

FIRE METAL

MONUMENT

BRONZE

Tracing the story of bronze over three millennia and across three continents, this exhibition explores how artists have used the copper alloy that inaugurated the Bronze Age around 3000 BCE. Long ago, craftspeople across Eurasia discovered that malleable copper could be mixed with tin, arsenic, lead or other metals to toughen it up or lower its melting point. These ancient innovators also refined casting technologies, including lost-wax, sand, and clay-mold methods. The essence of these materials and technologies informs bronze casting today.

Starting with Shang Dynasty ritual vessels (12th–11th century BCE) and ending with sculptures by Alison Saar and Louise Bourgeois, these objects show that artists have used bronze to convey monumentality and importance, capture details, and fashion sturdy items, like furniture, that might have been for everyday use.

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