

笔入毫微，从蝙蝠的须到枝干的青苔，都细心勾勒，唯妙唯肖。器底有釉下青花双圈六字年款：大清雍正年制。

巧夺天工。外壁两条缠枝桃纹环绕，各显异同，四只蟠桃，色调自然，丰腴逼真。一桃枝施灰珐琅彩，上附数花，均双层瓣，青黄黄蕊；另一枝红褐色，花瓣单层，粉色黄蕊。枝间叶片，曲卷瘦长，绿色松石色混糅，层次分明。一对铁红色蝙蝠翻飞于两枝交界处。外壁花枝越过口沿进入器内，呈过枝花。此枝结两枚桃实，透熟欲坠，亦有花蕾及三只嬉戏的蝙蝠。此器画工极为巧绝，乃为御窑的巅峰之作。

粉彩桃纹碗，胎薄釉润，圆壁光泽，圈足托承。此碗使用珐琅彩，构图纹理精妙，点画色泽传神，粉绿蓝褐，黄白黑红，浓淡相间，直径一四·〇公分 清雍正 公元一七二三年—一七三五年

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Famille Rose Porcelain 'Peach' Bowl

Qing dynasty, Yongzheng mark and of the period, 1723 - 1735
Diameter: 14.0cm

Famille rose porcelain 'peach' bowl, finely potted with rounded sides, standing on a foot-ring. The bowl is delicately enamelled, textured and stippled in pink, green, blue, brown, yellow, white, black and iron-red. The exterior is encircled by two intertwined branches, depicting different varieties of peach tree, on which are borne four peaches, in graduated tones of pink and lime green. One branch is enamelled in tones of grey and bears double-petalled blooms in greenish-white with yellow stamens; the other branch is in sepia tones and bears single-petalled pink blossoms, also with yellow stamens. The curling, slender leaves are shaded in tones of green and turquoise and borne on opposed stems, separated by two circling iron-red bats. The branches are painted to carry over the rim to the interior of the bowl and bear two further ripe fruits, blossoms and buds, leaving space for three swooping bats. The painting throughout is of the highest order, even minute details, such as the whiskers of the bats and the lichen growing on the branches, executed with consummate skill and artistry. The base is painted in underglaze blue with the six-character mark of Yongzheng within double circles.

Provenance:

J.D. Chen (Chen Rentao), Hong Kong.

Paul and Helen Bernat Collection, Boston, Massachusetts.

T. Endo Collection, Tokyo.

Published:

Sotheby's, Hong Kong, *The Paul and Helen Bernat Collection of Important Qing Imperial Porcelain and Works of Art*, 15 November 1988, number 44 (one of the pair).

Sotheby's, Hong Kong, *Highly Important Ming and Qing Imperial Porcelain from a Private Collection*, 29 April 1997, number 401.

Sotheby's, *Thirty Years in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, 2003, page 290, plate 326, as one of a pair.

Christie's, Hong Kong, *The Imperial Sale*, 29 May 2007, as one of a pair.

Similar examples:

There appear to be at least nine other identical bowls with Yongzheng marks painted with four peaches on the exterior walls and two peaches on the interior, as follows:

The 'pair' to the present bowl, also once in the Chen, Bernat and Endo collections, and now in a private collection, Taiwan, published as above and in Sotheby's, *Twenty Years*, Hong Kong, 1993, page 202, plate 275.

Two bowls in the Baur Collection, Geneva, published: John Ayers, *Chinese Ceramics*, volume 4, Geneva, 1974, numbers A594 and 595; and John Ayers, *Chinese Ceramics in The Baur Collection*, volume 2, Geneva, 1999, page 108, number 224 for one of two.

Two bowls, formerly in the Eisei Bunko Collection, Tokyo, now separated:

One now in the Meiyintang collection, see: *Toji Taikai; Shin No Kanyo*, (World Ceramics; Qing Official Kilns), volume 46, Tokyo, 1973, plate 13; Regina Krahl, *Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection*, London, 1994, volume II, number 960.



The other published: *Sekai toji zenshu*, (old series) volume 12, Tokyo, 1956, colour plate 11. See also, Masahiko Sato, translated and adapted by Kiyoko Hanaoka and Susan Barbari, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, New York and Tokyo, 1981, plate 312, for the same bowl wrongly attributed to the collection of the Musée Guimet, Paris.

Two bowls formerly in the T T Tsui/Jingguantang collection now separated, published: John Ayers, *The Tsui Museum of Art*, Hong Kong, 1991, number 119; see also, The Tsui Museum of Art, *Chinese Ceramics IV, Qing Dynasty*, Hong Kong, 1995, number 155; and Christie's, Hong Kong, *The Imperial Sale and Fine Chinese Works of Art*, 26 April 1999, numbers 539 and 540. These two bowls were previously separate:

One published Sotheby's, London, *Catalogue of Fine Early Chinese Pottery, Fine Chinese Porcelain, Famille Rose Services, Jade and Hardstone Carvings Etc.*, 9 December 1952, number 140 and frontispiece; and Sotheby's, London, *Catalogue of Important Chinese Jade Cloisonné and Amber and Chinese Ceramics (Part II)*, 21 February, 1961, number 171.

The other bowl published: Sotheby's, Hong Kong, *Fine Chinese Ceramics*, 14 November 1989, number 315 for one bowl; and Sotheby's, London, *Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art*, 16 May 2007, number 104.

One bowl from the Avery Brundage Collection, in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, published: Terese Tse Bartholomew, *Hidden Meanings in Chinese Art*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 2006, page 204, number 7.44.1.

In addition, there are the following bowls which may or may not be included in the above list:

Two bowls, formerly Yamanaka, published: Yamanaka and Co., *Chinese Ceramic Art, Bronze, Jade etc.*, London, 1938, catalogue number 116, plate 12 for an image of one. The unillustrated bowl could be one of the bowls listed above but the illustrated bowl is definitely not.

Seizo Hayashiya and Gakuji Hasebe, translated by Charles A. Pomeroy, *Chinese Ceramics*, Tokyo, 1966, plate 106.

Sotheby's, Hong Kong, *Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art*, 31 October 2004, number 142.

The design of peaches and bats is a classic combination, enjoying imperial favour during the Yongzheng and early Qianlong periods and may be found on dishes, vases and boxes of varying sizes, as well as bowls.

As is characteristic of the Qing period, the motifs are carefully chosen for their symbolic value. Usually five bats are depicted, as in the case of the present bowl, presenting the Five Blessings (*wufu*) of health, wealth, longevity, virtue, and natural death. Peaches have a long association in Chinese culture with immortality: the peaches of immortality were said to grow in the garden of the Queen Mother of the West, Xiwangmu, and were believed to ripen once every thousand years. In this case, there are six peaches although occasionally eight are depicted, particularly on vases and dishes. The combination of the five bats and six peaches undoubtedly bestowed upon the owner numerous auspicious blessings. In addition, the execution of the design itself brought with it another auspicious rebus. The difficult and highly accomplished technique of painting the branches in a design that flows over the rim of the bowl was referred to as '*changzhi*' (long branch), a homophone on the phrase '*changzhi*' (eternal governance). A particular request by the Yongzheng emperor for this punning design is noted in the records of the Zaobanchu, the Imperial Household Department:

'19th day, 8th month, Yung-cheng 9 (1731)...His Majesty directed to take glazed and unglazed porcelain and paint on it the designs of "eternal governance..."'¹



With such a wealth of symbolic meaning, it is usually assumed that wares with this peach and bat combination were produced for imperial birthdays or other important anniversaries. The present bowl was once 'paired' with a companion bowl, virtually identical (rather than complementary) to it in every respect, with regard to subject matter, treatment and quality. However, there appears to be no evidence that a specific order for pairs of such bowls was ever given. It is possible that a number of identical bowls would have been ordered by the emperor, or on his behalf.

¹ Liu Liang-yu, *Ch'ing Official and Popular Wares: A Survey of Chinese Ceramics 5*, Taipei, 1991, pages 119 - 120 for a discussion and translation of a section of the records. In this case, the design requested was for nine quails under a long branch with a flock of 'wild geese' and the specification of 'eternal governance' is clear. See also, Feng Xianming, *Annotated Collection of Historical Documents on Ancient Chinese Ceramics*, Taipei, 2000, page 222 for a Chinese transcription of the document.

