

**Eleven exemplary
eighteenth century
Chinese Jades**

Littleton and Hennessy

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It is rare, in today's frenetic world of Asian Art, to find collectors who are driven to assemble a truly outstanding group of objects such as the jades presented in this catalogue. One cannot underestimate the conviction one needs to maintain the cohesive thread that connects the eleven pieces offered. While it may not have the numbers of other collections, each piece within the group has been chosen to extremely high standards of beauty, craftsmanship, material and rarity. Additionally, most of the pieces have distinguished provenance, coming from well known British and American collections.

This collector has always believed that the most important part of ownership is the ability to study the individual object. The decision to purchase is always preceded by intense examination, research and comparison. It is perhaps for this reason that the pieces seem to have such depth, repaying repeated viewing. In researching the catalogue, it was amazing how many unexpected historical and aesthetic connections could be made. It is perhaps this quality that lends the collection its true greatness, the ability of the individual pieces to broaden our view of Chinese Art as a whole.

All true collectors need to collect, an obsession which can also be an affliction, and having explored this area, the collector feels the need to re-focus and move on. One of the great joys any dealer has is to have the opportunity to work with like-minded collectors and handle great objects.

There has always been the sense of adventure in trying to acquire pieces that fit the collector's passions, and I am honoured now to be entrusted with the sale of this group.

We look forward to seeing our friends again during TEFAF Maastricht 2009 and we are also delighted to have Ruben Lien join the team of Littleton and Hennessy. Ruben has laid down the foundations for a very bright future in the world of Chinese art with his time with Christies and we trust that his star will continue to grow with us.

James Hennessy
Shanghai
January 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese people's love of jade has existed for at least 8000 years, a relationship unparalleled in human history. From the shadowy hunter-gatherers of Xinglongwa in Inner Mongolia¹, to business magnates of Hong Kong, jade has been prized, worn and collected, not only as a symbol of status and wealth, but because it is so deeply intertwined with the aesthetics, philosophy, religion and history of China.

Many consider the 18th century to be the apogee of Chinese jade. Whereas this is debatable, it can certainly be considered one of the golden ages of jade carving. Certainly in no earlier period was such a variety and quantity of jade objects seen.

Many factors contributed to this florescence. Firstly: the conquest of areas where jade was mined resulted in an unprecedented supply of the material. The Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, had settled border disputes between the Qing court and Imperial Russia and opened trade between the two nations, allowing access to the superb spinach green nephrites of Siberia. The conquest of the Dzungar and Uighar tribes in 1759 brought Xinjiang, where the best nephrite was mined, under direct central control for the first time since the Yuan Dynasty. Finally the pacification of Burma in 1768, resulted in a flow of tribute jadeite jade into the court. Thus by the late 18th century many new and different types of jade had been made available to the Chinese lapidary.

Secondly: many technological innovations in jade carving appeared during this period. Although the foot treadle, with its two directional sawing motion, remained the basic mechanism for carving, the ability to hollow, pierce and carve was greatly enhanced by the use of new and unusually shaped carving heads. There is also evidence that a variety of new abrasives were introduced at this time, including diamond dust which leave characteristic scratches on the surface of jade which can be seen under magnification. Diamond tipped engraving tools, introduced by the western missionaries for copperplate engraving, began to be used for jade, particularly for inscriptions, allowing the direct carving of calligraphy upon the jade surface for the first time.

Thirdly and most importantly, the beginning of the 18th century marked the midpoint of the Kang-Qian Golden age, during which the Qing dynasty reached the zenith of its social, economic and military power. This was a period of increased imperial patronage of the arts, and from the Qianlong period onwards, imperial patronage of jade carving in particular.

It is impossible to summarize the influence that Yinzhen and his son Hongli (who ruled under the reign titles of Yongzheng and Qianlong) had upon imperial art in a few paragraphs, but it is useful to reiterate some well known facts about their individual preferences.

Numerous paintings of antiques and interiors commissioned by Yinzhen both as a prince and Emperor² reveal his diverse and refined taste. In different rooms, contemporary objects of exquisite workmanship are combined with carefully mounted and displayed antiques to create an atmosphere of elegant luxury. They reveal a sophisticated ability to harmonize old and new, and east and west.

Building on this foundation, Hongli became an all-encompassing collector who believed that the possession of art gave legitimacy to his rule, and therefore amassed an encyclopaedic group of antique and contemporary art. In particular he had a passion for jade and wrote more than 800 poems and essays about the subject. In these writings the Emperor showed a marked preference for jades following antique models in keeping with his respect for the classical past.

Antique models included both bronzes and paintings. The former were sometimes exactly copied, and sometimes more creatively remodelled. The latter were almost invariably landscapes, which were carved onto boulders, table screens and brushpots.

The themes discussed above are reflected in the 11 pieces of jade presented in this catalogue.

The refined taste of Yongzheng can be seen in the little wine cups, (cat. 5), which were probably made for his personal use. Wine vessels of jade had in the Ming dynasty been restricted to members of the royal family, with lower ranks being allowed vessels of gold and silver.

The plurality of cultural influence in China during this period is seen in the Chinese (cat. 1-4), Mogul style(cat. 6), Central Asian(cat. 9) and Western style(cat. 10) pieces.

Hongli's taste for archaism can be seen in the jadeite incense burner (cat. 7) the prototype of which was a bronze *ding* of the warring states period. However, in the interim, the legs of the *ding* have shortened, and it has acquired a cover, although the bronze leiwen and taotie mask decoration have been retained. It shows the creative adaptation of an antique form.

The pictorial style of jade carving is seen in cat. 11, perhaps one of the most successful evocations of a painting known in jade. The ability of the lapidary to vary the thickness of the material to imitate the different colours of ink, the technical virtuosity of the details such as the kite string left in relief make it a true masterpiece of Chinese jade art.

¹ Yang Hu Liu, Tang Chun, The Origins of Jade in East Asia, Jades of the Xinglongwa culture, Hong Kong 2004

² The Royal Academy, The Three Emperors pp. 252–255 and 258–261, London 2005.

引言

中國人與玉之關係源遠流長，上下八千年之久，為其他民族所難匹比。從內蒙興隆窪文化的獵民到香港的富商，玉的收集、佩帶及珍藏不只因為它代表了地位與價值，更因為它與中國的美學，思想，宗教與歷史息息相關。

許多人認為十八世紀是中國玉器的高峰。此說雖然可議，但不可否認其為玉雕的一個黃金時段；至少沒有一個時期的玉器比此時更豐富多樣。

這個百花齊放的局面是由許多因素促成的。首先，產玉區歸入版圖使得玉料取得更加容易。清廷與帝俄在1689年簽訂尼布楚條約，消弭疆界爭執，開放通商，使得西伯利亞的碧玉進入中土。1759年準部與回部的平定，讓新疆地區繼元朝後第一次被朝廷控制，上好的軟玉於是被採掘。最後1786年緬甸也加入版圖，令翡翠被定量貢入朝廷。至此，十八世紀末的玉匠有比前更多的不同玉種作為材質。

其次，這時期的玉雕有許多技術上的突破。雖然跔機來回磨磋玉料的解玉法仍是基本，新式的跔頭使淘膛，穿鑿及雕琢等技巧都更加進步。資料也證明許多不同的解玉沙被引用，如金剛沙在玉表上留下的獨特擦痕，可以在放大鏡下清楚看見。由傳教士引進作銅版畫用裝有鑽石頭的工具，也在此時被用在玉雕上，尤其用於刻字。

第三點，並也是最重要的一點，十八世紀初是康雍乾三朝的黃金時期，國力鼎盛。這時期是皇室對藝術日漸重視的時期，乾隆之後對玉雕之重視尤然。

雖然胤禛與弘曆對皇室藝文的影響難以寥寥數語涵括，但我們可以從他們廣為人知的個人喜好當中窺見一二。

在胤禛身為皇子與登基後命工匠所畫的圖軸中，其上的器物及房中擺設均反映了他多樣而雅致的品味。不同的房中，精美的當代器物與細心陳設的古董並列互襯，營造出優雅而尊貴的氣氛，展示了他融合新舊、貫通中西的練達。

在此基礎上，弘曆成為一位兼容並包的收藏家；相信藉由藝術來確定其皇朝的正統性。他據此而對古今各種包羅萬象的藝術，鉅細靡遺，無所不收。他對玉器有特別的偏好，曾為此題目作了多達800篇的詩文。在這些詩文中他明確地表明了他對仿古玉器的徧愛，及追思敬遠的思想。

仿古器包括了以青銅器為原形，或師法古畫兩種。前一種有時完全仿造，有時則另加新意。後者則以山水畫為主，以山子，硯屏或筆筒形式出現。

上面提及的幾個主題都反映在本書中這11件玉雕上。雍正皇帝簡練的品味可以在一對當是他御用的小杯（5號）上看到。明朝時只有皇室可使用玉製器皿，其他貴族只能使用金銀器。

中國在此時所收的多元化影響可從本土風（1－4號），痕都斯坦風（第6號），中亞風（第9號），及歐洲風格（第10號）幾件上看到。弘曆徧愛仿古的傾向則可在第7號的翡翠香爐上看出－其原形是戰國時期的銅鼎，不過其足縮短，並加了蓋。還保留著的是紋飾上的饗饗及雷紋。這是從古代器形上加以變化的例子。

在11號上我們看見了以玉器表現繪畫的最好例子，也是這類玉器中的極佳作品。可說代表了中國藝術的極致。

1 A WHITE JADE 'LINGZHI' WASHER
18th century

Formed as a hollowed *lingzhi* head, the interior rim embellished with two bats in high relief. The foot cunningly formed by the stem entwined with a smaller *lingzhi* branch, with small parallel opaque inclusions used to represent the growth rings of the fungus. The washer made of finely polished, unctuous, mutton-fat white material.

12.2 cm. (4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.) wide

白玉靈芝筆洗 十八世紀

洗呈靈芝蕈傘形，內緣圓雕兩隻蝙蝠，蕈幹盤迴於底部而成器足，與另一朵發葉小靈芝交纏，羊脂白玉質拋光柔和，有些許石紋。





2 A WHITE JADE 'PEACH' BOX AND COVER

18th century

Its profile shaped as a ripe peach on a leafy bough, with straight sides and a subtly recessed foot. The branches and curving leaves delicately carved in shallow relief on the slightly convex cover, further embellished on one side with a flying bat holding a tasselled *wan* symbol in its mouth. The entire composition a homonym for the rebus *wanshoufugui*: good-fortune and longevity for ten thousand years. The box made from green-tinted white, translucent material with occasional traces of bright russet skin, displaying a fine undulating polish throughout.

6.7 cm. (2 ½ in.) wide

Provenance:

Marvin Greenfield Collection

白玉桃形蓋盒 十八世紀

桃實形，直邊，淺圈足，蓋略拱起，蓋上淺雕蜚蝠發葉樹幹，旁飾一隻口叨卍字蝙蝠，拋玻璃光，玉質青白色稍帶玉皮。

來源：

Marvin Greenfield 舊藏。

3 A WHITE JADE 'PERSIMMON' BOX AND COVER

18th century

Its profile shaped as a ripe persimmon on a leafy bough, with straight sides and a subtly recessed base. The branches and curling leaves delicately carved in shallow relief on the slightly convex cover, further decorated with a bee to one side. The box made from green-tinted white, translucent material with occasional traces of bright russet skin, displaying a fine undulating polish throughout.

7 cm. (2 ¾ in.) wide

Provenance:

Marvin Greenfield Collection

白玉柿形蓋盒 十八世紀

柿形，直邊，淺臥足，蓋略拱起，蓋上淺雕樹枝果蒂與果實連結，旁飾一隻蜜蜂，拋玻璃光，玉質青白色稍帶玉皮。

來源：

Marvin Greenfield 舊藏。

4 A WHITE JADE 'PERSIMMON' WASHER 18th century

Designed as two persimmons on a gnarled leafy branch, the larger hollowed to form the container, its rim decorated with a bird in flight suspending a ribboned chime in its beak. All the details crisply carved in medium relief, the well polished stone of a pale greenish white tone with some pale flecks. The entire composition a homonym for the rebus *dajixiqing*: joyful celebration of great auspiciousness.

7 cm. (2 ¾ in.) wide

Provenance:

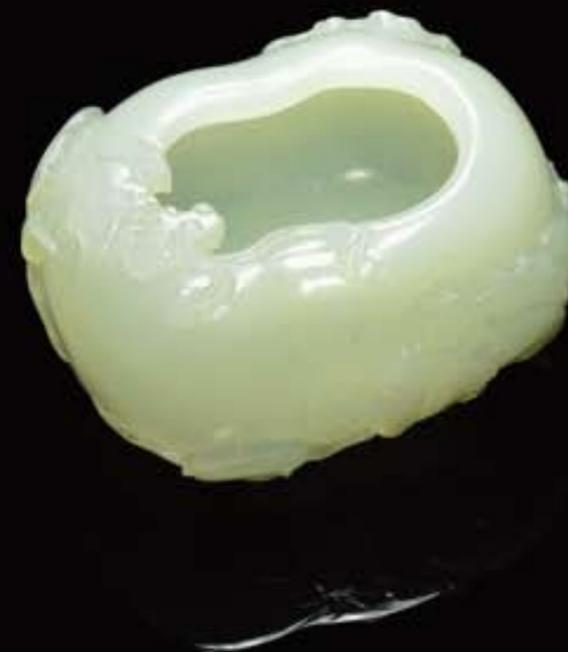
Lady June Horlick Collection

白玉吉柿喜慶小水洗 十八世紀

洗呈柿實形，生於一蟠蝨發葉樹枝上，並綴以另一小柿。器緣上飾一啣玉磬之喜鵲。拋玻璃光，玉質青白色帶有些許白斑。

來源：

June Horlick夫人藏品。





The four small objects for the scholar's desk are representative of the so-called 'Chinese taste' in jades. Each design has its roots in 18th century court paintings which achieved an almost perfect balance between naturalism and idealisation, a defining characteristic of most 18th century imperial decorative art (fig. 1). These pieces illustrate how the lapidary could use jade to translate ink-wash pictures into three dimensional forms.

In the two boxes, the design is rendered in shallowest relief, the fine incisions corresponding to the fine black ink outline in *baimiao* paintings. The cut out surface is then simply extended straight downwards to create the box form. In the Persimmon washer, the hollowed fruit is realistically rendered, but the branches and leaves are carved with sharp angles resembling brush strokes. They are then deeply undercut, so that when light passes through them they shade from light to dark, to give the illusion of graduating ink wash. In the lingzhi washer, a combination both of the techniques above is used. While the front is flat and two dimensional, with the details of the bats lightly incised, the reverse is sculpted with bold sweeping lines. Particularly impressive is the way in which the tension of the composition is maintained as the piece is rotated.

These small pieces show the sophistication of the Chinese lapidary during the 18th century, and their complete mastery of the medium.



Fig. 1

5 AN EXQUISITE PAIR OF WHITE JADE WINE CUPS

Early 18th century, probably Yongzheng period (1723–35)

Each deeply rounded cup with straight sides rising from a shallow tapered foot ring. The thinly carved, highly translucent, well polished stone of an even white tone with very fine snowflake inclusions.

5.5 cm. (2 1/8 in.) wide

Provenance:

John Lady June Horlick Collection

白玉酒杯一對 十八世紀早期，可能雍正時期（1723-35）

杯直口，圓腹，淺圈足。拋玻璃光，玉質白色稍帶雪花斑點。

來源：

June Horlick夫人藏品

The exquisite profile and the delicately modelled feet of these cups are a direct copy of the *falangcai* cups produced in the Qing Imperial kilns, and enamelled in the Palace workshops in Beijing, such as the Kangxi example in the Palace Museum, Beijing³ (fig. 2), or the larger Paul Bernat example from the Yongzheng period⁴ (fig. 3).

However, since there are no jade examples marked with Kangxi reign marks in the Palace collections, and an excavation of a Kangxi period nobleman's tomb to the west of Beijing in 1962 only yielded two small jade pendants of early Qing style (the other jades being Ming and earlier), it seems that jade production was fairly limited during this reign. Although it is also very rare to find jade pieces that can be dated to the Yongzheng period, we know from the records of the Palace workshop that the Yongzheng Emperor did commission jade pieces, and two agate cups in the Palace Museum, Beijing, are inscribed with Yongzheng seal marks⁵. It is also clear from the Palace records that the Yongzheng Emperor very much preferred undecorated jade vessels, and often ordered the lapidaries to polish the existing decoration on both contemporary and antique jade pieces to conform to this particular taste.

Given that *falangcai* cups would only be available as models to jade carvers in the Palace workshops, it is likely that these delicate cups would have been made for the personal use of the Emperor by imperial command, just like their *falangcai* counterparts. Certainly the flawless material, perfect proportions and the wonderful lustrous polish of these cups would have met with the approval of the fastidious Yongzheng Emperor.

此對酒杯之器形與清初御窯廠中所燒造之琺瑯彩小杯非常類似，大小也相同。可參見現藏北京故宮博物院帶康熙款的小杯（著錄於《故宮博物院珍品全集—39—琺瑯彩，粉彩，香港，1999，11頁，9號》）；及帶雍正款的Paul Bernat舊藏品，由香港蘇富比於1995年11月5日拍品317號拍出。此對小杯器形工整，玉質純淨，拋光細膩，應與琺瑯彩小杯同樣是皇帝御用器皿。

故宮中沒有帶康熙款的玉器，而1962年於北京西郊所發掘一康熙期貴族的墓穴中，也僅有兩件玉牌有清初風格，其它都是明或明早期的作品，說明康熙時期玉器的製作還未健全。雖然帶雍正款的玉器也鳳毛麟角，但從清宮造辦處活計檔案上我們知道雍正皇帝有作玉之紀錄，且北京故宮藏有兩件光素瑪瑙杯帶有雍正款。我們還從檔案上知道雍正皇帝喜歡像此對小杯及兩件瑪瑙杯一般的光素玉器，常命玉匠投其所好將玉器上的花紋磨去，有時連古玉也無法倖免於難。此對小杯正好符合了雍正皇帝喜好簡練風格的品味。



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



³ Illustrated in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum – 39 – Porcelains with cloisonné enamel decoration and famille rose decoration*, Hong Kong, 1999, p. 11, no. 9

⁴ sold at Sotheby's Hong Kong, 15 November 1988, lot 317

⁵ Illustrated in Yang Boda, *Zhongguo yuqi quanji (II): Qin, Han – Ming, Qing*, Hebei, 2005, p. 533 and p. 550, nos. 10 and 62



6 A MUGHAL STYLE PALE CELADON JADE 'CHRYSANTHEMUM' DISH

Qianlong (1736–95)

The shallow dish extremely thinly carved, its interior decorated with a central medallion of three layers of radiating chrysanthemum petals, corresponding to layers of overlapping peony petals on the base forming the foot. The exterior with a band of stylised lotus blooms, further petals folding around the rim into the inner mouth rim. The very translucent, softly polished stone of a pale greenish white tone suffused throughout with fine crystalline inclusions.

15 cm. (6 in.) diam.

青白玉痕都斯坦式菊瓣盤 乾隆

薄如蟬翼，盤心飾以三道細菊瓣，與盤底成圈足的牡丹花瓣相應。盤外壁飾以番蓮花，盤口沿並加飾包沿花瓣。玉質通透，拋光柔和，幾無石紋雜緒。

In material, style and workmanship, this remarkably delicate dish is almost identical to the pair of bowls in the Baur Collection, Geneva (fig. 4), which bear Qianlong reign marks and the character *jia* (first quality) on their bases⁶ (fig. 5). Although current scholarship redates a number of the jades in the Baur Collection, these astonishing bowls are undoubtedly of the Qianlong period. Not only does the profile of the bowls conform to porcelain and other un-carved jade bowls of this time, the calligraphy of the imperial marks are also identical to pieces in the Beijing Palace Museum from the Qing court collection⁷ (fig. 6). Furthermore, the decorative scheme of shallow relief 'Indian lotuses' closely resembles that found on a charger in the Palace museum⁸ (fig. 7).



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

It is very probable that this dish was made *en suite* to the Baur bowls. Not only are the petal bands and the stylised floral designs very similar on the current dish and the bowls, the way the petals fold over the rim especially is characteristic in both. Although extremely difficult to make, this design feature not only increases the sense of continuity of the decoration but also strengthens the most fragile part of the vessel.

The fascination of the Qianlong Emperor for Western and Southern Asian jades is seen in the remarkable exhibition of more than 240 pieces of Islamic jade from his collection, held in the National Palace Museum, Taipei in 2007⁹. These jades included examples manufactured throughout Islamic Asia, some pieces dating from as early as the 15th century.

It is only now, with the rest of the collection correctly identified, that the response of the Chinese lapidary to the 18th century taste for Islamic jades can be properly appreciated. Included in the show were 13 jades carved by Chinese lapidaries in the Islamic style. They show the wide variety of styles prevalent, from direct imitations of famous Mogul pieces in the imperial collection to very thin-walled vessels like the current dish.

這件巧奪天工的精緻玉盤，無論作工與紋飾都與日內瓦鮑爾藏品所藏一對帶乾隆款的玉碗非常相近（見 Pierre-F. Schneberger 所著 *The Baur Collection: Chinese Jades and other Hard Stones*，日內瓦，1976，B38-39號），有可能此盤本來是鮑爾玉碗的碗托之一。盤與碗圈足上的花瓣，還有器外的番蓮紋不但均雷同，口沿上花瓣由外折向內部的手法更是兩者均有的獨特裝飾。這個包沿花瓣的作法雖然難度極高，卻加強了紋飾裡外的連貫性，也對器皿最易受傷的口沿起了保護的作用，是既美觀又有實用性的裝飾手法。

⁶ Illustrated Pierre-F Schneberger: *The Baur Collection: Chinese Jades and other Hardstones*, Geneva, 1976, B38-39

⁷ Yang Boda, *Zhongguo yuqi quanji (II): Qin, Han – Ming, Qing*, Hebei, 2005, p. 546, no 50

⁸ Illustrated in Yang Boda, *Zhongguo yuqi quanji (II): Qin, Han – Ming, Qing*, Hebei, 2005, p. 533 and p. 550, no. 68

⁹ See Teng Shu-p'ing in the exhibition catalogue *Exquisite Beauty – Islamic Jade*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2007





7 A RARE ARCHAISTIC JADEITE TRIPOD CENSER AND COVER

Late Qianlong period

The censer is carved with two lion mask 'C'-scroll handles suspending loose rings and standing on three semi-globular legs. It is decorated on the front and back with two rectangular panels of *taotie* designs on *leiwen* ground. The cover is pierced with five quatrefoil apertures amidst archaic designs, and surmounted by a coiled dragon finial. The icily translucent mottled lavender tone with areas of bright emerald-green inclusions and a somewhat uneven glassy polish.

16 cm. (6 ¼ in.) wide

Provenance:

Hall Collection, Oxford

Exhibited:

Exhibition of Chinese Art, Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, 1915

翡翠雙耳三足龍紐蓋爐 乾隆晚期

爐圓腹，口沿左右雙獸耳活環，三乳釘足。器身前後各飾開光，內淺雕饕餮雷紋。爐蓋穿鑿五個四頭開光，間飾仿古紋，上雕蟠龍雲紋紐。玉質紫丁香色雜以翠綠。

來源：

Hall Collection舊藏，牛津

展覽：

Exhibition of Chinese Art, Burlington Fine Arts Club, 倫敦，1915年。

The appearance of jadeite from the mines of Moguang in the court of Qianlong after the conclusion of the campaign against Burma in 1768 was not especially remarked upon. In fact Yang Boda identifies one imperially inscribed jadeite piece, in which the emperor not only failed to recognise jadeite as a separate material, but also concluded it had come from Khotan¹⁰.

Yang also comments that only small amounts of jadeite entered China during this period, and notes that it seems to have been limited to a snowy translucent white or brilliant green material¹¹. However, a Qianlong marked jadeite *cong* vase from the National Palace Museum, Taipei¹², is predominantly icy lavender in colour accentuated with splashes of bright emerald green, the material remarkably similar to the censer in this collection.

The style and workmanship of the current vessel also allows an attribution to the late Qianlong period. The confusion between the two materials of this time is reflected in the uneven glassy polish and cruder detailing of the piece. This resulted from the use of abrasives and tools used to carve nephrite on the slightly harder jadeite material.

The limitations of the existing carving tools and unusual colouration of the new material may have discouraged some workers, but the Qing lapidary was able to turn these shortcomings into assets. Choosing an ancient bronze model, the uneven surface recalls the eroded metal, while the brightly contrasting colour inclusions resembles the red and green bronze patination so admired by connoisseurs of the antique.

乾隆皇帝於1768年征討緬甸奏捷，從此翡翠才開始定量進貢到清宮中。翡翠在此時產量還不多，極為珍貴，而宮中能真正確定為乾隆時期作品的翡翠也很少。此爐的造型與作工有乾隆晚期的風格，而其玉材與拋光上的特徵也均與當時所作的老坑翡翠吻合。台北故宮博物院所藏一件乾隆款的翡翠玉琮（著錄於 *The Refined Taste of the Emperor: Special Exhibition of Archaic and Pictorial Jades of the Ch'ing Court*, 國立故宮博物院，台北，1997，116-117頁，29號）其玉材就非常近似本爐，均是紫丁香主色配以明亮的翠綠色，可資比較。

¹⁰ Yang Boda, "The Glorious age of Chinese Jade" in *Jade*, ed. Roger Keverne, p. 171

¹¹ Yang Boda, "A Brief account of the Qing Court Collection of Jadeites," *Palace Museum Journal* 2000, no 6 pp 40-44

¹² illustrated in *The Refined Taste of the Emperor: Special Exhibition of Archaic and Pictorial Jades of the Ch'ing Court*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 1997, p. 116 and 117, no. 29

8 AN EXCEPTIONAL LARGE WHITE JADE VASE AND COVER

Qianlong Period (1736–95)

The flattened pear shape vase standing on a spreading base, decorated at the neck with two elephant-head 'C'-scroll handles suspending loose rings. The high domed cover surmounted by a prowling young mythical beast, probably a *bixie*, with its head turned back and its bushy tail flicked up, the highly polished flawless stone of an even white tone.

31 cm. (12 ¼ in.) high overall

Provenance:

Mrs. S. M. Hutton, London

Bluett & Sons, London, circa 1930

Mary S. Harkness, New York, Parke Bernet, 17 January 1951, lot 265

Christie's New York, 6 June 1985, lot 83

Sotheby's Hong Kong, 9 October 2007, lot 1576

白玉雙象耳獸紐大蓋瓶 乾隆

玉瓶扁平圓腹，斂肩，敞口，高圈足，頸左右各飾象耳吊活環，全身光素無紋。蓋拱式，上雕一回首顧盼之辟邪小獸。淘膛均勻，拋玻璃光，玉質潔白純淨，全無雜色。

來源：

S. M. Hutton夫人，倫敦。

Bluett & Sons，倫敦，約1930年。

Mary S. Harkness，紐約，帕克柏內拍賣公司，1951年1月17日，265號。

佳士得紐約，1985年6月6日，83號。

蘇富比香港，2007年10月9日，1576號。

"When Wang Sun Yu of Chu was on a state visit to Jin.... Zhao Yang asked, "Is the White jade *beng* still in Chu?" Wang Sun Yu replied "Yes." Zhao Yang said "How long has it been the national treasure of Chu?"

Guo yu (around 500bce)

Since the earliest times, flawless white jade has been considered a peerless treasure. For beauty of material and size, this vase can hardly be matched.

Showing the quality of the jade, the lapidary left the vase completely undecorated, creating a sense of understated luxury. The only adornments are the animal finial and elephant-head handles, which are identical to that of a Qianlong-marked *hu* vase in the National Palace Museum¹³ (fig. 8). Because of the lack of decoration, the lapidary paid particular attention to the polish of the stone, resulting in a lustrous, almost mirror-like finish, emphasising the jewellery quality of the piece. The auspicious combination of elephant, *xiang*, and vase, *ping*, together creates the rebus *tai ping jing xiang*, 'the appearance of great peace' – fitting praise for the sovereign of a great empire.

此件碩大的玉蓋瓶由整塊無瑕的玉料雕琢而成，實為一價值連城之瑰寶。所謂無絀不紋，玉器上的紋飾向來有遮蓋玉石本身缺陷的作用，只有無瑕疵之玉料可以讓玉匠用光素無紋的手法處理。本瓶上的裝飾僅有兩個象耳與一只獸紐。象耳的作法與台北故宮博物院所藏一件方壺上的象耳完全相同（著錄於 *The Refined Taste of the Emperor: Special Exhibition of Archaic and Pictorial Jades of the Ch'ing Court*, 國立故宮博物院，台北，1997，87頁，15號）。由於缺乏紋飾，玉匠對拋光上特別講究，使得玉料散發出一種晶瑩皎潔，光可鑑人的貴氣。而象耳與蓋瓶的結合又有太平景象之美意，是給治國之君的堂皇讚美。



Fig. 8



¹³ illustrated in *The Refined Taste of the Emperor: Special Exhibition of Archaic and Pictorial Jades of the Ch'ing Court*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 1997, p. 87, no. 15





9 AN IMPERIAL MOTTLED GREY JADE BOWL

Engraved and gilt four-character Qianlong *yuzhi* mark and of the period (1736–95)

The bowl very thinly carved with deep rounded sides rising to a slightly flaring rim, and standing on a low, slightly recessed circular foot. Made from softly polished, glassy material, with attractive horizontal charcoal and pale-grey mottling throughout.

13.7 cm. (5 ½ in.) diam.

Provenance:

Mrs. H. F. Bain

Sotheby's Los Angeles, 6 March 1980, lot 1033

Simone and Alan Hartman Collection Part I, Christie's Hong Kong,

28 November 2006, lot 1391

灰玉碗 乾隆 描金 [乾隆御製] 刻款

碗深圓腹，敞口，矮臥圈足，碗壁極薄。拋光柔和，玉質灰白駁雜。

來源：

H. F. Bain 夫人。

蘇富比洛杉磯，1980年3月6日，1033號。

Simone and Alan Hartman Collection Part I，佳士得香港，2006年11月28日，1391號。

The material of this bowl, its shape, polish and the unusual foot all show characteristics of pieces made in central Asia, to the west of Khotan where an abundance of jade was found. The people from this area have a long history of making jade items, and both the local and Chinese records show that as early as the 15th century jade pieces were being made for its ruling class. A bowl of very similar shape and material but with no mark and some added gilt decoration and additional parallel grooves near the rim is in the Palace Museum, Taipei¹⁴ (fig. 9). In the same collection is a jade ewer¹⁵, which was originally of celadon colour but intentionally dyed grey, showing that grey jade was especially esteemed by the people of Central Asia.

The fact that this bowl bears the four-character mark 'Qianlong yuzhi' – made by the command of the Qianlong Emperor – indicates that it was commissioned after the success of the 1759 campaign when Central Asia became part of the Qing Empire (fig. 10). The unusual diamond tipped tool engraved mark with its atypical calligraphy is not seen on other jades, but found on two agate bowls in the Beijing Palace Museum, previously from the court collection¹⁶ (fig. 11). The similarity of the characters *qian*, *long* and *zhi* on all three pieces indicate that these marks would have been done by the same hand.



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

¹⁴ included by Teng Shu-p'ing in the exhibition catalogue *Exquisite Beauty – Islamic Jade*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2007, p. 34, no. 10

¹⁵ Ibid: p. 47, no. 37

¹⁶ illustrated in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum - 57 - Treasures of Imperial Court*, Commercial Press, Hong Kong, 2004, p. 228–231, nos. 204 and 205

The significance of the *yuzhi* mark is explained by Hugh Moss¹⁷.

“marks which use the form *yuzhi* literally ‘imperial made’... (are) usually translated as ‘by imperial command’ of a particular emperor. These indicate that the pieces were made at the specific command of an emperor, nearly always in court workshops, be they in the palace or elsewhere..... This meant that the Emperor had a special interest in their production and monitored it more closely than was the case with other wares, although it did not imply that all the pieces were made solely for his own use”

The appearance of an undeniably imperial mark on a piece of seemingly central Asian origin raises questions which give this piece a unique historical significance. Were central Asian craftsmen brought to the palace workshops to teach their skills to Chinese craftsmen? Was this commission related to the Emperor’s marriage to the Uighar Princess, later known as Rong fei, in 1760? Or was it made simply to recall the Emperor’s great victory?

In the absence of further documentation, these problems may never be solved. However, looking at the mysterious swirling striations of the bowl, which so resemble the ‘dream-stones’ beloved by the Chinese scholar, it is easy to forget these questions and simply be lost in aesthetic reverie.

此碗的玉料，器形，拋光，及獨特的圈足，都有著中亞玉器的風格。此地的人民有長久的作玉傳統，早在十五世紀的史料中便記載著其王命令工匠作玉的紀錄。乾隆皇帝於1759年平定這個區域的准部與回部，改其名為新疆，從此便控制了這個地區。此碗上有乾隆御製款，當是乾隆在平定了此區後命當地工匠所作，以顯示清廷已將該地納入版圖，有昭告天威之意。

台北故宮博物院藏有一件與此碗器形，玉料都非常接近，但有鑲金裝飾的玉碗（見鄧淑蘋著《國色天香—伊斯蘭玉器》，國立故宮博物院，台北，2007年，34頁，10號）。另外還有一件由青玉染成灰玉的玉壺（47頁，37號），同為中亞人作品，說明灰玉在此民族心目中的價值。此碗上的乾隆款寫法獨特，相似寫法可在北京故宮博物院所藏的兩件瑪瑙碗上看見（著錄於故宮博物院珍品全集—57—宮廷珍寶，商務印書館，香港，2004年，228-231頁，204-205號）。

10 A PALE CELADON JADE ROCOCO-STYLE VASE AND COVER

Qianlong period (1736–95)

The vase is of baluster shape and rectangular section standing on a spreading foot. Its waisted neck is flanked by two ‘S’-scroll handles. The main decoration on the body on the front and back is a stylised floral design carved in shallow relief within oval panels. The domed cover is surmounted by a lotus bud finial. The well polished stone has an pale green tone with an area of opaque inclusions cleverly incorporated in the decoration.

20.5 cm. (8 in.) high

Provenance:
Lady June Horlick Collection

青白玉西洋花紋雙耳蓋瓶 十八世紀

瓶高肩，敞口，高撇足。頸左右有西洋卷草花耳，瓶身兩面開光，內淺浮雕西洋花紋。蓋高拱，上雕蓮苞紐。玉質淺青色有一道石紋。

來源：
June Horlick夫人藏品



Fig. 12

¹⁷ Tsang, Gerard and Moss. Hugh ‘Art From the Scholars Studio’, Hong Kong 1986.



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

Since the late Ming, Chinese Emperors used Catholic Missionaries in China as a window to Western Science and Culture. The many artistically talented missionaries who served the Emperors resulted in a gradual diffusion of Western ideals into Chinese Imperial art. However, it was only with the Qianlong Emperor's construction of the Western Palaces in the *Yuan Ming Yuan* or Summer Palace after 1747 that entire European Style environments were created in China.

Although there are no records of the interiors of these Palaces, it would not be surprising if the many Rococo style Chinese pieces seen in Museums and collections today, originated from furnishings originally used there. A large *zitan* table¹⁸ whose pair is now in the *Diao Yu Tai* state guesthouse in Beijing is thought by Tian Jiaqing to have been from the Summer Palace.

Although western style jades are hardly known, the scrolling handles, shape and the decoration of this vase are clearly inspired by the French Rococo style (fig. 12). The low relief pearl headed tendrils on the flowers in the central panel are almost identical to those seen on the pair of tables mentioned above (fig. 13), while a *falangcai* pear-shaped vase in the Palace Museum, Beijing¹⁹, also has very similar Rococo-inspired decoration (fig. 14). However, the moulding above the foot, the shape of the cover and the knob suggest that the Chinese lapidaries were influenced by classical Greek and Roman vases which were coming into fashion from around 1770 onwards (fig. 15). Thus it would not be far-fetched to conclude that this covered vase was made to furnish Qianlong's Western Palaces.

此瓶的卷草紋耳與西洋花開光均受了法國洛可可風影響，當是為了配置圓明園中的西洋風傢具擺設而作。田家青所著之 *Destiny with Zitan* 中有一長案，兩者花紋可互相比較。此案與北京人民大會堂中一長案成對，兩件均來自圓明園。故宮博物院還藏有一琺瑯彩花瓶（著錄於故宮博物院珍品全集—39—琺瑯彩，粉彩，香港，1999，41頁，34號）其上的花紋也可作一比較。

¹⁸ illustrated by Tian Jiaqing in *Destiny with Zitan*, Wenwu Chubanshe, Beijing, p. 34, no. 6

¹⁹ illustrated in *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum – 39 – Porcelains with cloisonné enamel decoration and famille rose decoration*, Hong Kong, 1999, p. 41, no. 34







11 A WHITE JADE TABLE SCREEN

Qianlong period (1736–95)

The screen of rectangular form and carved in medium to high relief on one side with a scene of boys playing with various toys within a balustraded garden with a pavilion, set within a rugged landscape of precipitous cliffs and caves, paulownia, pine and bamboo growing from the crags. The reverse is decorated with a flowering prunus tree with jagged branches. The well polished stone of an even pale greenish white tone with occasional inclusions cleverly incorporated into the overall design.

20.5 x 16.5 cm. (8 ¾ x 6 ½) in.

Provenance:

Lady June Horlick Collection

白玉嬰戲圖硯屏 乾隆

屏長方形，正面雕山石庭園，松柏樓閣，中有孩童嬉戲其中。背面一清癯老梅，花蕊吐信。拋玻璃光，玉質白色帶青稍有石紋。

來源：

June Horlick夫人藏品。

The studio was the most important part of the Chinese scholar's home, and every object within it was chosen with the utmost care. The table-screen, as the tallest vertical element on the scholar's desk, was undoubtedly one of the most important elements of the decoration. However, since it was almost impossible to find flawless slabs of jade of sufficient size before the 18th century, it was almost never used as a material for table screens before the Qianlong period.

Towards the second half of the 18th century, the Qianlong emperor began to criticize current fashions for jade carving in his poetry. Decrying the florid and complicated styles that technological innovations in jade carving allowed, he advocated instead a return to ancient forms, using antique bronze and old master paintings as models for jade design²⁰.

This table screen is a masterpiece of the new pictorial style preferred by the Emperor, combining superb composition, exceptional craftsmanship and a piece of top-quality material.

The style of carving is very closely related a pair of jade screens in the National Palace Museum, Taipei²¹ (fig 16), as well as the British Rail Pension Fund jade table screen²² (fig. 17). All four screens have diagonal compositions, drawing one's eye from the lower left gradually upwards to the upper right. In each, the details of the rocks are inspired by the *cun* brush strokes of landscape paintings, cleverly creating an illusion of three-dimensionality on an otherwise flat surface. Additionally, the trees on the current screen and the British Rail Pension fund screen are also very similarly rendered, with abrupt 'tri-bends', which adds dynamism to the whole pictorial scene. On this screen, this dynamism is further enhanced by the way the rocks are placed in an unusual swirling fashion, making the whole scene appear constantly moving.



Fig. 16 (detail)



Fig. 17

The screens also have a substantial amount of void in the composition, which is very much in tune with the aesthetics of classical landscape paintings, and shows off the quality of the stone at the same time. The outlines of the designs on these screens are all deeply undercut, which makes the compositions stand out, as if floating from the background, which is especially apparent when light comes through the screens. These similarities suggest that each of these screens were carved by the same hand, almost certainly a master lapidary working in the *zaobanchu*.

The particular challenge faced by carvers of jade table screens was to be able to create two different designs which did not interfere with each other when light was transmitted, and yet concealed all the flaws present in the material. The focus of the current screen, a void placed in the centre of the composition, is accentuated by a kite in mid-air, with an elegantly curved string and fluttering ribbons. When back-lit, the void seems to be subtly suffused with horizontal glowing clouds, which turn out to be a reflection of the branches of the flowering prunus tree on the other side.

With its floating cliffs, rocks and strange caves, the composition recalls the surreal landscapes of the early Qing painter *Wu Bin*, or the ominous dark paintings of *Gong Xian*. However, in Qianlong's perfect world, these landscapes are tamed and transformed, the charm of the boys with their toys, fireworks and the prunus suggesting a New Years scene, a time of renewal and unbridled joy.

此硯屏是一件精彩難得的玉雕作品，結和了巧妙的構圖，精湛的工藝與上好的玉料。此屏的作工與台北故宮博物院所藏一對硯屏（著錄於 *The Refined Taste of the Emperor: Special Exhibition of Archaic and Pictorial Jades of the Ch'ing Court*, 國立故宮博物院，台北，1997，204–207頁，71–72號）及英國鐵路基金會於香港蘇富比1989年5月16日拍品96號賣出的一件硯屏非常相近，當是同一作坊甚或玉匠的作品。

四件硯屏均是對角構圖，導引觀者的視線由左下角往右上角移行。不論是山石樹木，其輪廓均往內斜刀深雕，使得構圖更加凸顯出來，彷彿漂浮獨立於背景之上；這特點在背光之處觀看硯屏時最能顯現出來。山石上用皴法點綴，不但有傳統山水畫風格，又可在平面上造成立體感。本屏與英鐵屏的樹木也很特別，兩者均有一株用「三彎」法表現的樹，增加了畫面的動感。本屏右邊山石旋渦式的處理手法更使整個畫面活動了起來，是別出心裁的處理方式。

四屏上均有相當的留白處，與傳統山水畫的美學一致，並也向觀者強調了玉材上好的品質。本屏的留白處於對角軸上方，中間以一架紙鳶截斷，其彎曲的長線與上揚的飄帶，恰好成一三彎曲線，與左下的樹木相互呼應，形成了完美的構圖。

此屏背面雕一梅樹，符合前面新年節慶的景象。梅樹枝幹與花朵的佈置仔細但不造作，與前面的構圖互相對應，不令透光時彼此侵犯，使得硯屏從兩面看來都賞心悅目。

²⁰ *The Refined Taste of the Emperor: Special Exhibition of Archaic and Pictorial Jades of the Ch'ing Court*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 1997

²¹ illustrated in *The Refined Taste of the Emperor: Special Exhibition of Archaic and Pictorial Jades of the Ch'ing Court*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 1997, pp. 204–207, nos. 71 and 72

²² sold at Sotheby's Hong Kong, 16 May 1989, lot 96

EMPERORS OF THE QING DYNASTY

| 年號 Reign Title | 廟號 Temple Name | 帝名 (愛新覺羅) Name (Aisin Gioro clan) | 年數 No. of Years | 公元 Date |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 順治 Shunzhi | 世祖 Shizu | 福臨 Fulin | 18 | 1644–1661 |
| 康熙 Kangxi | 聖祖 Shengzu | 玄燁 Xuanye | 61 | 1662–1722 |
| 雍正 Yongzheng | 世宗 Shizong | 胤禛 Yinzhen | 13 | 1723–1735 |
| 乾隆 Qianlong | 高宗 Gaozong | 弘曆 Hongli | 60 | 1736–1795 |
| 嘉慶 Jiaqing | 仁宗 Renzong | 顥琰 Yongyan | 25 | 1796–1820 |
| 道光 Daoguang | 宣宗 Xuanzong | 旻寧 Minning | 30 | 1821–1850 |
| 咸豐 Xianfeng | 文宗 Wenzong | 奕詝 Yizhu | 11 | 1851–1861 |
| 同治 Tongzhi | 穆宗 Muzong | 載淳 Zaichun | 13 | 1862–1874 |
| 光緒 Guangxu | 德宗 Dezong | 載湉 Zaitian | 34 | 1875–1908 |
| 宣統 Xuantong | | 溥儀 Puyi | 3 | 1909–1911 |
| 中華民國 Republic Period | | | | 1911–1949 |
| 洪憲 Hongxian (Yuan Shikai) | | | | 1915–1916 |
| 中華人民共和國 People's Republic of China | | | | 1949 |