



pair of chinese export porcelain partridges tureens

Qianlong period, circa 1775

English Market

Length of stands: 9 inches; 23cm

Provenance: with Fred B Nadler Antiques

A rare pair of Chinese export tureens, covers and stands modelled as partridges, finely enamelled in sepia and black, the beaks and feet in pale yellow, the stands with scattered flowers and a feathered border to match the birds.

These tureens are of a type previously unpublished and only one other pair is known, on ormolu mounts and lacking these stands. They are delicately painted in life-like colours and moulded in an unusual pose, with one wing apparently dragging slightly. The model for these tureens is likely a European porcelain original, which appears to have been copied quite faithfully, including the colouring, though it has not been identified. They resemble the boxes and covers in the form of setting partridge or quail that are also known in export porcelain, copying an English model from Bow, though no stands for that version are known. They are also similar to small tureens and covers in the form of female Watercocks (*Gallicrex cinerea*).

These tureens have lobed stands with a scalloped rim that, encountered on their own, might not have been connected with such tureens. However the delightful detail of the feathers in the rim, in the same colouring as the tureens, fits them perfectly.

The bird copied here is the English Partridge (*Perdix perdix*, Linnaeus 1758) which is also found in North West China, though the colouring, especially of the head also resembles the Chinese Bamboo Partridge (*Bambusicola thoracica*, Temminck 1815) which occurs around Jingdezhen and would have

been more familiar to the Chinese artists who painted these tureens. This follows the pattern seen in many other examples of export bird figures, of European bird models being mixed with the features of Chinese species. The hanging wing is an accurate observation of a trait seen in many ground nesting birds. When disturbed from the nest or with young, the parent will drag a wing along the ground to appear wounded, thus attracting a predator away from the young in the hope of easy prey and the parent then flying away at the last moment.

References: Sargent 1991, p204, an example of the setting quail tureen; Cohen & Motley 2008, pp 216-222 for a discussion of the bird species models in Chinese export porcelain; p254, No 17.8 a pair of the *Gallicrex* tureens; Bukowski 2006, a pair of tureens of this model on ormolu mounts.