PAN
AMSTERDAM

PAUL RUITENBEEK CHINESE ART

LACQUER AND MOTHER-OF-PEARL PAIR OF BOXES SHAPED AS DOVES

Qing dynasty, 18th - early 19th century, 8.8 cm long, 6.8 cm high.

The lacquer boxes are naturalistically shaped as a pair of doves, each carefully inlaid with finely engraved pieces of mother-of-pearl, resembling the plumage. The birds are detailed with ivory eyes, beaks and legs, the eyes further inlaid with mother-of-pearl and glass. The heads are slightly turned to one side, the legs tucked underneath. Each box has a small, hidden cover in the centre of the back, engraved on the interior with a four-character Qianlong seal mark on a mother-of-pearl square tile. The interiors are lacquered black. Old fitted box and wood stands.

In China doves are traditionally associated with loyalty, as they pair for life. They may also symbolise fertility. Therefore, gifting a pair of doves was fitting for a wedding or as part of a dowry. A highly similar pair of boxes, but in the shape of mandarin ducks, are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inventory number 56.32.2a and b. Birds of very similar shape and size exist in cloisonné. Compare a related incense burner, also in the

shape

of a dove, illustrated in Ronald, D Hickman and Claudia Brown, Chinese Cloisonné, The Clague Collection, 1980, pl. 61, pp.132-133.

Provenance:

Formerly in the collection of Reverend Victor Farmer (1898-1977), prior to 1964

Formerly in a British private collection

Published:

The Arts Council of Great Britain and The Oriental Ceramics Society, Loan Exhibition of The

Arts of the Ch'ing Dynasty, 1964, pl. 12, cat. no. 386, p. 75.

Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society 1963-1964: vol. 35, 1965, pl. 121 cat. no. 386.