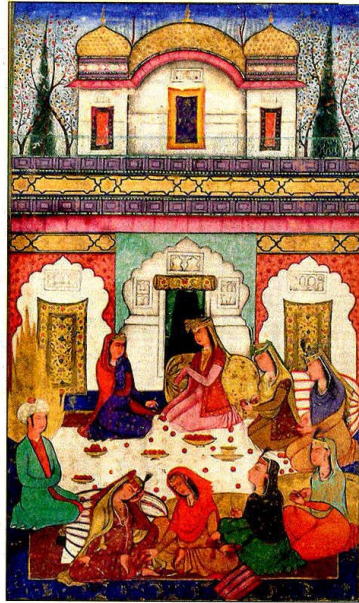


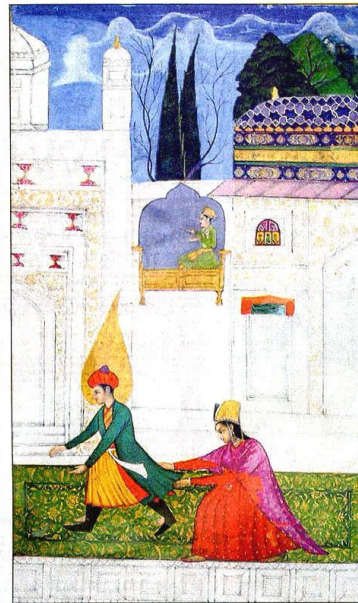
MODERN BEAUTY: Artist Cai Zhisong reinterpreted the beauty of a terracotta warrior in Ode To Motherland No. 2.



SIZE MATTERS: Bound feet were considered beautiful in China around the late 19th century.



A THOUSAND WORDS: Paintings of the Story Of Yusuf from 17th century India depict a virtuous and beautiful servant who refuses the advances of the lady of the house.



FAT LADY: A woman with curves like this figurine was considered the epitome of grace during the Tang dynasty.

More than eye candy

The concept of beauty in Asian cultures is explored from the past to the present

Adeline Chia
ARTS REPORTER

INSIDE the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) in Empress Place, a statue of a Qin-dynasty soldier is keeping vigil in a strange position — hunched over and naked except for his headgear.

This unusual sculpture by Chinese contemporary artist Cai Zhisong, Ode To Motherland No. 2, is one of 300 artefacts on show at Beauty In Asia: 200 BCE To Today, an exhibition that opens today.

A celebration of all things beautiful across Asian cultures, the exhibition features sculptures, paintings, jewellery, and even a sceptre, tiara and sash of previous Miss Singapore World winners.

It is the first time the museum is including contemporary artworks in an exhibition.

This was done to contrast ancient and contemporary concepts of beauty, said ACM director Kenson Kwok.

The lead curator of the show, Dr Gauri Parimoo Krishnan, said the Cai sculpture was included because the artist took an ancient idea of beauty — the majestic figure of 200 BC terracotta warriors — and re-interpreted it in fresh ways.

Dr Kwok said the topic of beauty will be a draw because it is a familiar subject to many.

“This is an exhibition where we try

and address an issue with contemporary meaning and relevance. We do that by comparing the past with today,” he added.

One of the show’s highlights is a bronze sculpture of the Hindu goddess Uma Parameshvari — widely regarded as a symbol of ideal beauty in India — from the Chola period in 11th-century South India.

Dr Krishnan said the statue, acquired a few months ago, is one of the museum’s most highly prized artefacts in price and historic value, and is exceptional for its intricate craftsmanship and delicate proportions.

Also on display is Lotus Dream, a contemporary print by Singaporean photographer Russel Wong, who superimposed a picture of Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai with traditional Indian decorations.

Dr Krishnan and her team of five curators took nearly two years to put together the exhibition.

Part of her research included speaking with magazine editors to get their views on modern beauty. A large collage of magazine covers is displayed in the exhibition.

ACM borrowed a third of the exhibits from local and overseas museums and private collectors. The rest came from its own collection.

Dr Kwok hopes there will be a second show.

He said: “The scope of the theme is so wide. If it’s a really popular show, we can do a part two.”

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> Beauty In Asia: 300 BCE To Today is on at the Asian Civilisations Museum till Sept 23. Admission prices are \$8 for adults and \$4 for students and those aged 60 years and above.