



A charming pair of 19th century Chinese Export silver and hardwood chamber candlesticks
£1,250.00

A charming pair of 19th century Chinese Export silver and hardwood chamber candlesticks. Designed as columns with restrained chased and repoussé decoration composed of a series of friezes of trailing flowers demarcated into five registers. The base plate of silver similarly decorated with stylised bamboo and attached to a carved hardwood pedestal base.

The form of these candlesticks is reminiscent of monumental Chinese architecture, particularly carved stone columns. These are particularly associated with the Ming period and decorate buildings as well as gardens and the complex of tombs built outside Beijing. These columns are often similarly decorated with friezes in registers, some depict the heavens usually with an entwined dragon but also with vegetal decorations like those on these candlesticks.

Chinese art is often imbued with a deep symbolism. The plant kingdom is a primary source for much of this and plants have an important role within Chinese culture in general.

The bamboo depicted on the base is an especially important part of Chinese culture, on a practical level bamboo was used extensively in many aspects of Chinese life. Symbolically it represents purity, modesty, restraint and integrity and is one of the four noble plants in Chinese culture.

The theme of the noble plant is continued on the column. The registers have three friezes depicting plum blossom, the most popular plant in Chinese art and serves as a metaphor for an indomitable spirit of inner beauty and modesty in adversity. In folk culture, the five petals of the plum blossom represent the five blessings: Fu (? happiness; good luck), Lu (? fortune; salary), Shou (? longevity), Xi (? joy) and Cai (? wealth).

The next flower is the chrysanthemum, symbolic of longevity and wealth, and a wish for a peaceful retirement. Since ancient times the chrysanthemum has been deeply cherished by Chinese scholars and known as the 'Hermit of All Flowers'. This is largely due to the association with the foremost of the Recluse Poets, Tao Yuanming (???, CE 365-327), the pioneer of the so-called 'Fields and Gardens' poetry.

Finally, the top register has a frieze of stylised hanging fruit. There are several possibilities as to which fruit is intended, the most likely, given the preponderance of plum blossom is that this is the fruit represented. Traditionally the plum fruit symbolizes strength, endurance hope and perseverance.

The traditional wooden base is carved with lotus blossom and cartouches, the lotus representing purity, beauty and spiritual enlightenment.

Combining elements from traditional Chinese art with their associated symbolism, these candlesticks would have appealed to the growing western taste in oriental works of art and highlight the quality of Chinese artisans working on items destined for export.

Length: 7 cm

Width: 7 cm

Height: 12.5 cm

Total Weight: 583 grams

Material and Technique	silver and hardwood
Origin	Chinese
Period	19th Century
Condition	Excellent

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