



chinese export porcelain figure of the angel of fame, copying a delft original

Qianlong period circa 1755

Dutch Market

Height: 11 inches; 28cm

An extremely rare Chinese export porcelain figure of an angel, modelled after a Delft original, painted with famille rose enamels, holding a trumpet and standing on a separate rococo base with moulded flowers.

This figure is previously unrecorded and does not appear anywhere in the literature on Chinese export porcelain. However a very rare version in Dutch delft is known which must have been the model for this example. The delft model has a different base and, with the wings, is all one piece unlike this figure, which has a separate base and the two wings are detachable, fitting into crafted sockets in the head and shoulders. These figures appear to have been derived from an ornament print by Jean Le Pautre.

The figure is the Angel of Fame or the personification of fame and renown (Roman: Fama; Greek: Pheme or Ossa), representing power and glory. On those she favoured she showered renown but on those who offended her she bestowed scandal and infamy. Virgil described her as having "her feet on the ground, and her head in the clouds, making the small seem great and the great seem greater."

Sophocles in Oedipus Tyrranos calls her a daughter of Hope (Elpis) though in the Aeneid, Virgil says her mother is Gaia.

She is traditionally shown blowing a trumpet through which she is bestowing fame. In the other hand she often carries a second trumpet, sometimes smaller to 'blow' scandal, or a wreath to add to the favoured hero. In other depictions she leads a winged stallion and holds a caduceus. In this model the staff is a later replacement but the trumpet is a porcelain original. Most of the delft examples have wooden trumpets of later date.

This Chinese version has lost the globe base (representing the world throughout which fame is proclaimed and also her parent, Gaia) and instead has a more colourful floral base similar to examples in European porcelain, such as Bow.

This Angel was a particular favourite with the early settlers and revolutionaries in America and is sometime depicted holding the badge for the Order of Cincinnati, which was reproduced on Chinese export porcelain in a dinner service for George Washington.