the sound of water. Find it flowing up into the round opening of *Water Stone*. Many Japanese gardens include stone basins that collect water from rain and surrounding mountain streams.

### LOOK

In nature, opposites like the ones you found in the Chinese Garden Court continuously change and balance each other. List the opposites you notice in this sculpture.

Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988), *Water Stone*, 1986; basalt; H. 25 in. (63.6 cm), W. 42 3/4 in. (108.6 cm); Purchase, Anonymous Gift 1987 (1987.222). © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



## Store Your Dreams

Use the gallery map in this guide to find **Gallery 233**.

**IMAGINE** that you could store your dreams in a jar.

**DRAW** a dream you would put inside.



### LOOK

Search for a container that is milky white and round like the moon. Walk all the way around it. Look carefully at the color and describe it.

### DID YOU KNOW?

This is called a moon jar and it may have been used to store grain.

Moon Jar, Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910), second half of the 18th century; Korea; porcelain; H. 15 1/4 in. (38.7 cm), Diam. 13 in. (33 cm); The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art, Gift of Harry G. C. Packard, and Purchase, Fletcher, Rogers and Harris Brisbane Dick and Louis V. Bell Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and the Annenberg fund Inc. Gift, 1975 (1979.413.1)



EDUCATION

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