

Bodhisattva “South 26”

This vibrant sculpture is a replica of the 26th bodhisattva sculpture (South 26) hanging on the south wall of the Amida Hall sanctuary. The bodhisattva wears a golden crown and necklace, and strikes cymbals atop a creamy yellow cloud. The cloud and the scarves trail out to the left, animating the figure.

Byodoin created this replica to allow visitors to see what the original bodhisattvas-on-clouds statues may have looked like a millennium ago. Contemporary artisans used scientific techniques combined with historical knowledge to identify the original coloration of the statue. To create the replica, they employed the split-and-join carving technique (*warihagi*) used in the original statue: a block of cypress is carved, split, hollowed, then rejoined. Hollowing the cypress block both reduces the weight of the statue and helps prevent cracking over time. The artisans coated the statue with a lacquer base before applying pigments and gold leaf. The replica’s bright, ethereal appearance provides a glimpse into the aesthetic ideals of the late Heian period (794–1185) when the aristocrat Fujiwara no Yorimichi (992–1074) commissioned the Phoenix Hall and the statues within it. Although the 26 originals in the temple museum and the 26 replicas and 26 originals in the Amida Hall sanctuary do not employ the same bright color palette, a sense of their Heian elegance remains.