

## Imaging Dunhuang: Artistic Renderings from the Lo Workshop

In 1943, during World War II, James and Lucy Lo traveled to western China to the desert oasis town of Dunhuang. Their aim was to photograph the nearby Mogao Caves, built between the fourth and fourteenth centuries. Many of the 700 extant caves contain brilliantly painted walls and ceilings as well as finely carved statues. The vast majority of the caves' iconography was devoted to Buddhism, but hints of Daoism, local folk traditions, and Central Asian religions are also present. Over the course of eighteen months the Los worked without electricity or running water and used a system of mirrors and cloths to reflect light into the caves in order to take photographs. At the end of their project they had created more than 2000 black-and-white images. However, during the war and its aftermath, printing photographs was a costly and difficult undertaking. Such challenges remained even when the Los moved to Taiwan in the 1950s. Yet their commitment to the art of Dunhuang and to disseminating information about the site remained firm.

As part of a community of like-minded artists and intellectuals in Taipei, the Los knew a number of young artists. They invited a group of them to help produce life-size painted copies of the cave paintings at Dunhuang using wall projections of the photographs. Large pieces of paper were pasted onto the wall, and then outlines of the compositions were traced over the projections. Relying on the Los' comprehensive notes and their memories, the artists then colored the images.

These remarkable archival resources are a testament to the Los' deep appreciation and understanding of the art of Dunhuang as well as their commitment to preserving and transmitting its visual splendors. Other visitors to Dunhuang had made free copies of the cave paintings, but the facsimiles produced by the Los are unique in their fidelity to the originals, capturing Dunhuang's art prior to later deterioration and modern conservation programs.

The importance of these paintings was significant enough to garner the Los an invitation to display a group of the artistic renderings at the 1964-65 World's Fair at Flushing Meadows in Queens, New York. While on display in the fair's China pavilion, the paintings were viewed by Wen Fong, then professor of Chinese art history at Princeton University. Professor Fong learned about the Los' work in Dunhuang and acquired a full set of their photo archive for the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton. Recently, Lucy Lo donated the paintings on display here to the Art Museum so that the photographs and artistic renderings may reside together at Princeton, serving as a rich resource for the study and appreciation of Dunhuang.

*Zoe S. Kwok, Assistant Curator of Asian Art*



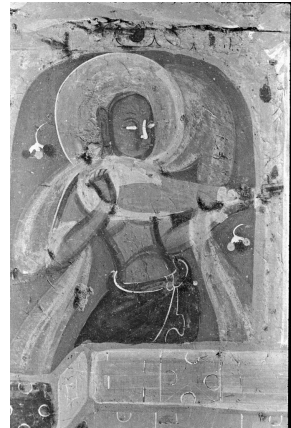
**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Copy after wall painting, Tang dynasty, 618–907**  
*Bodhisattva, from Cave 25 [formerly Cave 17], Yulin Caves, Anxi, Gansu province, 1958–63*  
 Ink and color on paper  
 Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2012-139)



**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Copy after wall painting, Western Wei dynasty, 535–557**  
*Celestial musician with flute, from Cave 249, Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province, 1958–63*  
 Ink and color on paper  
 Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2012-133)

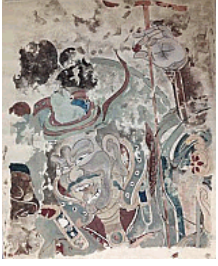


**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Copy after wall painting, Western Wei dynasty, 535–557**  
*Celestial musician with pipa lute, from Cave 249, Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province, 1958–63*  
 Ink and color on paper  
 Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2012-134)

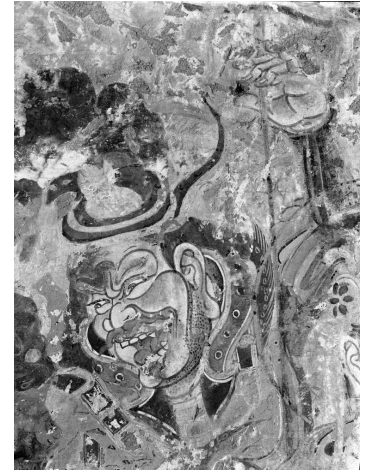


**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Copy after wall painting, Western Wei dynasty, 535–557**  
*Animals, from Cave 249, Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province, 1958–63*  
 Ink and color on paper  
 Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2013-110)

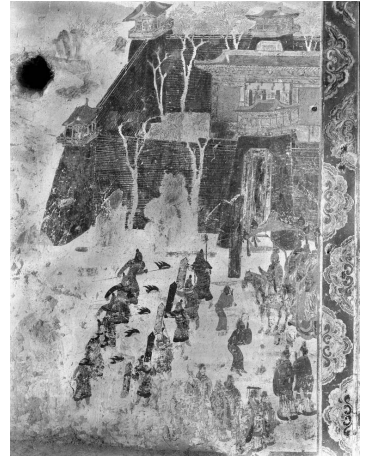




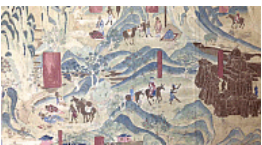
**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Copy after wall painting, Early Tang dynasty, 618–704**  
***Heavenly Guardian*, 1958–63**  
Ink and color on paper  
Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2012-135)



**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Copy after wall painting, High Tang dynasty, 704–781**  
***Building, from Cave 217, Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province*, 1958–63**  
Ink and color on paper  
Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2013-106)

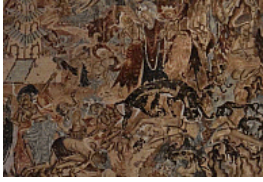


**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Restoration copy after wall painting, High Tang dynasty, 704–781**  
***Lady, from Cave 130, Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province*, 1958–63**  
Ink and color on paper  
Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2013-109)

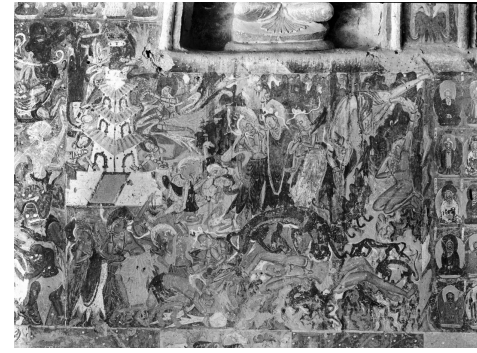


**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Copy after wall painting, High Tang dynasty, 704–781**  
***Landscape, from Cave 217, south wall, Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province*, 1958–63**  
Ink and color on paper  
Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2012-138)





**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Copy after wall painting, Northern Wei dynasty, 386–535**  
***Buddhist Tiger Story, from Cave 254, Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province.***, 1958–63  
Ink and color on paper  
Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2013-107)



**James C. Lo Workshop**  
**Copy after wall painting, High Tang dynasty, 704–781**  
***Kasyapa, from Cave 446, Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province.***, 1958–63  
Ink and color on paper  
Gift of Lucy L. Lo (2012-136)



Xie Chengshui 謝成水, born 1950  
Chinese, Modern period, 1912–present  
Guanyin: Copy of wall painting from Cave 320 of the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, ca. 1990  
Ink and color on paper  
Gift of Professor Roderick Whitfield, Graduate School Class of 1965, in honor of James and Lucy Lo (2011-54)