COHEN&COHEN
CHINESE EXPORT PORCELAIN AND ORIENTAL ART



Pair of Chinese porcelain nodding figures of reclining maidens reading books

Qianlong period circa 1750

European Market

Length: 9 inches; 23cm

An extremely rare pair of porcelain figures of reclining maidens each holding a book, decorated in bright famille rose enamels with an iron red dress, the heads separate and nodding, on a leaf shaped base painted with flowers.

This form is rare, with only one other pair being recorded. It appears to be linked in style to a few other pairs of figures of seated maidens with phoenixes or deer.

The ladies appear to be pregnant which is a very unusual depiction in Chinese art. However the books shown here are a literal representation of a Chinese metaphor: reading a book nourishes the growth of ideas in the mind like a child developing in the womb.

References: Cohen & Motley 2008, p100, a pair of seated ladies holding spaniels with phoenixes beside them; Cohen & Cohen 2014B, No 33, a different pair of this same model; Victoria & Albert Museum, London No FE.25&A-1978, a reclining lady with an infant beside her on a similar leaf base; Sargent 2012, No 254, two reclining ladies in a different position without books, with nodding heads, c 1750; Yi-Li Wu (2010) Reproducing Women: Medicine, Metaphor, and Childbirth in Late Imperial China.