PAN
AMSTERDAM

VANDERVEN ORIENTAL ART

Guanyin Shrine

China, Kangxi period (1662-1722)
H: 20.4 cm
Provenance:
- Vanderven & Vanderven, 2001 (label)
- Treves Collection, Amsterdam 2025

This pierced rockery devotional shrine, enamelled on the biscuit in the sancai palette, is dedicated to the goddess Guanyin *Avalokitesvara*. Portrayed as the 'Goddess of Mercy'- she is seated in a brown grotto on a lotus throne, with green yellow and aubergine enamelled petals. She is dressed in long white robes, with a green bodice. Her hair, which is bound into a top knot, is covered loosely by a cloth. She is seated with an arm resting on her raised knee, a position known as 'Royal Ease' (*Mahrajalilasana*). In her right hand she holds Buddhist prayer beads (*mala*), symbolizing the guidance of beings from suffering to enlightenment. A tall stalk of bamboo grows on either side of her and below her a yellow carp emerges from the green waves. This alludes to a story from the *Complete Tale of Avalokitesvara and the Southern Seas*, in which Guanyin saves the son of the dragon king who was swimming in the guise of a carp. On the outer edges of the grotto stand two of her acolytes. The young boy on the right, wearing a short tunic and holding his hands together in prayer, is *Shancai Tongzi* (Child of Wealth). The figure on the left, in long robes holding the "pearl of light", represents the young girl *Longnu* (Dragon Daughter). Above them on rocky outcrops are a yellow basket and a cup surrounded by leaves. The unglazed and uncoloured underside is roughly modelled - the fingers of the potter

clearly visible in the clay. It has a later fitted wooden stand.

Shrines like this were likely intended for a small house altar, but were also exported to the West as an exotic luxury. The Laura Collection, Italy, holds a smaller but similarly shaped rockery. An example, formerly in the Eumorfopoulos Collection, is now in the Benaki Collection, Athens (nr. 2679). The Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Main (acc.nr. 10994) and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv.nr. AK-NM 12467 & AK-MAK 659 & 573) also have comparable rockery shrines.