



NEWS

Manchester's East Asian art gallery opens Buddhism exhibition

 13 February 2025  [Sean Nolan](#) [Follow @MM_newsonline](#)

A Manchester gallery focusing on East and Southeast Asian art is showcasing a new exhibition focusing on Buddhism.

Art space [esea contemporary, which is based in the city's Northern Quarter](#), teamed up with Italy's Museum of Asian Art to display a number of historic Buddhist artefacts – some of which date back to the 6th century.

The seven bronze statuettes are being paired with a number of contemporary art pieces, which include audio-visual features and other atmospheric elements.



The seven bronze artefacts on loan from Turin's Museum of Asian Art. Photo courtesy of esea contemporary.

Xioawen Zhu, the Director of the gallery said: “We very actively bridge ancient artefacts together with contemporary artworks”.

The origins of this new exhibition began with a partnership with the Museum of Asian Art which is based in Turin, Italy. The museum has one of Europe’s largest collections of asian art, and has now loaned some of its pieces to Manchester’s esea contemporary.

The Turin museum has hosted Buddhism-focused exhibitions in the past as part of its ‘Buddha¹⁰ project’. But this new display in Manchester marks the first international iteration of this series.

Beyond this focus on asian art, Turin and Manchester have a lot of similarities, she shared. Both cities have industrial histories, and are now the home to very large East Asian communities, according to Zhu.

The artefacts act as the central hub for the exhibition, with new specially created contemporary pieces being displayed alongside it. These include x-ray images taken of 16th century statues, displayed around the gallery space.



An example of a statue x-ray display. Photo courtesy of esea contemporary.

The new exhibition is already appealing to older East Asians in Manchester, she said.

“Some of them, they’ve lived the majority of their life in Manchester, originally coming from Hong Kong or mainland China.

“They miss the connection with their cultural heritage. The Buddhist statues we show here – they are of very high cultural value.”

But the exhibition also has a wider scope, as the gallery is collaborating with the Manchester Buddhist Centre to provide more in-depth community engagement.

Visitors will have the chance to go on a guided tour of esea contemporary’s exhibition before going to the nearby buddhist centre for a meditation session.



One of the audio-visual elements created for the exhibition. Photo courtesy of esea contemporary.

The exhibition was made possible through support from Arts Council England, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and Asian cultural organisation the Bagri Foundation.

esea contemporary is the UK's only non-profit art centre focusing on artists and art from East and Southeast Asia cultural backgrounds. It was previously called the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art but has since expanded its scope to include other Asian cultures.

The exhibition has free admission and will be running til 20 April 2025 at the gallery's site on Thomas Street in Manchester.

Images courtesy of esea contemporary.