



Miniature Bianhu-shaped Flask In Gilded Bronze With Champlevé Enamel



6 800 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Description

Attributed to China, late Qing Dynasty, circa 1890-1900 Gilded bronze and champlevé enamel An elegant miniature gourd in the bianhu (??) style, made of gilded bronze and richly decorated with champlevé enamel. One side is adorned with a remarkable pair of Fenghuang (??), the Chinese phoenix, soaring among stylized clouds. The two birds, deliberately differentiated, have distinct forms: one, more powerful with a strongly developed neck, precedes a second, more slender and graceful bird. This composition most likely evokes the traditional pair of Feng (male) and Huang (female), a symbol of harmony, prosperity, peace, and perfect union in Chinese art. The reverse features an elegant, symmetrical design of floral scrolls arranged around a central medallion, directly inspired by the great

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ornamental traditions of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The composition's perfect symmetry, the balance of the arabesques, and the delicacy of the recesses attest to remarkable decorative mastery. Crafted using the *champlevé* technique--particularly rare on this type of object--this gourd is distinguished by its reserved areas, which were carved directly into the bronze before the enamels were applied, unlike the more common *cloisonné* technique, which uses added metal wires. This method lends the decoration remarkable graphic precision and perfect continuity between the gilded bronze and the enamels. One of the most remarkable aspects of this work lies in the extraordinary finesse of its execution. Created on a miniature gourd measuring just 9.8 cm in height, it reveals exceptional technical mastery, in which every detail--from the birds to the foliage, including the flowers and cloud motifs--is rendered with a precision worthy of the greatest monumental works. This virtuosity, concentrated within such a small format, places this work among the most refined miniature pieces of Far Eastern enamel art from the late 19th century. The *bianhu* form, derived from ancient Chinese models, is reinterpreted here in a highly elegant archaic style. The iconography, deeply rooted in Chinese tradition, combined with the exceptional quality of its execution, suggests a work intended for a high-ranking patron or an art collector's cabinet. The attribution to China is based on the *bianhu* form, the decorative vocabulary, the probable depiction of a pair of *Fenghuang*, as well as several stylistic characteristics specific to late Qing dynasty productions. While certain technical details--notably the green enamel completely covering the interior of the gourd--are reminiscent of some contemporary Japanese works, the combination of all the currently available evidence leads one to favor a Chinese attribution. The *champlevé* technique--which involves carving directly into the bronze before applying the enamels and then firing the piece

several times--is among the most demanding processes in the art of enameling. On a miniature work measuring just 9.8 cm in height, such precision of execution constitutes a remarkable demonstration of technical hui
virtuosity. Condition: Excellent condition. A few old firing cracks localized around the neck and base, with no visible restoration. Original gilding remarkably well-preserved. Dimensions: Height: 9.8 cm Width: 8 cm Provenance: Mr. Daniel Ceresola, Sakura Conservatory.