

## ***Vishnu and His Avatars*** (Indian, Central Region, 10<sup>th</sup> century)

Red sandstone, 54 ½ x 31 ½ x 8 3/8 inches (138.4 x 80 x 21.3 cm)

**Accession Number: 71.1**

This large, complex, high relief sculpture once adorned the exterior of a Hindu temple, probably in Madhya Pradesh, India. Before entering, visitors prepared for meditation by studying the elaborate imagery. In the center is Vishnu, known to the Hindus as the preserver of the world. He is identified by his attributes and the avatars (worldly incarnations) that surround him.

Before researching a work of art from the MFAH collection, it is helpful to view the work first hand. The information in books and journals will be more meaningful if you have taken advantage of the opportunity to inspect the object itself.

“Reference” books you will find on the library’s main floor, and “Ready Reference” books are behind the information desk. Other books can be obtained by asking at the information desk.



### ***Object Specific Information***

*Museum of Fine Arts, Houston: A Guide to the Collection*, 1981. (Page 6) N 576 .H7 A6 Ready Ref.

Marzio, Peter. *Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, A Permanent Legacy*, 1989. (Page 68-9) N 576 .H7 A63 1989 Ready Ref.

“Recent Acquisitions: A Trimuri and the Avatars and Icon of Bisnu”  
*Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Bulletin* 2 no. 6 (1971): 70-5. N 576 .H7 A3 n.s. v.2 Ready Ref.

### ***General Surveys of Indian Art***

Honour, Hugh & John Fleming. *The Visual Arts*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 1999. (Especially Chapter 6) N 5300 .H68 1999 Ready Ref.

*Gardner’s Art through the Ages*. 12<sup>th</sup> ed., 2005. (Chapter 6) N 5300 .G25 2005 Ready Ref.

Stokstad, Marilyn. *Art History*, 1995. (Chapter 9) N 5300 .S923 1995 Ready Ref.

### ***India***

Johnson, Gordon. *Cultural Atlas of India*, 1996. DS 421 .J6 1996 Ref.

Koul, Sudha. *Come with Me to India*, 1997. (Chapter 5) DS 407 .K68 1997

Keay, John. *India: A History*, 2000. (Chapters 9 and 10) DS 451 .K365 2000

### ***Hinduism***

Dallapiccola, Anna. *Hindu Visions of the Sacred*, 2004. N 8195 .A4 D35 2004

Coomaraswamy, Ananda. <i>Hinduism and Buddhism</i> , 1943.	BL 1201 .C6
Maxwell, T.S. <i>Gods of Asia</i> , 1997. (Chapters 4 and 15)	BL 1216.6 .A785 M38 1997
Bonnefoy, Yves. <i>Asian Mythologies</i> , 1993. (Part 2)	BL 1005 .D5313 1993

### ***Symbolism***

Dallapiccola, Anna. <i>Dictionary of Hindu Lore and Legend</i> , 2002.	BL 1105 .D35 2004 Ref.
Jansen, Eva. <i>The Book of Hindu Imagery</i> , 1993.	BL 1216 .J26 1993 Ref.
Hall, James. <i>Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art</i> , 1994. (s. v. "fish" (p. 24), "tortoise" (p. 49), "disk" (p. 64), "mace" (p. 73))	N 7740 .H35 1994 Ref.
Chevalier, Jean. <i>Dictionary of Symbols</i> , 1994. (s. v. "chakra" (p. 177), "disc" (p. 294), "fish" (p. 383), "tortoise" (p. 1016))	GR 931 .C4413 1994 Ref.
Begley, W.E. <i>Visnu's Flaming Wheel: Iconography of the Sudarsana-Cakra</i> , 1973.	NX 680.3 .C48 B43

### ***Indian Art and Sculpture***

Blurton, Richard. <i>Hindu Art</i> , 1993.	N 8195 .A4 B58 1993
Newman, R. <i>The Stone Sculpture of India: A Study of Materials</i> , 1984.	NB 1002 .N4 1984
Welch, Stuart. <i>India: Art and Culture, 1300-1900</i> , 2007. (Introduction and Chapter 6)	N 7301 .V57 2007
Coomaraswamy, Ananda. <i>Introduction to Indian Art</i> , 1999. (Chapter 12)	N 7301 .C583 1999
Saraswati, S.K. <i>A Survey of Indian Sculpture</i> , 1975. (Chapter 7)	NB 1002 .S3 1975
Desai, Vishakha and D. Mason, eds. <i>Gods, Guardians, and Lovers: Temple Sculptures from North India, A.D. 700-1200</i> , 1993.	NB 1002 .G62 1993

This reference guide is just the tip of the iceberg on helpful resources in the library's holdings. Many of the suggested resources above have their own **bibliographies**. Each of these may lead you to other resources that would also be helpful in your research here in the museum or in another library. To find additional resources, use keywords such as "Hinduism" and "Vishnu" in the **on-line catalog** and **periodical indexes**. Once you find a few relevant titles, pay attention to the subject headings to identify similar materials.

### **Examples of useful subject headings are:**

*Hinduism*  
*Art, Hinduism*  
*Indian mythology*  
*Sculpture –India*  
*Art and religion*

For guidelines about writing it may be helpful to look at **Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing about Art***, which includes tips for looking, reading, and writing about art. Ask for it at the reference desk. We also have several citation manuals.

At every stage of your work, please allow the **library staff** to help you. We can be reached at 713-639-7325.