

Pair of Chinese Cloisonne Censers with Covers.

Incense burning has been a common human religious experience since the Egyptians began the practice in 2500 BCE. In religious settings, the world over, from Roman Catholics to Chinese Buddhists, the objects which hold burning incense have been elaborately adorned to bring additional significance to the acts of prayer they facilitate. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer a **Pair of Chinese Cloisonne Censers with Covers** (\$2/3,000) in our February Gallery Auction, held on Friday, February 16th.

This lot includes two Chinese censers, each with a bowl body rising from three key fret legs. The body is finished with gilt and beautiful enamel of red, yellow, blue, and emerald green

which are worked into blossoming lotus and leafy tendrils. The legs are decorated with leafy scrolls bearing lotus buds, while the dome covers feature bats and lotus tendrils. Each censer is then topped with a turquoise rock on a gilt double lotus base.



The lotus motif is an especially important symbol in the broader region with important religious significance in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and

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Christianity, as well as in Confusion thought. The lotus, which will sprout from seeds as old as 1,300 years, is revered as a symbol of longevity and self-regeneration. Its dual nature, as both an underwater and surface plant, is frequently connected to the divine, as is its notable beauty. The Buddha compared himself to the lotus flower, describing his enlightenment as similar to the way a lotus flowers from muddy waters. These positive connotations of the lotus flower are enhanced by the inclusion of the bat on the censers. Bat (biān fú), and good fortune (fú) sound very similar in Chinese, and therefore bats have a connection to good luck and positive outcomes in Chinese-speaking areas.

Censers, a type of bowl meant to hold burning charcoal and incense, have been created and used in China since at least the fourth century BCE. These

early censers were fabricated in an adapted form of the earlier Bronze Age ritual bronzes but soon featured groundbreaking designs such as the popular hill censers and scented globes. These objects were used both in religious rituals, where the smoke is a necessary means of communicating with the divine, as well as practical objects for fumigating or perfuming rooms and clothes. While today agarwood and sandalwood are popular incense used in censers, the ancient Chinese used magnolia, thatch grass, and licorice.

These pots are made using cloisonne, an ancient technology that uses thin strips of metal, typically gold, to hold enamel or precious stones on the surface of a metal object. The first objects made using this technique are found in Cyprus and date from the 12th century BCE, although it is likely that jewelry made in Mesopotamia may have

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used a similar technique as early as five thousand years ago. Cloisonne remained popular in the Middle East and especially in the Byzantine Empire but did not make its way to China until the late 1300s. The royal court was slow to adopt the technique, viewing it as foreign, but by the 18th century, the Qing dynasty had established an esteemed royal workshop producing cloisonne wares.

Pair of Chinese Cloisonne Censers with Covers (\$2/3,000) will be offered at Michaan's Auctions February Gallery Auction on Friday, February 16th, which features fine diamonds in excellent condition in

addition to notable examples from the Fine Art and Asian Art departments. The auction is led by the jewelry department, which will be offering an unmounted pear-cut 2.45 carats colorless diamond and an unmounted pear-cut 2.96 carats colorless diamond. Also included in the sale is a lithograph by Grant Wood, an Arnaldo Pomodoro hanging sculpture, and a jade insert table screen.

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