China: Look out for the Taotie

Animal Designs

The importance of the animal world can be seen most clearly in the fact that these treasured bronze ritual vessels were often covered with depictions of animals.

Fantastic animals are no less important. The dragon, later to become emblematic of China itself, is commonly found on bronzes, and the most prominent decoration on early bronzes is a mysterious monster-like beast commonly called the taotie.

If you already looked closely at the objects and vessels in the collection online, you might have spotted the taotie, some are more obvious than others. If not, take a look.

Challenge:

Could you design a taotie of your own?

Why not find some images of real and mythological animals on the internet to print, or look through magazines and newspapers. You can even draw animal features for yourself.

Try cutting up the features of the animals and mixing them up.

Try the fangs of a dragon with the ears of a wolf, eyes of an owl and stripes of a tiger?

When you are happy, glue the features together to create the new taotie.

You could paint or colour it if you wish.

You will need:

Paper, scissors, glue, animal features to cut out (or draw your own)

Compton Verney
ART GALLERY & PARK
China: Look out for the Taotie

Example of some animal features to try out