

VANDERVEN ORIENTAL ART



Conical Bowl

China, Kangxi period (1662-1722)

Height: 8.3 cm | Diameter: 22 cm

Provenance:

- With Bernhard Stodel, Amsterdam, after 1965 (Label.BS1620)
- Nieuwenhuys Collection, 1991
- Private Collection, Belgium 2025

This unusual conical bowl, is decorated on the outside, with a continuous narrative scene in fine famille verte enamels. It is divided into three different figural episodes set in a rocky landscape, executed in three shades of green, blue, red, yellow and black enamels. The first scene is of a warrior on horseback holding a guandao polearm, followed on foot by a guard bearing a yellow standard. The second scene is of a mustachioed man holding a sword and a kneeling figure in a blue robe, who is about to be executed. The final scene is of a man holding a sword approaching a crouching figure holding a spear. The inside of the bowl is decorated on the bottom with a small figure of a kneeling scholar. The inside rim has a green, yellow, blue and red honeycomb diaper border, with four cartouches in reserve - each with an auspicious emblem representing the Four Scholarly Accomplishments (siyi wenwen). The bowl stands on a high undecorated foot-ring and the underside has a loosely painted blue lotus flower within a double ring. A slightly worn white rectangular label, bears a stock number of the renowned Amsterdam dealer Bernhard Stodel.

The narrative on this bowl possibly depicts a popular episode from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. The main scene is of the famous warrior Guan Yu, carrying his iconic crescent blade (青龙偃月刀) and mounted on his famously swift horse, Red Hare (Chitu 赤兔). Another scene is of an imminent execution, which Guan Yu will step in to prevent. This combination reflects the iconic moral saying: Guan Yu manifests righteousness and stays the blade (关羽义释曹操). The scene emphasizes the importance of correct moral judgement at a critical moment. When this image is placed on everyday objects, such as this bowl, it expresses the wish for moral justice to enter ones daily life.

The Grandidier Collection - housed in the Musée Guimet, Paris - has a comparable example (inv.nr. G785). It has a different narrative on the outside, but a similar scholar on the inside of the bowl and the same blue lotus flower on the bottom.