



**A RARE CHINESE WANLI (1573-1620) PERIOD BLUE AND WHITE
BRUSH POT STAND
POA**

Modelled in the form of a screen with two water wells, richly painted in shades of underglaze cobalt blue, with, on one side, a figure of Kui Xing in relief, one of the five Gods of Literature, standing on three stars, set against a white ground decorated with swirling blue clouds and a star constellation, the reverse is decorated with two extremely rare scenes, the upper depicting a figure, possibly Zhong Kui at repose in a terraced garden, the lower with a scene of a man sitting in a terraced garden with a flying phoenix amidst swirling clouds, the sides modelled and painted in the style of ornate wood stands, the base glazed.

Provenance

Henry Potter Stevens Collection no. 51, bought from H.R.N Norton 3rd July 1941. for the princely sum of £12.

Dr. Henry Potter Stevens was born in Park Lane, London in 1875, He went up to Oxford to read Chemistry where he gained a First in 1896. This was immediately followed by a PHD from Heidelberg University in Germany in 1899.

He became a Chemist for the rubber industry and published two academic books 'The Paper Mill Chemist' in 1908 and 'Rubber' in 1915 and was a consultant to the Rubber Growers Association for over thirty years up to the start of WWII

He was also a talented painter and some of his watercolours were exhibited at the Royal Academy.

Dr. Stevens was a remarkable collector with wide ranging interests and tastes as well as Chinese art he collected Japanese lacquer inro and scientific instruments. A number of pieces of the Chinese collection were sold at Sotheby's in 1966. Many of his Chinese pieces, have an illustrious history going back to other famous collections such as Cunliffe, Soame Jenyns, Beurdeley, Ezekiel, Eumorfopoulos, Winkworth and Norton.

In old handwritten catalogue by Dr. Henry Potter Stevens it says:

Ming Blue & White Artist's Stand

Provided with water container and wells. Decorated on one side, upper half reclining figure; lower half youth listening to inspired phoenix or similar bird on his right.

On the other side, high relief figure of Kuei Hsing God of Literature on a background of clouds and hills.

Chia Ching period.

Bought Norton 3/7/41 BC/-/ = £12

Price code- B 1/ U/ 2 C/ 3 K/4 I/5 N/6 G/7 H/8 A/9 M/10

Footnote:

Identified by the writing brush held in his right hand and his iconic 'back-kick' posture, Kui Xing ('Chief Star') the Daoist deity was worshipped by all wanting to obtain academic success. This brush pot on a scholar's desk must have given hope of good results. As God of Literature, he was worshipped by candidates to the imperial examinations. Dreaming of Kui Xing the night before the exams was considered an auspicious sign.

K'uei Hsing (Kui Xing) is a character in Chinese mythology, the god of examinations, and an associate or servant of the god of literature, Wen Chang. Depicted often standing on a fish-dragon's head, holding up a writing brush in his right hand. Here he stands on stars. He is said to have been an historical figure, a poor but brilliant student called Zhong Kui who passed the imperial examinations with high honours. However, because he was ugly, he was not allowed to enter government service. In despair, he drowned himself but was carried by a fish-dragon up to heaven where he became a star ('Xing' in Chinese) of the Great Bear constellation (known in China as the Palace of Literary Genius).

Kui Xing is the chief star in the Big Dipper constellation.

The term 'Kui Xing' originally referred to the North Star. As stated in the Historical Records Kui is the first star of the 'Great Dipper constellation'.