

PAUL RUITENBEEK CHINESE ART



Blue and white porcelain dish with lotus design

Ming Dynasty, Wanli Period (1573-1620)
18.7 cm diameter, 3.2 cm high

The dish is of shallow form, standing on a straight foot rising to rounded sides. The interior is painted in lively underglaze blue of slightly violet tone, with an exuberant decoration of a single central lotus bloom, from which scrolling stems emanate with double or triple ramifications, radiating towards a thin double line border. A further double line border adorns the interior rim. The reverse side is decorated with six lotus blooms interspersed with scrolling stems. The base is inscribed with a four-character mark within a double ring in underglaze blue reading *shangpin jiaqi*, 'beautiful vessel of the highest grade'.

Several Wanli-period dishes of very similar type and decoration with a six-character imperial reign mark are known, see for instance a dish in the Metropolitan Museum, Valenstein, *A Handbook of Chinese Ceramics*, New York, 1975, pl. 104, object number 17.118.11. It seems that the present dish is of finer quality, in terms of the porcelain as well as the painting, than many of the imperially marked examples. This difference in quality could possibly be explained by the high numbers in

which imperial Wanli porcelain was produced, whereas a dish like the present one was likely made as a more exclusive, high-quality object and therefore marked as such.

A near identical dish bearing the same four-character mark is illustrated in Sotheby's, Edward T. Chow Collection, Part one, *Catalogue of Ming and Qing Porcelain*, Hong Kong, 25 November 1980, lot 20, and was auctioned more recently by Sotheby's Hong Kong on 4 June 2020, lot 513.

Provenance:

Formerly in a Dutch private collection