COHEN&COHEN
CHINESE EXPORT PORCELAIN AND ORIENTAL ART



Pair of Chinese export porcelain elephant form candelsticks

Qianlong period circa 1770-80

European Market

Height: 9.5 inches; 24cm

Price: £38,000

A pair of Chinese porcelain candlesticks modelled as caparisoned elephants with candlesticks on their backs, decorated in famille rose enamels

This shape of candlestick is known from the Ming period and was copied in the Kangxi period, but usually in metalwork, either bronze or cloisonné.

This rare pair is an early example of this type in porcelain and is of very good quality. The form was later reproduced in the Jiaqing and Daoguang periods, usually smaller, brighter, and relatively crude, catering for the growing interest in Indian and pan-Asian style in the European markets of the nineteenth century.

Rare examples of the form are also known in painted enamel on copper and mixed media, sometimes with clocks mounted instead of the candlesticks.

The white elephant is a symbol of mental strength and purity in Buddhism, an image further enhanced by its carrying a light on its back. In the Qing dynasty real elephants with vases on their backs were included in processions to celebrate the Emperor's birthday.

References: Sargent 1991, p196, a pair of similar type to this and pp240–245, other examples of elephant models; Carneiro 1990, p108, a pair of this type; Cohen & Motley 2008, p193, a single example in the James E Sowell collection