

Basic Detail Report



Dish

Date

mid 19th century

Primary Maker

Artist Unknown

Medium

porcelain and underglaze cobalt blue

Description

Viet Nam has a long history of producing high-quality ceramics that were exported widely to Southeast Asia and

beyond. But from the mid-18th to the end of the 19th century, the Vietnamese royal courts in Hue and Hanoi placed orders for high quality porcelain decorated with underglaze cobalt blue. This ware has come to be called “Bleu de Hue” and is distinguished from the ceramic output for both the domestic and foreign market by the thickness of the potting as well as a distinctly heavy, flattened foot ring. The Vietnamese rulers felt that imported goods, including ceramics, better demonstrated the nobility of the royal court than domestic wares. It was, therefore, not unusual for the court to place special orders for Chinese ceramics, which were regarded as technically more advanced than those manufactured locally. In the early 19th century, after the Nguyen unified Viet Nam, a royal decree was made ordering that all royal utensils for use at the court, including those originally in Hanoi, be brought to the Imperial capital at Hue. This piece, executed in the style of a traditional Chinese painting, includes a ten-character poem and two seals. The first appears to be the character zhong (center or middle) in a round cartouche and the second xi (evening) in a square cartouche. The poem translates: “The withered branches are reflective of the bitterness of winter; Mr. Nian fears the emptiness of the store.” The two-character inscription on the foot is the Vietnamese nom equivalent of tran ngoan, precious curio or trinket. A precise date for this piece is difficult, but, based on stylistic evidence, it would appear to have been manufactured in the mid-19th century.

Dimensions

Overall: 3/4 x 5 1/8 in. (1.9 x 13 cm)