

Basic Detail Report



Brush Pot (Bitong)

Date

late 17th century

Primary Maker

Artist Unknown

Medium

porcelain and underglaze cobalt blue

Description

The decorative subject matter on this pot is especially appropriate for the scholar's desk. It illustrates a scene from one of China's most important prose poems, *The Red*

Cliff. The author, Su Dongbo or Su Shi (1037-1101), lived during the end of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). Not only was Su Shi a leading literary figure, he was also a prominent artist and closely identified with the literati rather than the court approach to painting. He was not only a practitioner but also an art theorist, who advocated that painting did not need formal likeness but should appear to be spontaneous in execution. He also felt that painting needed to be grounded in the achievements of recognized past masters. The *Red Cliff* poems were the subject a number of paintings from the late Northern Song Dynasty on. The boating scene depicted is referred to in the poem. As a vessel made for the literati, the four-character mark applied to the bottom of the pot, *wen zhang shan dou* (Writings earning great respect), is especially apt. It has been speculated that this mark appears exclusively on blue and white brush pots of the Kangxi period painted with landscapes and figures. A brush pot with a similar mark dated to the Kangxi period is illustrated in *Popular Pottery and Enameled Porcelain of the Qing Period*. There are two brush pots of roughly the same size as the Lowe's bearing this mark in the collection of the Shanghai Museum of Art, both having narrative style paintings. One has a long prose inscription, *Ode of the Autumn Sound*. With three such extant examples, one can speculate that the *wen zhang shan dou* mark may not have been reserved for brush pots of this scale.

Dimensions

Overall: 6 1/4 x 7 1/2 in. (15.9 x 19.1 cm)