Blue and white ceramics are found across the globe. This is the result of centuries of global trade, particularly between Persia and China. Use this guide to take a look.

Majestic Creatures
Images of majestic creatures are seen throughout this exhibition, including on the two dishes at the entrance to the gallery. Lions, dragons, and other mythical beasts have symbolic significance in both Chinese and Persian art. Persian potters often combined these symbols with Chinese design elements, such as delicate floral scrolls, concentric bands, and scalloped edges.

Observe
The late 15th-century Persian dish shows a lion encircled by a floral scroll. Notice the lotus flower suspended above the lion, recalling a rising sun.

Did you know? A lion with a sun motif directly above it is an enduring symbol of power and kingship in Persian art.

Observe
This 17th-century Persian dish showing a mythical creature is called a qilin.

Did you know? In Chinese lore, the qilin has a single horn and hooved feet, and is associated with the birth or death of an important figure.

Ask
Consider a quality or an event that is significant to you. What creature, real or imagined, would you use to represent it?

Reference
the gallery map to locate the objects discussed in this guide.
Persian Blues
Explore some of the blue colors in this exhibition and their origins below.

**Cobalt**
Cobalt is a naturally occurring mineral. Persian cobalt was used in Chinese ceramics starting around the 12th-13th century. This began a dialogue between Iran and China, with each influencing the other’s use of cobalt and inspiring local ceramic production in both lands.

**Turquoise**
The turquoise color is created using a glaze containing copper and other ingredients. Geographical variations in soil and technique result in different shades of blue-green pigment.

**Form and Function**
The global exchange of blue and white ceramics has led to changes in the form and function of ceramic wares.

- **Observe** These are two kendi shaped 17th-century Persian hookah bases.
- **Did you know?** Kendi describes a jug with a bulbous body, long neck, and spout. Originally from South Asia, the kendi form was adopted by the Chinese in the 14th century. Chinese kendis were manufactured for export to Southeast Asia, where they were used as ceremonial drinking vessels. The kendi shape later became popular in the Middle East and Europe.

**Explore**
In the Persian examples here, the kendi form has been adapted as the base for a water pipe. Europeans similarly altered the kendi form by adding metal spouts, handles, and lids.

**Across MFAH Collections**
Continue exploring blue and white traditions from around the globe through objects in the exhibition from the collections of Bayou Bend and Rienzi. These include objects from China, Japan, England, and the Netherlands.

- **Observe** This Posser Pot from the Bayou Bend collection includes floral and bird imagery which may have been adapted from Chinese porcelain designs. Posset pots were popular in middle-class English homes where they were used on festive occasions.

- **Observe** Ralph Bacerra's 1979 Dragon Bowl. Bacerra was interested in traditional ceramic techniques. Notice the iridescent luster-painted border.

**A Lustrous Tradition**
Contemporary artists respond to the global legacy of blue and white.

**Explore**
The Museum also houses several examples of historic lusterware, such as this **Bowl** with a bird design. Keep an eye out for objects like this as you continue exploring luster-painted ceramics in the Art of the Islamic Worlds and The al-Sabah galleries, located in the Law Building and indicated on the map below.

**Related Programming and Offerings**
The Museum offers a variety of programs to complement its exhibitions. For a full listing and more details, visit mfah.org/calendar.

Visit the MFAH gift shop where the September-October 2020 issue of Arts of Asia is available for purchase. This issue accompanies the exhibition Between Sea and Sky and includes articles by MFAH curators.