



BEN JANSSENS
ORIENTAL ART

THE NING ZHOU ZHAI COLLECTION

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Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to offer you these early Chinese ceramics from the UK-based "*Spring Hill Hermit*" collection.

All pieces were selected on quality and rarity and this becomes obvious when one looks at the collection in detail.

Most pieces have a wonderful provenance; they were purchased from dealers such as Priestley & Ferraro, Sydney Moss and J.J. Lally, with one piece (cat no. 2) having come from the private collection of Prof M. Besser via Ben Janssens Oriental Art. Other pieces have come from eminent auction houses, such as Sotheby's Hong Kong saleroom.

I hope you enjoy the ceramics from the *Spring Hill Hermit* collection and please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of assistance to you.

Ben Janssens
London, October 2023



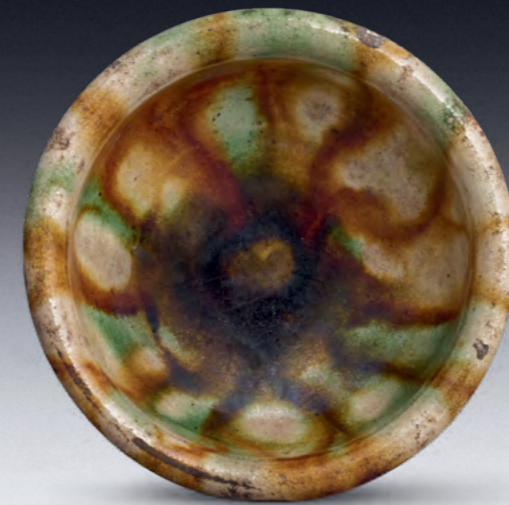
1 **MINIATURE SANCAI BOWL**
三彩小杯

Tang dynasty, 618 – 906
Diameter: 2 ½ inches, 6 cm
Height: 1 ½ inches, 3 cm

A miniature pottery bowl, the sides rising from a flat base towards a lipped rim. The inside and part of the outside are covered in a carefully executed so-called *sancai* glaze of green, amber and cream tones. The glaze spills over the rim but stops well short of the foot in an uneven line.

PROVENANCE:

Sydney Moss, London. Sotheby's Hong Kong
09.11.2016, Lot 101





2 TWO QINGBAI PORCELAIN SAUCERS 湖田窑花口出筋小碟一对

Northern Song dynasty, 960 - 1127
Diameter: 4 3/8 inches, 11 cm

Two porcelain saucers in the form of an open chrysanthemum flower, each with a slightly concave base and thinly potted, gently curved sides. Raised ribs and notches divide the wide, upturned rims into twelve lobes. Both dishes are entirely unadorned and covered in a transparent glaze of pale blue hue, leaving only the base unglazed, showing the fine-grained white porcelain body and characteristic brown firing marks.

Ceramic forms of the Song dynasty are inspired first by Tang silver and later also by Song lacquer ware. Red and black lacquer dishes from this period have survived in some quantity and like these delicate porcelain dishes rely purely on their shape for effect.¹ *Qingbai*, literally bluish-white colour, is perhaps the result of a wish to produce a jade-like texture. Porcelain saucers of this type and form are associated with the kilns of Hutian, near Jingdezhen.² The chrysanthemum flower is a symbol both of autumn and of longevity; it blooms in frost and icy winds and is noted for its health-giving properties.³ Dishes such as these usually have an even number of lobes: eight, ten or twelve. Yang illustrates a similar foliate saucer with ten lobes from a tomb dateable to 1090 AD in Pengze county.⁴

PROVENANCE:

Prof. M. Besser, London. Ben Janssens Oriental Art, 9.11. 2016

1 For a comparable lacquer dish in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, see: Garner, H., *Chinese Lacquer*, London, 1979, no. 21, p. 52

2 Zhao, Ziqiang and Liu Xinxin, *Chai Kiln & Hutian Kiln*, 2004, pp. 77 and 160

3 Tse Bartholomew, T., *Hidden Meanings in Chinese Art*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 2006, 7.11, p. 175

4 Yang, Houli et al, *Dated Qingbai Wares of the Song and Yuan dynasties*, Cheng Ling Foundation, Hong Kong, 1999, no. 21, p. 49





3 **QINGBAI OCTAGONAL BOX AND COVER**
青白釉六边粉盒

Song dynasty, 12th – 13th century
Diameter: 3 ¼ inches, 8.4 cm
Height: 1 ½ inches, 4 cm

An octagonal *qingbai* porcelain box of compressed drum shape with tapered, faceted sides. The domed cover has a slightly concave circular top, which is like the rest of the box, completely plain. The box is covered in a pale bluish glaze of *qingbai* type, which pools in places to an aquamarine tone. The unglazed base has a number of characteristic grit marks. The interior of the box is glazed, the rims are unglazed.

Both the form and the plainness of this small box are very much in keeping with the Song dynasty's preferred aesthetic for *qingbai* ceramics of simple forms and plain exteriors, rather than painted designs. This box, which was made in Fujian province, would have originally been used to store cosmetics, and much like other *qingbai* wares produced during this time, would have been used on a daily basis.

PROVENANCE:

Sotheby's London 13. 06. 1989, lot 168. Sotheby's Hong Kong 28.11. 2016, Lot 373





4 **QINGBAI PORCELAIN LOBED BOX**
湖田窑瓜棱粉盒

Song dynasty, 12th – 13th century
Diameter: 2 ¼ inches, 6 cm
Height: 1 ½ inches, 3.8 cm

A small lobed *qingbai* porcelain box of compressed drum shape. The box resembles a chrysanthemum flower; both the cover and the bottom section are moulded with thirteen fluted designs around the sides and the cover has a finial in the form of a stalk. The box is covered in a thin, translucent pale bluish glaze, leaving the rims and base uncovered, exposing the sugary white body. The base is mould-impressed with a five-character shop mark within a rectangle reading *Wu Jia He Zi Ji* (box of the Wu family). The box has small scratches in the glaze on the side edges to facilitate lining up both parts.

The marks on the base of *Qingbai* boxes refer to the shops that supplied them, they are not maker's marks. The shape of this box is based on a contemporary silver example, such as a box in the Meiyintang collection illustrated by Krahl.¹

PROVENANCE:

Sotheby's Hong Kong 28.11.2016, Lot 373

¹ Krahl, R, *Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection*, Volume Three (II) London 2006, fig.26, p. 403





5 **QINGBAI BOTTLE VASE, YUHUCHUNPING**
青白釉玉壶春瓶

Song dynasty, 12th century
Height: 9 ¼ inches, 23.5 cm

A porcelain bottle vase (*yuhuchunping*) of slender pear shape, the sides gently rising in several sections from a recessed base and terminating in a cup-shaped 'trumpet' mouth. The vase is completely covered in a *Qingbai* glaze that has a pale celadon hue.

Unusually, this beautifully potted vase has a glaze that has a pale celadon hue, not the usual bluish colour.

PROVENANCE:

Sotheby's Hong Kong 28. 11. 2016, Lot 373





6 **QINGBAI CONICAL BOWL**
湖田窑花口斗笠盖

Song dynasty, 12th – 13th century
Diameter: 5 ½ inches, 13.8 cm
Height: 2 ⅛ inches, 5.3 cm

A six-lobed porcelain bowl, the very thinly potted rising upwards at a steep angle from a low foot ring. The body is subtly decorated with a part-carved, part-combed design of flowers. Both exterior and interior are covered in a thin, translucent pale bluish glaze, which pools to a dark blue tone in the deepest part of the interior. The base is unglazed, showing the fine-grained white porcelain body and characteristic brown firing marks.

PROVENANCE:

Sotheby's Hong Kong 28.11. 2016, Lot 373





7 **LONGQUAN STONEWARE BRUSH WASHER**
龙泉窑洗

Southern Song dynasty, 1127 - 1279
Diameter: 5 inches, 12.5 cm
Height: 2 inches, 5 cm

A stoneware brush washer of shallow bowl form, the straight sides rise at a slanted angle from a low, recessed foot ring, and terminate in a lipped rim. The bowl is entirely devoid of ornament and covered in a bluish-green glaze, except for the foot rim, which shows the fine grey body of the stoneware.

Shallow, circular bowls of this type have traditionally been described as brush washers and, given the deceptive simplicity of the potting and the subtle refinement of the glaze on the present piece, which was produced at the *Longquan* kilns in southern Zhejiang province, one may well imagine it fulfilling this function on the desk of a discerning scholar-artist. The smooth glaze, devoid of crackle and of a subtle bluish-green tone, is of a particularly refined type, sometimes referred to as *kinuta* (lit. 'mallet', presumably as it was first applied to vases of that shape) by Japanese collectors, traditionally great admirers of *Longquan* porcelain. A closely comparable brush washer from the *Longquan* kiln, unearthed in the Sichuan city of Suining, is now in the Suining Municipal Museum.¹ Another example is in the collection of the Hakone Art Museum in Japan.²

PROVENANCE:

Ip's collection, Hong Kong, Sotheby's Hong Kong,
28.11.2016, Lot 359

¹ National Museum of China *Song Yun: Sichuan Yao Cang Wenwu Jicui* (The Charm of Song, Cultural Artefacts from Hoards in Sichuan), Beijing 2006, p. 25

² Gompertz, G.St.G.M. *Chinese Celadon Wares*, Faber and Faber, London 1958 & 1980, no. 67a,b p. 136





8 **FOLIATE XING SAUCER**
邢窑花口盘

Five dynasties to early Northern Song dynasty,
10th - 11th century
Diameter: 5 ½ inches, 14 cm
Height: 1 ½ inches, 3 cm

A white porcelain dish, the gently rounded sides supported on a ring foot. The edge of the rim is sharply cut into a tenfold rim. The dish is completely undecorated and covered in a thin white glaze with the near-white body only exposed on the foot ring. A number of characteristic 'tear-drop' markings in the glaze are clearly visible on the dish.

Xing ware, the first 'true' porcelain, is the predecessor of *Ding* ware. This striking, pure white stoneware dish was made at the highly regarded *Xing* kiln in Hebei province, which produced ware that "...seems to have been favoured for wine".¹ According to Kerr: *The great fame of Xing ware rests in its designation as the earliest true porcelain made in China, and hence in the world. [...] Xing wares are the whitest of early northern porcelains, both as regards body and glaze.*² A comparable 'flower-shaped' ten-lobed *Xing* dish is in the Meiyintang collection.³

1 Watson, W. *Tang and Liao Ceramics*, Thames and Hudson, 1984, p. 36

2 Kerr, R. *Song Dynasty Ceramics, Victoria and Albert Museum Far Eastern Series*, London 2004, p. 40

3 Krahl, R. *Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection, Volume Three (II)* London 2006, no. 1414, p. 414.





9 **DING STONEWARE BOWL WITH 'GUAN' MARK**
定窑“官”字款碗

Late Tang Dynasty – Five Dynasties,
10th century
Diameter 6 1/8 inches, 15.6 cm

A thinly potted conical bowl with flared sides rising from a concave rounded foot to a well-finished lipless rim. The bowl is covered inside and out with a clear glossy glaze, showing a few 'tear marks' on the underside. The slightly recessed flat base is also glazed. The well-trimmed edge of the foot is unglazed, exposing the fine white porcelain. The base is incised through the glaze on the base before firing with the character 官 'guan' (official).

A similar conical bowl of slightly larger size, with incised 'guan' mark on the base was discovered in 1985 in a hoard of thirty-two 'guan'-marked porcelains and other ceramics excavated at Huoshaobi village in the northern suburbs of Xian and now in the Xian Institute of Cultural Relics Preservation.¹ White porcelains bearing the incised mark 'guan' have been excavated at the *Xing* and *Ding* kiln sites in Hebei province and in many different regions in China, from dated tombs, pagoda foundations and hoards. The earliest documented discovery of 'guan'-marked white porcelains to date was at Lin'an, Zhejiang province in the tomb of a high official named Qian Kuan (d. 895), the father of Qian Lu, the first king of the State of Wu, and the tomb of his wife, Madam Shuiqiu (d. 901), where many white porcelain dishes, bowls and cups with incised marks of 官 'guan' (official), and 新官 'xin guan' (new official) were found. Some scholars have suggested that porcelains incised with 'guan' and related marks must have been a special category of ware made for the use of high officials or as special tribute wares. A *ding* waterpot with a *guan* mark is in the Meyintang collection.²

PROVENANCE:

Collection of Ronald W. Longsdorf, U.S.A., J.J. Lally, New York "Early Chinese White Wares, The Ronald W. Longsdorf Collection" 2015, no. 23

- 1 Zhang (ed.), *Zhongguo chutu ciqu quanji* (Complete Collection of Ceramic Art Unearthed in China), Vol. 15: Shaanxi, Beijing, 2008, p. 92, no. 92, described as Tang-Five Dynasties and attributed to the Ding kilns at Quyang, Hebei province
- 2 Krahl, R. *Chinese Ceramics from the Meyintang Collection Volume One*, Azimuth Editions, London 1994, fig. 341, p. 196





10 **DING STONEWARE SAUCER**
定窑花口盘

Song dynasty, 11th/12th century

Diameter: 5 1/2 inches, 14 cm

Height: 5/8 inch, 3.8 cm

A thinly potted lobed stoneware saucer, the sides flaring outwards from the flat base and terminating in a six-lobed rim. The interior and exterior, including the flat base and the foot ring, are completely covered in an ivory-hued white glaze of *ding* type.

This saucer was made in the *Ding* kilns, situated in present-day Quyang county in Hebei province, southwest of Beijing. *Ding* wares have been grouped by connoisseurs as one of the five famous ceramics from the Song dynasty.¹ The high level of craftsmanship and materials used in creating such wares is evident at first glance and when held. It is unusual for the base also to be completely covered in glaze, as on the present saucer. A similar, slightly larger six-lobed dish with glazed base is in the Meyintang collection.² A set of four smaller, but comparable dishes with glazed bases from the collection of Kai-Yin Lo was included in the exhibition *Bright as Silver, White as Snow* at the Denver Art Museum in 1998.³

¹ Krahl, R. *Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection Volume One*, Azimuth Editions, London, p. 198

² Krahl, R. *op.cit.* fig. 347, p. 198

³ Lo, Kai-Yin (ed.) *Bright as Silver, White as Snow, Chinese White Ceramics from Late Tang to Yuan Dynasty*, Denver Art Museum 1998, pl. 17, pp. 118-9





11 **STONEWARE BOWL OF JIZHOU TYPE
WITH "PAPER CUT-OUT" PHOENIXES**
吉州窑剪纸贴花双凤纹碗

Song dynasty, 960 - 1279
Diameter: 5 inches, 12.7 cm
Height: 2 1/2 inches, 6.3 cm

A stoneware bowl of *Jizhou* type, its conical sides rising steeply from a short, slightly recessed base and terminating in a channeled rim. The interior is decorated with two "paper cut-out" phoenixes in flight, alternating with plum blossoms. The exterior is covered a predominantly black glaze, to which pale blue splashes are applied in a random pattern in imitation of tortoiseshell. The glaze stops just short of the foot, which is left unglazed.

The *Jizhou* kiln in Jiangxi province in southern China produced small, sturdily potted bowls usually covered in a dark brown or black glaze, which were used for drinking tea. It is unusual to find a *Jizhou* bowl employing two different techniques; one a "paper cut-out" technique to make the phoenixes and plum blossoms (both highly auspicious symbols) and another to produce the tortoiseshell-like pattern on the exterior of the bowl. In the paper cut-out technique, the decoration is first cut out in paper, then applied to the glaze. The paper subsequently burns away in the firing, leaving a perfect silhouette of what had been cut out and applied.





12 **YAOZHOU STONEWARE BOWL**
耀州窑柿红釉花口盖

Song dynasty, 11th/12th century
Diameter: 4 ¼ inches, 11 cm
Height: 1 ½ inches, 3.8 cm

A delicately potted small bowl, the sides rising from a short foot and terminating in a six-lobed, upturned rim. The bowl is covered inside and out is a glossy persimmon glaze of *Yaozhou* type, leaving just the base and the foot uncovered and showing the fine pale brown stoneware.

The lobed form of this bowl and its glaze colour are both strongly reminiscent of contemporary lacquerware and it is certainly possible that the potters were inspired by this. The kilns that produced these *Yaozhou* wares were mostly situated around Huangbao and Chenlu in present-day Tongquan county, Shaanxi province in northern China. These kilns produced the familiar green-glazed 'celadon' wares in abundance, but the main production was actually brown-glazed wares, of which this beautiful small lobed bowl is a perfect example. The colour is caused by the amount of iron oxide used. A small Yaozhou persimmon-glazed dish from the collection of Mrs Walter Sedgwick with an equally glossy glaze is in the Meyintang collection.¹

¹ Krahl, R. *Chinese Ceramics from the Meyintang Collection* Volume One, Azimuth Editions, London 1994, fig. 436, p. 242





13 **CIZHOU POTTERY BOX WITH BUTTERFLIES**
磁州窑白地黑花双蝶纹盖盒

Northern Song or Jin dynasty, 12th century
Diameter: 4 ½ inches, 11.4 cm
Height: 1 ½ inches, 3.8 cm

A pottery straight-sided box and cover, supported on a low foot rim. The interior and exterior are covered in a finely crackled, creamy white glaze of *Cizhou* type, leaving the rims and the base uncovered and showing the fine grained pottery. The domed cover is painted in underglaze black with two confronting, stylized butterflies in flight. An oblique incised slash on the sides marks the alignment of box and cover.

A *Cizhou* pottery box and cover of similar shape, painted with a floral spray, is in the Meiyintang collection.¹

PROVENANCE:

Private collection, Japan. Priestley & Ferraro,
no. 2125, London

¹ Krahl, R, *Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection*, Volume Three (II) London 2006, no. 1544, p. 547.





14 **YUEYAO OVAL STEMMED BOWL**
越窑海棠杯

Song dynasty, 10th or 11th Century
Diameter: 4 ½ inches, 11.5 cm
Height: 2 ¼ inches, 5.8 cm

A finely potted stem bowl of oval outline, supported on a high, tapered foot. The bowl is completely undecorated and covered inside and out in an evenly applied, sea-green glaze of *Yueyao* type.

Yue wares, a term that covers most early celadon wares, developed slowly over a period of about one thousand years, from the Han dynasty (206BC - 220AD) to the early Song dynasty. The central *yue* kiln sites are in the Shanglinhu region in Zhejiang province.¹ *Yue* wares produced during the Five Dynasties and the Northern Song dynasty have many characteristics in common with their predecessors, such as the greyish body and the production methods. An oval fluted *Yue* stem bowl is in the Meiyintang collection.² Commenting on this bowl, Krahl remarks that "... oval bowls are known from Sassanian and Sogdian metalwork and were copied in Tang silver."³

PROVENANCE:

Priestley & Ferraro, no. 1031, London

¹ Gompertz, G.ST.G.M., *Chinese Celadon Wares*, Faber and Faber, London, 1980, pp. 34-5

² Krahl, R, *Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection*, Volume Three (II) London 2006, no. 1403, p. 405

³ Krahl, R, *op cit.* p. 405





15 **LONGQUAN CELADON MALLET-SHAPED VASE**
龙泉窑摩羯耳瓶

Southern Song dynasty, 13th century
Height: 6 ½ inches, 16.3 cm

A small mallet-shaped porcelain vase of *Longquan* type, the straight sides rising up from a recessed base, the shoulder tapered and the neck terminating in a dish-shaped mouth with upturned rim. The neck is moulded with well-modelled fish handles to either side. The vase is covered in an even, pale green 'celadon' glaze, leaving the foot uncovered and showing the fine porcelain body.

The clear, jade-like glaze that covers this vase is typical of the *Longquan* kilns in southern Zhejiang province. It is primarily attributable to the smoky firing technique employed there, which converted the small amount of iron present in the glaze into ferrous oxide.¹ A slightly smaller *Longquan* vase with twin fish handles is in the Meiyintang collection.² In the accompanying text, Krahl refers to the mallet shape as '*kinuta*', the Japanese term.³ *Longquan* celadons were and continue to be particularly popular in Japan. It is interesting to note that the small repair on the foot was executed in lacquer, to enhance the repair rather than to hide it; this is a typical Japanese concept.

PROVENANCE:

Private collection, Japan. Priestley & Ferraro,
no. 2200, London

¹ Gompertz, G.St.G.M. *Chinese Celadon Wares*, Faber and Faber, London 1958 & 1980, page 164

² Krahl, R. *Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection* Volume One, Azimuth Editions, London, no. 570, p. 304

³ Krahl, R. *op.cit.* p. 304





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