

VISIBLE PATIENCE
November 1, 2010

By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

The Classic Chinese Dragon Puzzle

This is an example of a Chinese Dragon Puzzle ball. These balls are still made, although modern day ones no longer use ivory, but either Mammoth ivory or a synthetic resin formed from ox bones and poured into a solid block. But the carving is still done by hand, obviously. These carved puzzle balls have always been an inspiration for patience to me, something I am learning slowly and later in life.

This one is not the finest I have seen, but it is the only one in my possession. I have no idea if this is ivory or whatever, but I have had it for around years, so who knows. Anyway, that is not the point.

This ball has eight concentric nested spheres, one within the other. Someone hand carves these nested spheres from the solid block using very special tools (drills, L-shaped cutters, etc.) and lots of patience. I have seen photos of puzzle balls with 15 spheres, and with much finer detail. All of the inner spheres are free-moving and can be rotated. At the center, the eight sphere, is a solid round ivory ball.

In this one, if you look, you can see many layers of the nested spheres, so take a look. It is IMO an amazing physical demonstration of skill and patience. I just thought some of you might enjoy seeing this.



