



Massive Pair of Jardinières

Yongzheng / Qianlong, circa 1735

European Market

Diameter: 24 inches (61cm) Height: 15 inches (38cm)

Pair of large famille rose jardinières finely painted with ducks and cranes amongst water plants, the flattened rim with a floral border reserved with panels of paired carp. Together with a pair of carved giltwood stands.

The birds depicted on these jardinières are: Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*); Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) and Chinese Egret (*Egretta eulophotes*) and there is a leaping Toad (*Bufo asiaticus*) and a very large cricket.

Mandarin ducks are symbols of happiness and marital fidelity and often appear on porcelain from this period. This species of duck has bright plumage and nests in holes in trees. It used to be widespread in eastern Siberia, China and Japan but is now considerably reduced, possibly as low as 20,000 following habitat loss. It has survived by being unpleasant to the taste and therefore no good for hunting. There is also a free flying population in the UK which has established itself in the wild from birds originally held in captivity - the first to arrive in Europe having been brought back from China in 1745.

Kingfishers were very popular in China and their feathers were widely used in appliqué work on copper. They were often called the 'halcyon bird' as it was believed that they had power

over the waves and could calm the sea. The Chinese Egret was once widespread but is now endangered with a remaining population of 2000 and their eggs are still collected by Chinese farmers for food! Here one of the egrets is eyeing a nearby dragonfly which it is about to consume. The other pair of small finch like birds are unidentified.

The Toad (or frog - the Chinese did not distinguish between the two) was known as the 'heavenly chicken' because the spawn was believed to drop with the dew. A medicine was extracted from the warts on the Toad's back which was a remedy for heart attack. A three legged toad is believed to swallow the moon during an eclipse.

Crickets feature widely in Chinese culture either as singing insects or fighting ones. Combats were popular and money was wagered as in cockfighting. They are the emblem of courage and the symbol of summer.

These jardinières are of an impressive size and must have been intended for small trees - perhaps in an orangery. The insides are unglazed and there are drainage holes at the bottom.

REFERENCES:

VEIGA, Jorge Getulio et al (1989) *Chinese Export Porcelain in Private Brazilian Collections*, p146, a charger with the Eight Immortals on the rim and a central scene very similar in colour and subject to the decoration on these jardinières.

GYLLENSVÄRD, Bo et al. (1972) *Kina Slott på Drottningholm*, p205, a painting on rice paper with the same combination of birds and insects.

Sold for £103,000 to a private US collector