



**Japanese miniature wine pot, eighteenth century
POA**

Japanese miniature wine pot, eighteenth century, of globular form, decorated in overglaze enamels and gilt with scattered prunus heads and bamboo; the neck encircled by a foliate ruyi-head band with underglaze cobalt blue ring and stiff leaves above, the applied loop handle and straight spout with a scrolling pattern in iron red and encircled by bands of stiff leaves; the lid similarly decorated and surmounted by a knob connected to the handle with a copper gilt chain.

Height 6cm. (2 3/8in.); width from handle to end of spout: 9cm. (3 1/2in.)

Condition: Good

Notes: Plum and bamboo are two of the so-called 'four gentlemen', a group of plants which embody the ideal characteristics of the literati scholar: purity, steadfastness, humility and uprightness. Along with orchid and chrysanthemum, they appear together in Chinese art from as early as the Song dynasty (960-1279), depicted in traditional ink and wash painting as well as in poetry and ceramic design. As with many artistic and literary styles, the motif of the four gentlemen was transmitted across Asia and became popular in Japan, where the practices of semi-mythical Daoist figures and Tang literati were celebrated and emulated by groups of scholars and artists. Such practices, including verse composition and calligraphy, were often accompanied by wine drinking, in order to loosen inhibition and expand artistic perception. It is thus entirely appropriate for a vessel intended to hold wine to be decorated with emblems of the gentleman scholar: in this case prunus, which even when withered and old can produce the purest of blossoms in the early spring snow, and bamboo, which is evergreen and steadfast, bending and so remaining upright despite the harshest of conditions.

Material and Technique	porcelain with overglaze polychrome enamel decoration
Origin	Japanese
Period	18th Century
Condition	Excellent
Dimensions	Height 6cm. (2 3/8in.); width from handle to end of spout: 9cm. (3 1/2in.)

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