

Inside Painted

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Inside painted snuff bottles, as the name suggests, are painted by using an angled brush inserted into the bottle, normally made of glass or a translucent hard stone. Although all snuff bottles require a high level of skill there is something about the seemingly impossible task of producing such delicate drawings that provides further interest. The majority of inside painted bottles date from the late 19th C and many were never used to carry snuff, as wear and tear resulted in the loss of paint over time. They soon came to be appreciated solely for their artistic qualities.

36. Glass, painted on the inside in ink and colour painted with a continuous landscape scene of pavilions and tall mountains, with figures in a skiff to one side.

Signed by Kui Detian, undated but probably 1900- 1910.

Height: 6.3cm

Provenance: Dr S Bampton

Robert Kleiner & Co Ltd

An English Gentleman

Kui Detian is a relatively unknown artist and rarely dates or signs his bottles. There are about thirty known examples and only one of those is dated - to 1904. Some of his bottles have the inscription *chuyuan lihua* which means 'at the accession of a new ruler' so we can assume that was the Xuantong Emperor who ascended the throne in 1908. He has a whimsical style and produces pleasing landscapes.

37. Glass, painted inside with the subject of the Seven Sages in the Bamboo Grove, the figures disposed between rocks and clusters of bamboo.

Signed Ye Zhongsan, undated but circa 1900-1905 and with a red seal of the artist.

Height: 6.4cm

Provenance: Susan Hacker

Robert Kleiner & Co Ltd

An English Gentleman

Ye Zhongsan the elder enjoyed a long career between 1893-1940 and was joined by his three sons between 1912-1927 who signed in his name. The work of the Elder Ye however has a delicate control of brushwork and colour.

This fine example is typical of the work of Ye Zhongsan the elder. It is a rare subject, possibly because of the extreme difficulty in painting bamboo, which was always regarded as the supreme test of brush control. Another example, dated 1904, is illustrated by Hugh M Moss *Journal of the ICSBS*, Autumn, p 36 fig 87.

The 'Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove' were a group of Chinese learned men from the third century AD. During a time of political upheaval, the group distanced themselves from governmental service, choosing instead to spend time engaged in Daoist-inspired discussions, poetry, and music, sometimes while inebriated. At least one member of the group abandoned his government position after becoming disheartened by corruption, and the group as a whole became associated with retreat from public life.



38. Crystal, carved with panels on the front, reverse and the lateral sides, then painted inside with a splendid Pekinese dog under a lush flowering peony, with a bamboo fence that links the scene to the reverse which depicts two smaller dogs and two doves above.

Signed by Ye Zhongsan and dated 1904

Height: 6.1cm

Provenance: Private Collection, England

The Daoguang Emperor (1821-1850) and his consort had a love of small dogs and doves, and in that time period the subject was considered an Imperial motif and painted onto porcelain. In some of those examples, as here, the dog has a collar of bells so that it cannot creep up on the doves and kill or chase them, as would be its natural inclination.

It is quite rare to see this subject painted inside a snuff bottle. The fact that Ye Zhongsan chose a crystal bottle in which to paint the scene, shows how much he appreciated it, or of course it could have been a commission for a dog and dove lover !

