

[Seeing Siva; New York Exhibition Shows Siva from Chola to Comics](#)

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Perhaps no icon captures the ardor of devotees more fervently than does Shiva Nataraja, and a remarkable exhibition at the Asia Society brings the many moods and images of the Lord of Dance together. Over 50 exquisite sculptures celebrating the role of music and dance in Hindu art are highlighted in "The Cosmic Dancer: Shiva Nataraja" which can be seen at the Asia Society Galleries in New York through June 28, 1992.

Dance and music reverberate through every aspect of life in India, including religion. According to Denise Patry Leidy, curator, Asia Society Galleries: "Associated with religious as well as secular functions such as marriages and the opening of a new household, dance and music are an ever-present part of Indian life. The primary themes of all performing arts are the daily lives and heroic activities of the Gods."

The centerpiece of the exhibition is a magnificent bronze Shiva Nataraja from the Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection of Asian Art, dating back to the Chola period, and considered by many art historians to be among the finest Indian bronzes ever made. The deep interconnections between religion and dance in Hindu iconography are shown through bronze, wood and stone sculptures of dancing Tibetan goddesses, groups of celestial musicians from ceiling decorations of Indian temples, and images of other Indian Deities, such as the dancing Sambandar. The exhibition also notes the impact of Shiva Nataraja on modern India by showing magazine illustrations, cartoons and book jackets which emphasize that the Cosmic Dancer is a more important image to the modern India psyche than the Taj Mahal.

According to Leidy, "Only Shiva performs the dance of creation and destruction that shakes the foundations of the cosmos. In the visual arts, therefore, only Shiva is shown with his left leg crossing his body in the performance of the dance of bliss. This dramatic position is reserved for Shiva Nataraja, the most accomplished dancer in the universe, in order to remind us that His performance of the dance of bliss symbolizes the very essence of our existence, the continuation of life itself."

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