

**CHINESE AND JAPANESE  
WORKS OF ART**  
*in the Collection of  
Her Majesty The Queen*

**Volume I**

**John Ayers**

ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST

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Frontispiece: *famille verte* jar and cover from Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, 1690–1710 (cat. 459)

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# Introduction: the history of the collection

*John Ayers*

The Royal Collection incorporates one of the most significant collections of Eastern arts in the Western world, consisting of a rich cross-section of the porcelain, jade, lacquer and other works of art produced in China and Japan over a period of several centuries. Many of the earlier records of these acquisitions have been lost, but later inventories, often outlining their history in some detail, tell the story of those who, here and abroad, have shaped the character of the Collection over the centuries.

A long-standing appetite for rarities from distant lands, leading to the introduction of novel styles and techniques in our own arts and manufactures, has repeatedly added to the amenities of life in the West. Of the greatest significance of all for Western nations has been Chinese innovation in the craft of ceramics.

It was in the early centuries AD that the Chinese achieved the ability to make high-fired stonewares, with their unique durability, as well as devising a range of attractive decorative glazes in which to clothe them. The wealth of artistic possibilities that stoneware created was then superseded by the time of the Tang dynasty (618–906) by the even more advanced material that we call ‘porcelain’, with its novel properties of whiteness and translucency, transforming the possibilities, and hence the future development, of the ceramic arts.

Soon, porcelain was in demand throughout the known world; and in the fourteenth century, the Chinese adopted, from what is now the Middle East, the technique of underglaze painting in cobalt blue. As a result, some singularly attractive wares were produced that were soon carried by Indian and Arab traders to the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea, whence, transported overland, they would become items of regular trade throughout western Asia and into Europe.

It was in this way that the sultans of the widespread Ottoman Empire were able to amass, mainly for use in the lavish banquets to which they were partial, the unique collection of early celadon-glazed and blue-painted dishes and jars that remains preserved to this day in the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul. Elsewhere, more modest collections were made by such European rulers as the Medici in Florence. While little now remains of their former splendour, a handful of pieces also found their way, usually in the form of princely gifts, over the Alps to northern Europe. Here, they were seen as such rarities as to be worthy of mounting in silver or gold and kept in treasuries.

From about 1500, however, when Portuguese mariners pioneered the Cape route to the East, porcelain and other oriental goods began to travel more freely. A century later, the establishment by the Dutch, the English and, in due course, other nations, of their own East India Companies ensured an increasing flow of firstly Chinese, and then Japanese products. Lacquered furniture and other goods were also in demand; and soon the more imposing porcelain artefacts were being used as furnishing pieces in the decoration of great houses and palaces, a practice that has never since been out of fashion.

*Frogmore House: The Green Closet*  
(detail of Fig. 8), c.1819,  
by Charles Wild



11, 12

### 11–12 Pair of duck incense burners mounted in gilt bronze

RCIN 100256.1–2

Porcellanous stoneware with celadon glaze, mounted in gilt bronze

Incense burners: Longquan, Zhejiang province; Ming dynasty, 16th–early 17th century

Mounts: France; third quarter 18th century

H (overall) 24.0 cm, 25.5 cm; W 16.5 cm, 17.5 cm

Similar models standing on a low mound base with head turned to the left, the round eyes protruding slightly, the beak open, revealing the tongue. The hollow body is moulded with plumage, the extended tail feathers overlapping at the tip, the clawed and webbed feet standing on a base carved with rockwork and left largely unglazed so as to burn reddish brown in the firing, and reinforced underneath by a strut. The neck and upper part of the body are removable, for inserting the burner. The joining rims are enclosed in thin bands of gilt bronze with a hinge on one side for the cover, partly hidden by decorative foliate branches extending onto the neck. The gilt-bronze rim at the neck extends across the thickly potted body, with decorative foliate clasps to attach the

mount to the porcellanous body. Placed in the beak of each bird is a gilt-bronze fish. Remnants of paste adhere to the bases where a mount was once fitted, and there is a redundant hole in the base between the feet.

MOUNT CASTINGS: the fish cast in one piece. The foliage cast in at least three separate sections and then joined to the rim of the hinged neck. Several leaf tips and some leaves are missing.

PROVENANCE: George IV, 1816; purchased by François Benois (active 1806–30) from Escudier, Paris, on 8 February 1816, ‘deux Canards de porcelaine de la chine, sur terrasse En Bronze doré formant pot pourii, 90 francs’ (RA GEO/MAIN/26419).

LABELS: on each base, in ink, ‘2’.

INVENTORY REFERENCES: Royal Pavilion, Brighton: ‘A pair of sea green waterfowl ... having fish in their Beaks’, with the note ‘broken when purchased’ (1829B, p. 119); sent to Buckingham Palace, March 1847 (noted in ‘Her Majesty’s Dressing Room’ in 1917) (1829A, p. 10).

## 2. OTHER EARLY WARES

### 13 Jun ware bowl

RCIN 58991

Buff stoneware with opalescent blue glaze splashed with crimson-purple

North China, probably Henan province; Yuan dynasty (1279–1368)

H 7.8 cm; Dia. 18.2 cm

With spreading sides rising at the rim, and small, neatly cut, spreading foot. Covered with a thick, light blue glaze running into pools above the foot and somewhat crazed inside, where a larger and a smaller splash of crimson copper oxide were applied.

PROVENANCE: probably acquired by Queen Mary (1867–1953).

LABEL: on the base, the black printed label, 'GEORGE-EUMORFOPOULOS' (George Eumorfopoulos (1863–1939) was a celebrated London collector and co-founder of the Oriental Ceramic Society).



13





173

of May 1800 may be the earliest known purchase of a piece of mounted Asian porcelain by George IV.

PROVENANCE: George IV, 1800.

LABELS: on each base, the printed label, 'GvR' under a crown, with 'Room 219' added in pencil.

INVENTORY REFERENCES: 'A pair of white Kylins mounted with gilt bronze Lizards ... etc', inventoried at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton (1829B, p. 102), and sent to Buckingham Palace in March 1847 (1829A, p. 32), where they appear in the 1877 Buckingham Palace China Inventory in the Drawing Room (p. 155, no. 227). Noted in 1914 in the 'Small Chinese Room'.





192

### 192 Gilt-bronze clock mounted with Chinese figures

RCIN 30429

Chinese and French porcelain and gilt-bronze mounts

Figure: south China, probably Fujian province; Kangxi period (1662–1722)

Deer: Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province; early 18th century

Cup: France; mid-18th century

Mounts: France; mid-18th century

H (overall) 24.6 cm; W (overall) 21.0 cm; D (overall) 10.5 cm

The original clock movement (now missing) is mounted in a cup of Chantilly porcelain painted in enamels in the 'Kakiemon style', fitted with a concave glass face within a gilt-bronze ring cast with leaves, formed as a door hinged on the left. It is raised on a branching stem surrounded by four French porcelain flowers,



209, 211, 210

### 209–211 *Garniture of three vases*

RCINS 692.1–2, 11851

Porcelain with crackled glaze and applied decoration in black and white slip

Perhaps south China; late 18th–early 19th century

H 35.4 cm, 35.6 cm, 45.9 cm

Baluster-shaped with rounded shoulder, waisted neck and open mouth, the sides spreading towards the foot. On either side of the neck are small handles in the form of prunus branches dressed in black, with applied flowers in white. On the front, in relief, are two four-clawed, brown-black dragons disputing a pearl, and on the reverse, a flying crane. The mouth rim is dressed in brown.

COMMENTARY: Jutsham Dels i.222, 4 September 1815, provides a possible reference: ‘A Pair of Small Crackly Vases or Jars light Drab Ground - with painted Birds, Snakes or 3 leg Dragons Flowers and Insects - the Top & Bottom mounted in Or Molu’. An additional note reads: ‘presented by the Princess Charlotte’ (1796–1817). While these items cannot otherwise be identified, and it is not uncommon for mounts to have been removed, there remains the question of the third, larger vase.

PROVENANCE: possibly George IV, 1815.

LABELS: inside each of the smaller pair is an ink-written label, ‘From the Lord Chamberlain’s Office 8/12/16’.





325, 326

(no. 211). For an identical pair, see Christie's 1998b (lot 31). See also London 1990 (p. 170 (one only), no. 151).

LITERATURE: Dillon 1910, p. 27, cat. 73 (i, ii); Lane 1949–50, p. 31, pl. 10e, f.

### 325–326 Two hexagonal jars and covers

RCIN 1110.1–2.a–b

Porcelain painted in 'Kakiemon-style' enamels

Arita, Hizen province; 1670–90

H (overall) 31.5 cm, 31.5 cm, (jar only) 26.9 cm, 26.9 cm

Of the same form as cats 323–324. Painted in rich blue, green, red and brown enamels (without black or gold). On alternate sides appear a long-tailed, long-necked, brown-bodied bird

perched on a flowering stem, and one of two other designs of tall flowering plants. Round the shoulder is a band of scrollwork in green on a red ground, interrupted at the corners, alternately, by quatrefoil panels displaying a bird with outstretched blue wings and fan-shaped green tail, and by blue blooms with red centres. Round the neck is a border of key-fret in red; the cover repeating the shoulder design.

COMMENTARY: the vases are identical in design, but not a 'matched pair' as cats 323–324. Variations of the designs exist, and for one in the British Museum without birds on the sides and having plant motifs in the shoulder quatrefoils, see London 1990 (p. 174, no. 155). A similar jar in Dresden 1990 (p. 434, no. 212a, b) is inscribed on the base 'R.B. 1730'.

LITERATURE: Dillon 1910, p. 27, cat. 72 (i, ii).



423





## 526 Vase mounted in gilt bronze

RCIN 3596

Porcelain painted in iron-red enamel, mounted in gilt bronze

Vase: Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province; reign of Kangxi, c.1700–20

Mounts: France; third quarter 18th century

H (overall) 27.6 cm

Of the same form and decoration as cats 522–523 and 524–525, the short neck removed. Painted round the sides, similarly, are floral scrolls in white reserve on red. The gilt-bronze neck is decorated with a band of spreading stiff leaves, with a pounced ground and burnished edges. The vase sits in a berried laurel band on a hollow, square, gilt-bronze base, with concave corners and panelled sides with granulated ground.

MOUNT CASTINGS: the neck mount cast in one piece. The laurel band round the foot cast in one piece, and the plinth cast in several panels which are brazed together.

COMMENTARY: similar to cat. 527, which was formerly at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

INVENTORY REFERENCE: noted in the '1866' Windsor Castle Inventory, pp. 408–9, no. 734, in the King's Closet.



526



554, 555

### 554–555 Pair of rouleau vases

RCIN 27808.1–2

Porcelain painted in underglaze blue, iron-red and green enamels and gilt

Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province; reign of Kangxi, 1700–20

H 26.8 cm, 27.0 cm

With waisted neck expanding at the lip and recessed, glazed base with an empty blue double ring. The sides are painted with chrysanthemum blooms and half-blooms with blue, red and dotted green petals overpainted in gilt or with motifs in white reserve, all on a ground of gilt plant scrolls, with chevron border above and sprays of *lingzhi* in gilt and red on the neck. The mouth rim is gilt.

PROVENANCE: Queen Mary.

LABELS: on each base, a printed label, of a Gothic 'M' under a crown (for Queen Mary), 'PRIVATE PROPERTY'; and smaller printed labels in red, 'Holyrood May 1969' and 'No 19/ 138'.

INVENTORY REFERENCE: Holyrood 1978 Inventory, p. 127, nos 1078–1079.





674

### 674–675 Pair of vases

RCIN 58990.1–2

Porcelain with turquoise glaze, painted in *famille rose* enamels and gilt Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province; mark and reign of Qianlong (1736–95)  
H 38.9 cm, 38.8 cm

Of double-lobed gourd form, the larger, lower bulb ovoid, and the upper pear-shaped with spreading mouth. Painted to resemble *cloisonné* enamel work, with, on the body, reserved in a turquoise ground, strips of geometric scrollwork, with *shou* (long life) roundels above in iron-red and gold, among floral scrollwork with lotus and hibiscus flowers, other exotic blooms and beribboned jade musical chimes (one of the Eight Precious Things), with lotus-petal and *ruyi*-head borders below and above. The rims are gilt in imitation of metal. On the base, in iron red, reserved in the turquoise ground, is the six-character reign-mark written in seal script: *Da Qing Qianlong nian zhi* ('Made in the reign of the Qianlong emperor of the Great Qing').

PROVENANCE: almost certainly George IV.

MARK/LABELS: on the base of cat. 675, the remains of a crown painted in black; also the labels, 'Rubens Room 1863', printed in red within a blue border; and another, '344' in ink, referring to this numbered entry in the '1866' Windsor Castle Inventory.

INVENTORY REFERENCES: recorded in the Long Gallery at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton (1829B, p. 48); sent from Brighton to Buckingham Palace, March 1847: 'A pair of double shaped Turquoise blue bottles the ground enamelled with Chinese borders &c gold blue red and yellow flowers & scollops through' (1829A, p. 22). They were sent to Windsor Castle, where they are listed in the '1866' Windsor Castle Inventory in the Rubens Room (now known as the King's Drawing Room), pp. 242–3, no. 344.



### 676–677 Pair of vases mounted in gilt bronze

RCIN 78435.1–2

Porcelain with green glaze, painted in *famille rose* enamels, mounted in gilt bronze

Vases: Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province; second half 18th century

Mounts: France and England; late 18th to early 19th century

H (overall) 75.3 cm, 75.3 cm

With tall, ovoid body, waisted, tubular neck and gently spreading rim, and four moulded dragons in applied relief round the shoulder. Painted all over in imitation of painted or *cloisonné* enamel work; in reserve, on a light apple-green ground, relieved with incised feathery scrollwork, are lotus and hibiscus scrolls, the inside of the neck and base treated with a light turquoise enamel. Two of the dragons are in iron-red and gold, and the others in yellow and rose-pink. The top rim is fitted with a projecting, incised, gilt-bronze band, the domed cover cast with beaded edge and acanthus leaves, surmounted by a berried acanthus finial. The foot is set in a beaded ring above a bold egg-and-dart band, on a plain circular step and large, hollow, square base. Covering a thick dressing of brown wax on the turquoise base (probably part of a previous mounting) is a wooden plaque, from which a stabilising metal rod runs through the vase to connect with the rim band, no doubt for its former use as a lamp.





696



697

### 696–697 Two imperial dishes

RCIN 58815.1–2

Porcelain painted in underglaze blue and yellow enamel  
Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province; Guangxu period, c.1875–1903  
H 5.9 cm, 6.0 cm; Dia. 32.2 cm, 32.0 cm

With rounded well and everted lip. In the centre is a design painted in reserve on a blue ground, of a rampant, five-clawed dragon pursuing a pearl among clouds and flames, with two similar running dragons in a band round the sides, repeated on the outside, all with the designs filled out in yellow enamel. On the base, in four large blue seal-script characters, is the mark *Chuxiugong zhi* ('Made for the Palace of Gathered Elegance').

PROVENANCE: presented to Queen Victoria on 5 August 1896 by the Special Chinese Ambassador, Li Hongzhang, on behalf of the Guangxu emperor. See provenance note under cat. 449.

LABELS: on the bases are typed labels, 'From Osborne 1903'; also, the printed label, 'GvR' under a crown, 'BUCKINGHAM PALACE L.C.D.', with handwritten 'Corridor 257' added.

INVENTORY REFERENCE: recorded in the Inventory of Works of Art at Osborne House (1900, I, p. 357) in the New Wing Corridor as 'Two Old Porcelain Plates in blue and sage green with clouds and dragons; in the form of dishes and with a Chinese inscription on the bottom. Diameter 12 5/8 inches [32.1 cm]. On a carved circular and hexagonal stand with medallions of rosewood'; sent to Buckingham Palace in April 1903. The stand has not been identified.





704

### 704–705 Pair of large vases and covers

RCIN 2353.1–2.a–b

Porcelain painted in *famille rose* enamels and gilt

Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province; 1740–60

H (overall) 134.5 cm, 136.5 cm

Of tall, baluster shape, with rounded shoulder, waisted neck and upright mouth rim; the cover, a low dome, with spreading rim and large, bud-shaped knob. Painted round the sides are a pair of pheasants by a tree peony growing by a rock, a pair of ducks by a lotus plant in water, a pair of cranes and two pairs of phoenixes. Round the shoulder are four quatrefoil cartouches with a selection of the 'Hundred Antiques' (collection of motifs and objects, some from nature and some from Chinese mythology such as the Eight Precious Things / Eight Treasures) in red, black and gold; on the neck, four smaller panels with peony sprays among hibiscus, and other floral scrolls reserved in a flowered pink ground; and round the rim, a red-and-gilt key-fret border. The cover is decorated to match the shoulder, the knob in iron-red, gold and green. Above the foot is a lotus-petal pattern border.

PROVENANCE: presented to Queen Mary by friends in 1935.

INVENTORY REFERENCE: QMB.III.313.





725, 726



727, 728



729



730, 731