ROBERT HALL

Chinese Snuff Bottles V

from the Collection of Mr & Mrs Robert Trojan
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Robert Hall  Robert Hall—France
140 Sutherland Avenue, London W9 1HP  Gayle Gray Laverlochère, 22 Rue Drouot, Paris 75009
Telephone 071 286 0809  Téléphone (1) 4247 1204
Facsimile 071 289 3287  Facsimilé (1) 4523 1017

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For Bob and Chris Trojan
Introduction

Bob and Chris Trojan met in the late 1960's in St. Thomas, a small and beautiful island forming part of the United States Virgin Islands in the Caribbean. They married in 1971 and, although travelling extensively throughout the world, always made their home there.

Chris was born in 1910 in Rochester, New York, and attended the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Rochester and Trinity College in Washington, D.C. Her father worked for Eastman Kodak in a senior capacity in charge of public relations, and travelled widely on behalf of the company. Chris remembers meeting the charismatic George Eastman on several occasions during her youth whilst enjoying outings with her father.

Bob was born in Chicago, Illinois, also in 1910. He worked at the Virgin Island Hotel in St. Thomas after serving in the United States Navy during the Second World War. He had seen many countries during his tour of duty, but decided to return to the island which he had grown to love.

I first met Bob and Chris at the galleries of Hugh Moss Limited, then in Bruton Street, London, during the summer of 1972. In those days, they were often found in the antique shops and auction houses of London's West End, usually with Bob's Zeiss eyeglass in position, thoroughly examining the surface of a bottle. Always interested in minerals, he was particularly fascinated by hardstone bottles of which many fine examples are illustrated here.

Chinese snuff bottles became an important area of their collecting activities and they became active members of the International Chinese Snuff Bottle Society, regularly attending the annual conventions around the world and winning several awards for their bottles.

Back home, Bob would bury himself in his basement workshop where he would fit and adapt stoppers for the snuff bottles or clean his sword blades. His background as an engineer was of considerable help to him in restoring and polishing objects from their collections, but his greatest enemy was the combination of termites and the humid Caribbean climate which together can quickly decimate many organic substances. For example, I discovered that many of the fitted boxes were impossible to transport as they had been reduced to mostly powder!

One of the things I most admire about Bob and Chris is that they simply saw no reason to follow the collecting patterns of others. Their decisions were always based solely upon whether or not they both liked a piece well enough to add it to their collection. For example, most collectors are reluctant to acquire snuff bottles of larger-than-usual size, but the Trojans were never affected by this prejudice. In many cases, even damage was not a deterrent if the bottle had sufficient merit to be enjoyed by both.

Failing health had largely curtailed their collecting activities in recent years, and it was with great sadness that I learned that Bob passed away in November 1990. To make matters worse, Chris was then hospitalized for some time. In August of 1991, she asked me to come to St. Thomas to list their collection of Oriental art and to remove it to England for safekeeping. In September I arrived in the Caribbean heat to meet Chris again for the first time in several years, and to start the task of reacquainting myself with the collection. The job turned out to be a much larger one than I had envisaged and took two separate trips to complete.

I listed nearly a thousand snuff bottles in the collection but, in agreement with Chris,
I hand-carried back to England only those from which I was to make the final selection of the group to be illustrated in this catalogue. In many ways, therefore, this catalogue also reflects my own personal taste.

I am sad to say that, when listing the collection, I discovered that a rather large group of bottles was missing. Their disappearance is a mystery to Chris, and it is still unclear as to whether they will be found. It is certainly to be hoped that they will surface at some time in the near future, as the missing group includes some of the more outstanding bottles that Chris and Bob acquired. Obviously, I should have liked to illustrate all the best of the Trojan collection; nevertheless, I hope that this catalogue will serve as a lasting memento, not only of the collection itself, but of the friendship, fun, good humour and parties that I and many other collectors shared with Chris and Bob.

Finally, I would like to say that it has been both a pleasure and an honour to be associated with the project of creating this catalogue, a tribute to Bob and Chris which I hope will be enjoyed by collectors for many years to come.

ROBERT HALL

Acknowledgements

It is a difficult task for me to write a catalogue without a great deal of help from a number of people. The amount of organization and preparation needed long before I even put word to paper is considerable, and from that point of view I would like to offer my sincere thanks to my family, colleagues and friends. To my wife, Lindsey, and to Su san Gavins and Ed Miller who are always so prepared to deal cheerfully with my disorganized manner. To Robert Hall for his superb photography and the pursuit of perfection which I so appreciate. To Gerard Tsang of the Hong Kong Museum who gave me his valuable time to help with translations, when it was least convenient for him, and Fang Wei Chang who provided the bulk of the translation work. And finally, to Hugh Moss who is always there to cast his enlightened eye over the manuscript, and in many cases a pencil too!
Glass
1 Glass; single overlay of translucent red on a clear ground; carved in low relief with four ducks swimming amongst aquatic plants with flowering vines overhead; the other side with a monkey swinging by its tail from a fruiting peach branch which also supports an official seal, above a wasp attracted by a fallen peach, and a seal.

Yangzhou, 1800-1850
Height: 5.3 cm
Stopper: green jadeite

The combination of red overlay on clear transparent glass can be extremely effective, particularly when the decoration is carved and finished by an experienced and sensitive hand.

2 Glass; single overlay of brown on opaque white; delicately carved with a goatherd leaving his three goats (implying the coming of Spring) while he flies his kite near two swallows; the other side with two crabs, chrysanthemum and orchids growing from ornamental rockwork below a four-character inscription which reads: "three pleasant things about Autumn"; the oval footrim also carved from the brown overlay.

Yangzhou, 1800-1850
Height: 5.6 cm
Stopper: pink glass set on a brown collar
3 Glass: opaque white, painted in enamels with a continuous scene of five quail on a grassy bank with ornamental rocks, roses and asters; the neck painted with a formalized scrolling design; the shoulders with formalized flowers and the base with a band of formalized lingzhi; the base with a raised blue enamel mark Qianlong qianzhi ("made in the Qianlong period") in kaishu (official script).

Wang Xisan, Beijing, 1960-1975
Height: 5.3 cm
Stopper: pink tourmaline set on a bronze collar

This is certainly one of the more inspired works to have come from Wang Xisan, by far the best pupil of Ye Bengqi.

4 Glass; imperial yellow, of flattened rounded form, finely carved with two lively qī dragons contesting a flaming pearl, one with its head doubling back to challenge its adversary who is close to winning the prize.

1760-1820
Height: 5.7 cm
Stopper: amethyst on a silver collar
Illustrated: Journal ICSBS, December 1976, Volume VIII, Number 4, front cover

A fine and well-balanced work of art of simplicity and vitality — a masterly rendition of a popular theme.
5 Glass; single overlay of translucent ruby-red on a clear ground; carved in relief with a continuous design of a crane carrying a counter in its beak whilst flying over a pavilion and a conch shell; the reverse with a pavilion floating on clouds, a bat and a dragon-headed fish lying upside down in the waves with lingzhi; the base surrounded by waves which form the oval foot.

1750-1820
Height: 6.9 cm
Stopper: coral set on an ivory collar

Although red is the most common colour of glass overlay, many red overlay bottles display the finest quality and technique. On this example, the decoration incorporates so many different symbols that it is difficult for the Westerner to comprehend, but the meaning is couched in Daoist terms and includes the wish for longevity.
Glass; double overlay of opaque blue on opaque turquoise on a milky white ground; the turquoise-coloured overlay carved with a continuous design of bamboo; the blue overlay carved with He Xianggu in flowing robes; the other side with Xi Wangmu being offered the peach of longevity by the Monkey King in a log boat.

1800-1850
Height: 6.7 cm
Stopper: coral with a pearl finial set on a blue glass collar
Illustrated: Stevens, Bob The Collector's Book of Snuff Bottles, 1976, # 225
Glass: opaque white, painted in enamels with a continuous design of orchids and other flowers around an ornamental rock near three butterflies; on one tip of an orchid is a tiny ladybird; the neck and shoulders painted with a formalized floral design.

Wang Xisan, 1960-1975
Height: 4.8 cm
Stopper: chased gilt bronze carved with a dragon and pearl
Illustrated: Journal ICSBS December 1976, Volume VIII, Number 4 front cover

Glass: single overlay of translucent dark green on a translucent snowflake ground; carved with a formalized design of a lotus, somewhat reminiscent of the Buddhist svāturva symbol; the shoulders carved with mask and ring handles; the oval footrim also carved from the green overlay.

Attributed to Beijing, 1736-1820
Height: 6 cm
Stopper: pink tormaline set on a carved bronze collar
Provenance: Ko Collection, Part I, Christie's London, 14th June 1971, #6
Hugh M. Moss Ltd
Illustrated: Journal of the ICSBS, December 1975, back cover.

A skilfully carved bottle depicting an unusual subject frequently associated with the Palace Workshops, executed with the utmost confidence and conviction.
Nephrite & Jadeite
9 **Nephrite**; white with pale ochre inclusions; well hollowed and carved in low relief with an exotic long-tailed bird looking over its shoulder on a branch; a raised inscription to one side: "A bird is singing the Autumn theme on the river" followed by a seal *Wenzao* ("literary plaything").

Suzhou, 1700-1860  
Height: 6.4 cm  
Stopper: pink rose quartz on a gilt bronze collar

An extremely subtle bottle with a simple and very confidently carved scene. This appears to be an early example from the Suzhou school of carving, and it contrasts greatly with the later, more intricately decorated bottles from that school.

10 **Nephrite**; white with light beige markings; carved with a continuous basketweave design, the shoulders with a double concentric band; the oval foot indented.

1750-1860  
Height: 5.1 cm  
Stopper: metal filigree with floral decoration
11 **Nephrite**: mottled greenish-grey with a brown and black skin around the shoulders, sides and base; one side carved with a figure seated on a garden stool in an elaborate log boat, with a gourd vessel hanging from a branch overhead; the other side with bats amongst swirling clouds above *lingzhi*.

1720-1850  
Height: 6.1 cm  
Stopper: pink tourmaline

12 **Nephrite**: pure white, exquisitely carved as a bamboo shoot with overlapping tightly wrapped leaves; the body overlaid with spinach-coloured nephrite carved as bamboo; the mouth recessed to receive the matching oval collar of the stopper.

1750-1850  
Height: 6.2 cm  
Stopper: coral carved as a twig with matching nephrite collar
13 Nephrite; white with light ochre inclusions; carved in relief as a Chinese cabbage ("bucai"), its leaves overlapping realistically and meeting to form the mouth; the base formed by the stalk where it meets its root.

1750-1850
Height: 6.2 cm
Stopper: green jadeite carved as a twig

This is a charming and most unusual form for a nephrite snuff bottle, although many examples are to be found in porcelain and, much later, in glass.

14 Nephrite; white; the pear-shaped bottle carved realistically as a wicker basket, the design extending underneath to form the recessed foot, a loosely hanging rope handle tied to the shoulder rings.

1750-1850
Height: 6.3 cm
Stopper: mottled green jadeite on a brown glass collar

The basketweave pattern is not an unusual motif for snuff bottles, but the oval form is unusual for the basket weave pattern, and this rendition is particularly well conceived. The rope handle is an extremely rare feature for this design.
15 Nephrite; of even celadon colour; the light ochre skin carved in low relief with two qí dragons holding a spray of lingzhi in their mouths, their bodies curling spiritedly; the sides carved with mask and ring handles.

1730-1800
Height: 6.2 cm
Stopper: green jadeite

16 Nephrite; dark grey with cream and ochre inclusions; of an unusual elongated form with a slightly everted lip; both front and back carved with oval panels, each containing five characters of seal script which may be translated as: "longevity, like hills and mountains, is everlasting", and "luck stays as (long as) the oceans and the skies".

1750-1850
Height: 9 cm
Stopper: Red stained stone on a metal collar

This is an unusual form for this rare and sought-after material, which was more often used by the carvers of the Suzhou School, and those of the small group referred to in Robert Hall, Chinese Snuff Bottles II, # 128, and Chinese Snuff Bottles IV, # 37.
17 Nephrite: of mottled spinach colour with lighter green and grey specks; of octagonal section with a cylindrical neck; the flat base incised with the four-character mark Xingyoutheng Tang ("the Hall of Constancy").

1810-1854
Height: 5.6 cm
Stopper: coral with pearl finial on a gilt metal collar

This is one of a few snuff bottles bearing a genuine Xingyoutheng Tang mark, the hall mark used by Zaichuan, the fifth Prince Ding, to denote objects which were worthy of his collection. These genuinely marked bottles all possess a very distinctive flavour, a rare level of individuality and creative inspiration. It is quite apparent that the Prince's taste ran strongly to elegant simplicity and understatement. This example is of an unusual form.

18 Nephrite: of even celadon colour with dark ochre skin; carved with two deities on a terrace set amidst waves, one of them seated on a cloud cushion holding a nüjí sceptre, another holding a peach of immortality; the other side with a very simple and elegant rock protruding from the ochre skin which extends to cover the base.

1760-1850
Height: 6.3 cm
Stopper: coral on an ivory collar
19 **Nephrite**: white, with two areas of variegated dark ochre and black skin carved with two butterflies and a cat, the base with a three-character mark reading "chrysanthemums and grass".

1750-1850
Height: 6.6 cm
Stopper: white nephrite carved with a finial

The words for cat and septuagenarian, *miao*, are phonetically close, and the word for butterfly, *die*, is a homonym for octagenarian, so a cat and butterflies pictured together form a rebus expressing the wish that the recipient might live to a ripe old age.

20 **Nephrite**: pure white; of rounded form, precisely carved with a basketweave design between concentric bands at the shoulders and foot; the flat base incised with the four-character inscription: "The Scholar's Studio for the Development of Righteousness".

1750-1840
Height: 5.4 cm
Stopper: pink coral

The basketweave design was a popular one for the decoration of snuff bottles, although the theme varied a great deal. This one, with an unusually tight weave and narrow and elaborate borders, is exceptional.
Nephrite; of celadon colour with a light and dark ochre skin; the pebble-shaped bottle carved, using the natural inclusions, with large curling mulberry leaves and two silk moths.

1740-1820
Height: 6.6 cm
Stopper: coral carved as a twig

Nephrite; white; each face carved with a panel containing sixteen characters of seal script which are the six commandments for self discipline:

"My ears should not listen to heresy
I should not be distracted (or look around in vain)
My tongue should not talk without reason
My heart should not wander
My actions should not be exaggerated
This is the way that the ancient school behaves
Who am I not to follow it?"

1730-1800
Height: 5.8 cm
Stopper: tourmaline with a jadeite finial on a metal collar

A rare and superbly made bottle, displaying all the finesse, restraint, and subtlety normally associated with the best bottles from the eighteenth century.
Nephrite; of even green celadon colour with light and dark ochre coloured skin running from the mouth of the bottle to beneath the foot; carved with a fortified building on a cliff with two boats below; the moon and a constellation of stars above; the other side with the bough of a pine tree curving elegantly across the body of the bottle following the natural brown inclusion.

1760-1850
Height: 6.7 cm
Stopper: coral on a bronze collar

The gnarled old tree reaching across the face of this bottle is a good example of the clever utilization of natural markings in minerals. The variations in colour have been used to good advantage in the carving of this dramatic bottle.

Nephrite; white with a cream and ochre patch; carved in low relief with a long-tailed tropical bird swooping by a blossoming plum tree, and another flowering plant.

Attributed to Suzhou, 1700-1760
Height: 5.6 cm
Stopper: mottled brown quartz

This bottle relates to a small group of low relief carved white jade pendants attributed to the Suzhou school.
25 Nephrite; pure white, of irregular form, carved in low relief with a bird on the branch of a pine tree and his mate on a stump below, wistfully watched by another bird perched on a rock near a flowering tree peony and lingzhi.

1750-1850
Height: 7.3 cm
Stopper: lapis lazuli on bronze

26 Jadeite; mottled white and pale emerald-green; the reverse of white colour, veined throughout with a slight hint of green and lavender; the well-hollowed bottle of simple squared form.

1780-1880
Height: 5.1 cm
Stopper: pink tourmaline on a gilt bronze collar

The appeal of this bottle lies not only in its fine green colour, attractive to all lovers of jade, but in its extreme simplicity.
27 Nephrite; of veined cream and ochre colours; carved in low relief with a figure and attendant walking towards a pavilion in a mountainous landscape; the other side with a figure fishing from a rocky ledge below a pine tree, his fish pot behind him, with two sail-boats in the distance and a scholar in a sampan; above is a seven-character inscription which may be translated: “The mountain is lofty, the river is beautiful, and the moon remains misty” followed by two seals, Zi and gong.

1750-1820
Height: 7.6 cm
Stopper: jadeite, carved with a qilong, on a metal collar
Provenance: Joan Wasserman

The signature which appears in the two seals, Zigong, is the apocryphal signature of Lu Zigong, the famous 16th-century carver from Suzhou.

28 Nephrite; white with a dark brown skin; carved as a formalized medallion with two qi dragons with open mouths and intertwined tails.

1770-1880
Height: 5 cm
Stopper: carnelian bead
29 Nephrite; white with light ochre veining; the natural pebble shape carved in low relief as a magnolia bud; well hollowed and pleasingly patinated.

1750-1850
Height: 7.0 cm
Stopper: carnelian carved as a bud

Two centuries or more of use and patination have given a great deal of character to this simple, unpretentious bottle.

30 Jadeite; mottled white, with light and dark green flashes and small brown imperfections; carved overall with a four-clawed dragon set against a minutely incised wavy ground which continues underneath to form the base.

1780-1880
Height: 5.6 cm
Stopper: jadeite carved as a yinyang symbol on a bronze collar

An action-packed work of art depicting a green dragon writhing through clouds. The craftsman has used all the markings and colours to maximum effect.
Nephrite; white with pale ochre inclusions; the graceful shape of the bottle following the original pebble form, finely carved in the form of a bag, the shoulders enclosed with a brocaded ribbon tied in a bow.

1730-1800
Height: 8.3 cm
Stopper: carnelian carved as a spider on a metal filigree collar

Nephrite; of even celadon colour; of double rectangular form with the neck and foot of equal cylindrical proportions; the narrow sides incised with a butterfly and flower, the main side incised with a bird and branches and an accompanying inscription written in seal script: “the clothing on the body attracts the imperial fragrance of incense” and a seal: “one piece”; the other side with two swallows near a willow tree and an accompanying inscription in Lishu (clerical script): “The wind passes with the subtle scent of flowers” followed by a seal: “jade stream”.

1775-1850
Height: 4.6 cm
Stopper: jadeite and carnelian, both mounted on gilt bronze collars

Double bottles always possess an extra element of excitement. The precision with which this one has been made, with the two necks reflecting the two feet, the superb finish, and two differently styled inscriptions, make for a very satisfying and tactile bottle.
Nephrite; of even celadon colour; carved in the form of a purse with matching original stopper and elaborately carved realistic folds, the neck and the lid with pierced holes with a beaded cord passing through to close the lid and to suspend the bottle from the belt; carved in low relief on one side with a cricket on a gourd vine, the other side with a butterfly and lily, accompanied by an inscription which loosely reads: "Master Zhou, whose name is recorded for posterity in a famous scholarly reference".

1736-1795
Height: 5.7 cm (including the stopper)
Stopper: matching and original

Gerard Tsang suggests that this reference, combined with the butterfly, may refer to a passage by Chuang Zhi, the Daoist philosopher, about his dream of being a butterfly. This is one of the finest yellow nephrite bottles made in this form, its inspiration being a silk purse.
Marble & Soapstone
34 Marble; flattened rectangular form, with a creamy central layer sandwiched between two toffee-coloured layers; one side with a lighter outside layer carved with two archaic coins and a four-character inscription which may be translated as: "money works"; the other side with another inscription: "Searching for plum blossom in the snow; seeking the chrysanthemeum in the frost"; signed Zhu Xuan zuo ("made by Zhu Xuan").

1800-1900
Height: 6.3 cm
Stopper: ruby matrix on a gilt bronze collar set with tiny pearls

35 Soapstone, of the variety known as Shoushan; of mottled ochre, cream and russet colours; the bottle of jar form, well hollowed, with a wide mouth; the body with a well-incised inscription, signed Sun Xuan and dated Bingzao and year of Daoguang (1846), collected from segments of ancient poems about plum blossoms which may be translated as:

"To purify and clear the mind, staying calm and tranquil like the plum blossoms, not to scramble for the dazzling beauty with the orchid, rather to stay firm and tenacious with the snow. The appearance can be cherished by the nearby monks however it is not to be cherished by ordinary people. In the evening the plum blossom is more beautiful since it is highlighted by the moon. The spring is bringing flowers all over the Xihu. The high cliff covered in green a hundred thousand zhang deep. In an old village, only a few families live."

The base carved with a raised seal which reads Peiyuan zhenghunghang ("for the precious appreciation of Peiyuan").

Dated: 1846
Height: 4.5 cm
Stopper: ivory

Perhaps more correctly a snuff jar, this vessel has many scholarly elements: being made from soapstone, beautifully and legibly inscribed, dated, and signed. It is also unique in that the characters on the base are reversed so that they function as a seal.
Chalcedony
Quartz; chalcedony of pale beige and grey with darker inclusions carved to reveal the silhouette of a fisherman in a sampan joyously hauling in his catch under threatening clouds with the sun shining hazily through at the top.

1760-1850
Height: 7.1 cm
Stopper: coral on a bone and metal collar

The “silhouette agate” group is particularly interesting because the natural inclusions stimulated the imagination of different artists in different ways. In this example, only a minimum of carving was needed to complete the scene formed by the markings in the stone. The effect of the sun shining through the clouds is a brilliant achievement which bears testimony to the skill of the artist.

Quartz; chalcedony of light beige colour with darker brown inclusions, carved with a scholar playing a qin in a boat which is being paddled by an attendant kneeling at the bow.

1760-1850
Height: 7.0 cm
Stopper: mottled green jadeite

A charming and peaceful scene with natural brown inclusions used to delineate the water lines.
38 Quartz; chalcedony of light honey tone carved with a saddled horse tethered to a post, a scroll above carved with a four-character inscription which may be translated: "a fine horse, a capable man"; the ochre inclusions magnificently used to emphasize the saddle, mane, ropes, hoofs and tail.

1760-1850
Height: 6.5 cm
Stopper: glass imitating coral

A horse shown tethered to a post is an auspicious motif and forms a rebus expressing a wish for the speedy success of an undiscovered talent.

39 Quartz; chalcedony of light honey colour with strongly contrasting darker inclusions lightly carved to reveal the silhouette of a bearded sage beneath a parasol on his donkey, turning to pay attention to an accompanying bat.

1750-1850
Height: 6.3 cm
Stopper: green glass

A charming bottle with a unique treatment of a popular subject. The artist has used the natural colours in the stone exquisitely to portray the old philosopher on his donkey.
40 Quartz; chalcedony of light honey colour with darker brown patches; carved with a fisherman reclining beneath a cliff, having just hooked a fish on his line from the turbulent river; the other side with two birds on the branches of a flowering prunus tree in a rocky grotto with a small pine tree to one side; the shoulders surrounded by cloud scrolls.

Suzhou school, 1750-1860
Height: 6.5 cm
Stopper: coral, carved with scrolls, with a turquoise finial

This is a fine chalcedony bottle from the Suzhou school.

41 Quartz; chalcedony of light grey colour with dark brown inclusions lightly carved to show a monkey on a rock tugging at the halter of a horse while his companion astride the horse tries to catch a passing butterfly.

1750-1850
Height: 5.7 cm
Stopper: coral with enamelled metal collar
42 Quartz; chalcedony with unusual russet and dark brown banded markings; undecorated but fabulously hollowed to provide the depth for this awe-inspiring scene with plunging cliffs and ravines by the water's edge, with the darker stripes from the shoulder suggesting wind-swept rain.

1780-1850
Height: 6.3 cm
Stopper: carnelian mounted on silver

This is certainly one of the most powerful undecorated agate bottles I know; the dramatic scene has simply been "released" by the artist's skill in selecting the stone and hollowing it to perfection.

43 Quartz; chalcedony of pale honey colour with ochre and brown inclusions forming the silhouette body of a quail with carved feet and beak, perched on a rock-like marking; a four-character inscription to one side which reads Chunfeng deyi, ("Being happy and proud").

1750-1850
Height: 5.7 cm
Stopper: coral on a turquoise and metal collar

One of the great strengths of the Trojan collection lies in its number of simple but beautifully made bottles. The inscription on this bottle was for a person who had passed an important examination and was feeling happy and proud about it.
Quartz; chalcedony of light honey colour with mottled ochre inclusions; carved with a monkey gazing up at the crescent moon from a rocky ledge beside a waterfall in a rugged landscape; the other side with a darker mottled inclusion carved with a briddled, dappled pony tethered to a post on a rocky ledge.

1760-1850
Height: 6.2 cm
Stopper: green jadeite

It is both unusual and delightful for two such different and visually striking scenes to be carved on the same bottle.

Quartz; chalcedony of light honey colour with an unusual pale green hue, with ochre inclusions and a light cream-coloured skin carved with a parrot perched precariously among the branches of a gnarled prunus tree; on one narrow side are two butterflies carved amongst clouds.

1750-1850
Height: 5.7 cm
Stopper: amethyst on a bronze collar

The colour of this stone is remarkable, and the striations running through the lighter skin from which the main decoration is carved lend perspective and reality to a charming scene.
46 Quartz; *chalcedony* of light honey-grey colour with dark brown inclusions ingeniously carved as the head and body of a fierce scaly dragon breathing fire, partly obscured by swirling clouds, as it attempts to catch the ubiquitous flaming pearl.

1750-1850  
Height: 5.8 cm  
Stopper: pink coral

A sensational bottle with the natural darker inclusions used to maximum effect to show a scene full of drama and fantasy. This is a masterpiece from all points of view, and even the dragon, which to the Western mind is ferocious and threatening, has a rather surprised and friendly countenance.

47 Quartz; *chalcedony* of light honey colour with a dark brown inclusion on one side suggestive of a fantastic rock jutting from the ocean, surrounded by an aura formed by extremely pale concentric bands.

1750-1850  
Height: 6.0 cm  
Stopper: coral on a brown collar

A fascinating bottle which is sure to have given endless pleasure to its lucky owners. *GuaiShi* ("strange stones"), have been highly prized for centuries in China where they are appreciated as works of art. The dark natural marking in this stone is so evocative of a bizarre rock jutting out of the sea that the artist has simply completed the illusion by carving the waves in low relief.
48 Quartz; chalcedony of light honey colour, with darker areas smoothly carved in low relief to form the flowing robes of a hunched figure, with a bi hanging from the belt of his robe, the centre of which is a natural inclusion; his feet carved from the lighter coloured chalcedony with the design continuing under the bottle where his robes form part of the base.

1750-1850
Height: 5.4 cm
Stopper: coral on a metal collar

The remarkable ingenuity with which the darker inclusions have been put to use on this bottle is fascinating. The simplicity and confidence of the carving are delightful.

49 Quartz; chalcedony of honey colour with darker inclusions carved to depict a bearded figure holding a branch of plum blossom.

1780-1850
Height: 6.8 cm
Stopper: coral with metal collar
Jasper
50 Quartz; jasper of mottled rust and ochre colours; vigorously carved using the contrasting colours to show a monkey with a coy expression, his feet crossed, perched on a rock.

1760-1850
Height: 7.5 cm
Stopper: green glass on a metal collar

51 Quartz; jasper; olive-green with beige, black and russet inclusions, expertly carved in high relief with a monkey on a galloping horse being chased by a wasp.

1760-1850
Height: 6.7 cm
Stopper: glass imitating coral on a metal collar

A bottle with this motif would have made a most suitable gift for an official. The combination of monkey, horse and wasp forms a rebus expressing the wish for a prompt elevation in rank.
Crystal
Quartz; amethyst and brown crystal with tourmaline needles; carved as a cicada, the upper portion formed in brown crystal, paling to amethyst for the wings which have hair crystal inclusions, its legs tucked under the body and its mouth forming the opening for the stopper.

1750-1850
Height: 5.7 cm
Stopper: pink tourmaline

This is one of the most exciting cicadas in any material. The combination of amethyst, brown crystal and hair crystal is unique in a snuff bottle, and the artist has risen to the occasion by carving a stunning creature with every detail perfectly finished.
53 Quartz: hair crystal; the translucent, colourless material suffused with black tourmaline needles; of disc shape.
1750-1860
Height: 6.4 cm
Stopper: pink tourmaline with metal collar

54 Quartz; colourless crystal; carved on both sides with an archaic scrolling design enclosing a shou character, all contained within a border of leitaven.
1760-1860
Height: 5.6 cm
Stopper: green and brown nephrite

There exists a small but very fine group of crystal bottles whose quality is outstanding, most of which are of a similar form, and bear the same characteristics (see Robert Hall, *Chinese Snuff Bottles*, I, number 24).
Quartz; crystal; the transparent, flawless material plainly carved, with rounded shoulders and concave neck, neatly finished oval footrim, and perfectly hollowed; the base incised with the four-character inscription: Xinggaozheng Ling ("The Hall of Constancy").

1810-1854
Height: 6.4 cm
Stopper: coral, carved with a dragon, with coral spoon

Owned by Zaichuan, the fifth Prince Ding, this is a gloriously simple bottle, brilliantly executed in every way, and the epitome of his very sophisticated taste.

Quartz; colourless crystal; of flattened rectangular form, with green actinolite needles dispersed throughout the body.

1750-1850
Height: 6.0 cm
Stopper: green jadeite carved as a frog on a metal collar, the spoon of spinach-coloured nephrite carved as a bamboo branch

Hair crystal exists with needles of several different colours. Black is the most common, but red and green are also found occasionally and can be extremely attractive. This is a particularly pleasing example, in which the needles are so fine that they give a very delicate, pale green hue to the stone. The effect is accentuated by the green nephrite spoon.
Puddingstone & Limestone
57 **Puddingstone**; of flattened, rounded form, the speckled beige matrix with black, grey and brown pebbles of varying sizes.
1750-1850
Height: 5.2 cm
Stopper: green-flecked jadeite

58 **Fossiliferous limestone**; with creamy-beige cellular fossil patterns containing grey and black inclusions of various marine fossils.
1780-1850
Height: 6.1 cm
Stopper: green glass with turquoise glass collar
Porcelain
59 **Porcelain;** moulded in the form of a gourd, covered overall with a creamy-white glaze and painted in *famille rose* enamels with eighteen smaller gourds, tendrils and flowers; the neck modelled as the calyx extending to the flared lip.

Jingdezhen, 1750-1850  
Height: 6.6 cm  
Stopper: carnelian

60 **Porcelain;** of flattened circular form with a raised central panel on each side; painted in *famille verte* enamels with a figure on a donkey approaching a pavilion nestled amongst rocks and trees; the other side with two scholars, each in a summer pavilion at the water's edge, a temple in the background surrounded by swirling clouds; the borders of jet black enamel.

Jingdezhen, 1820-1860  
Height: 5.6 cm  
Stopper: coral
61 Porcelain; moulded and painted with famille rose enamels; one side with a green butterfly in low relief on the underside of a pink lotus flower; the other with a pink butterfly on the underside of a green lotus leaf; the stems of each gathered on one shoulder and tied with a ribbon; the base moulded as a separate small leaf; the neck formed as an enlarged section of the ribbed stem of the plant.

Jingdezhen, 1790-1870
Height: 6.2 cm
Stopper: coral with a metal collar

Bottles from this interesting mould are much sought after by collectors because they are very attractive and do not seem to have been produced in very large numbers. This example shows few signs of wear.

62 Stoneware; of flattened rounded form; painted in green, red and white enamels with flowering lotus; the reverse decorated in buff-coloured slip with two figures sitting peacefully in a clearing overlooking the water and rocks, with the sun low in the sky; the inside of the neck and the underside of the foot enamelled with a creamy crackled glaze.

Yixing, 1800-1850
Height: 6.0 cm
Stopper: green jadeite with a metal collar
Illustrated: *Journal ICSBS*, September 1978, Volume X, Number 3, page 9, fig. 15

Yixing wares were held in esteem by members of the literati, and snuff bottles of this material were no exception. Neither famille rose enamelling nor the application of slip decoration is unusual in itself, but the combination of these two techniques is. Both media are used to good effect on this bottle.
Porcelain; moulded, covered overall with a creamy-white glaze, and painted in green, aubergine, iron-red, black, and white enamels with a fierce five-clawed scaly dragon chasing a flaming pearl; the base inscribed in iron-red enamels in seal script, Daoguang nianzhi ("made during the Daoguang period").

Imperial kilns, Jingdezhen, 1821-1850
Height: 5.8 cm
Stopper: carnelian

Moulded and enamelled dragons appear to have been a favoured imperial subject during the Daoguang reign. This design is one that is especially susceptible to wear, particularly around the protruding areas, and the condition of this example is exceptional.

Porcelain; of hexagonal section; covered overall with a creamy-white glaze and painted in enamels with a group of female performers, nine playing music for the tenth to dance. The base enamelled in iron-red with the four-character mark, Daoguang nianzhi ("made during the Daoguang period").

Imperial kilns, Jingdezhen, 1821-1850
Height: 7.8 cm
Stopper: carnelian carved with a shou character

This is an unusual form for a porcelain bottle made during the Daoguang reign, but the decoration is typical of the many new porcelain designs introduced throughout this important period for snuff bottles.
Organic
Laque bourgâuté; the black lacquer ground on a metal body and inlaid with minute pieces of abalone shell and gold foil, decorated on one side with a sleeping figure and two scholars playing weiqi whilst being waited upon by an attendant with a wine pot, two swallows swooping nearby; the reverse with an exotic bird in a blossoming tree; the neck, shoulders and foot all inset with a formalized floral motif; the base with the mark Qianlong nianzhi (“made during the Qianlong period”) in seal script.

Japan, 1860-1930
Height: 7.1 cm
Stopper: matching and original

The majority of laque bourgâuté snuff bottles were made in Japan. This example is of excellent quality and as a bonus it has retained its unusually shaped matching original stopper.

Walnut; the reddish-brown nut finely carved with a scholar holding a ruyi sceptre, accompanied by his attendant with a long staff in a misty landscape with gnarled pine trees, grottoes and rocks; the irregular nut well patinated from natural use.

1750-1880
Height: 3.3 cm
Stopper: green jadeite carved as a bird

Because of its rugosity and small size, a walnut shell is not an easy material to carve, and the sculptural quality of the intricate scene on this bottle shows the artist as a carver of considerable skill. Both the material and the subject matter would have appealed to the literati, and the pleasingly soft patination acquired after many years of use and fondling indicates that this bottle was indeed much cherished by its previous owners.
67 Jet; of slightly flattened bulbous form with a neatly recessed base.

1750-1850
Height: 6.0 cm
Stopper: pale green quartz with a green finial on a turquoise glass collar

A simple but beautifully made bottle in a rare material. Many so-called 'jet' bottles are, in fact, lacquered wood, and as jet is also a light material, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between them.

68 Lacquered wood; of elegantly tapered vase form; one side incised with a flowering plum blossom branch; the other with an incised eight-character inscription: "approaching the window, draw the distinguished blossom, the plum flower" followed by the signature Kuisheng.

Lu Dong, Yangzhou, 1800-1850
Height: 7.3 cm
Stopper: green glass

The decoration of this bottle, with its delicate sophistication in the line drawing of the prunus combined with the scholarly allusions of the inscription, makes it a perfect example of classic literati taste. Kuisheng was the zi or given name of Lu Dong. (See No. 68)
69 **Lacquer:** of rectangular form with raised panels on each shoulder; the dark olive-green lacquer delicately incised with a picture of a horse looking over its shoulder in a field with a small tree and the seal *Kuisheng*; the other side with a 14-character inscription: "(A horse) from one of the twelve Imperial Stables; its heart so strong it could run a myriad miles," with the signature *Xintuo Shanren* (a hao of Hua Yan (1682-1765) a noted poet, calligrapher and painter), and the seal *Yan*.

Lu Dong, Yangzhou, 1800-1850
Height: 7.3 cm
Stopper: green glass

Lu Dong (zi: *Kuisheng*), a renowned lacquer artist of Yangzhou, produced few snuff bottles, but all of uniformly high quality and with scholarly subjects appealing to the literati.

For more information and biographical details of this artist, see *Arts from the Scholar’s Studio* by Gerard Tsang and Hugh Moss, Nos. 63, 64 and 85.

70 **Amber:** flawless, of bright translucent golden colour; carved in low relief with a lady at her loom; the other side with a Daoist immortal blissfully relaxing in a log raft made from a fruiting peach tree, surrounded by gently lapping waves.

1750-1850
Height: 6.2 cm
Stopper: pink tourmaline

The colour of the amber in this bottle is exceptionally beautiful and clear. *Hupo*, the Chinese term for amber, means "tiger soul" and originated in the traditional belief that when a tiger died, its soul entered the ground and became amber.
71 **Gourd**: crisply moulded in disc form, the mould ridges running from the neck to the flat base, with raised circular panels on each side, one with a writhing dragon amidst clouds, the other with a splendid strutting phoenix; the lip separately applied with gourd.

1750-1850
Height: 6.9 cm
Stopper: coral

The Chinese were probably using moulds to grow decorated gourds prior to the Kangxi period, but the practice became popular at the court during that reign and continued through the 19th century. A dragon, *long*, and phoenix, *feng*, depicted together are said to symbolize the Emperor and Empress; the term *longfeng* is also used by the Chinese to describe a person of eminent talent.

72 **Gourd**: crisply moulded in disc form with mould ridges running from the neck to the base; each side with a seven-character relief inscription: “In Spring, the beautiful flowers and birds make up the scene” and “In a midnight dream, a crane stands alone outside the half-open window”; the lip separately applied with gourd.

1750-1820
Height: 6.3 cm
Stopper: coral carved with a bat and a peach spray

Snuff bottles with moulded calligraphic inscriptions are rare, probably because it was so difficult to achieve a good standard of precision in the formation of several characters.
Lacquer; flattened shield shape made from a metal body covered with layers of red cinnabar lacquer, subsequently overlaid in black and finely carved with a procession of children making their way from a large sampan through the rocky garden to cross a bridge on their way to visit a temple partly obscured by pine trees, rocks and clouds; the other side with a Budai holding his sack, accompanied by six children crossing a lotus pond; the base incised with the mark Qianlong nianzhi ("made during the Qianlong period").

Japan 1860-1920
Height: 6.9 cm
Stopper: coral-coloured glass with a green finial
Provenance: The Claar Collection, Part III, #519
Illustrated: Stevens, Bob The Collector’s Book of Snuff Bottles, 1976, #753

This is a superb example of the fine work attributed to Japan.
**74** Bronze; of yellowish colour; the slightly flattened rectangular form with an integral snuff dish on one side surrounded by an incised design of dragons in clouds and flaming pearls; each edge with a raised oval panel containing an incised floral motif; the base inscribed "made by Cheng Rongzhang in the third year of the Shunzhi period".

Attributed to North China, dated 1646
Height: 5.5 cm
Stopper: matching, possibly original, bronze

It is very rare to find a bottle from this early group with a matching stopper. In this case, however, the stopper appears to be of an age commensurate with that of the bottle.

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**75** Painted enamels on metal; of rounded form, delicately decorated in the famille rose palette with a wistful Chinese lady in beautiful robes seated on a rock by a lake with hills and a European-style church in the background; the landscape continues around to the other side with a child sitting by a rock holding a flower spray, with two butterflies above; the neck with pink floral scrolls above a band of lingzhi; the base with the four-character mark Qianlong nianzhi ("made during the Qianlong period") in blue enamel.

Beijing, 1760-1790
Height: 5 cm
Stopper: chased gilt bronze
Provenance: Bob Stevens
Illustrated: Stevens, Bob Chinese Snuff Bottles and Dishes, an Exhibition of Chinese Snuff Bottles from the Bob C. Stevens Collection, October 1978, Mikimoto Hall, Ginza, Tokyo, p 20 and p 124, #365; journal, ICSBS December 1978, Volume X, Number 4, page 43, fig. 365; journal ICSBS, March 1978, Volume X, Number 1, page 10, figs. 26 and 27
Inside-Painted
76 Quartz; very pale brown crystal; of bulbous form, painted inside with a continuous scene of a hundred boys at various pursuits in a garden; above is an inscription which reads: 'Painted by Ye Zhongsan in the first Winter month, 1923' seal huayu (painter's seal).

Ye Zhongsan, Beijing, 1923
Height: 7.1 cm
Stopper: green quartz on a white aragonite collar
Provenance: The Claar Collection, Part III, # 460
Illustrated: Stevens, Bob The Collector's Book of Snuff Bottles, 1976, # 923; Journal ICSBS, Spring 1984, Volume XVI, Number 1, page 62, fig 178

Ye painted very few bottles with the subject of the hundred boys. It certainly is a tour de force and would have taken a long time to complete.

77 Quartz; colourless crystal; of flattened pear shape, painted inside with a continuous scene of carp swimming under a mossy bank, with a cricket and Chinese cabbage; above is an inscription which reads: ‘Painted by Zhou Leyuan, Beijing, in the autumn of 1892’ with a seal Leyuan in negative seal script.

Zhou Leyuan, 1892
Height: 4.7 cm
Stopper: coral on a turquoise collar
78 **Amber;** of flawless golden colour and flattened rectangular form; painted inside with a continuous scene of a hawk on the branch of a pine tree growing from a mossy bank surrounded by flowering peonies, the hawk looking backwards to the moon; an inscription above which reads: “signed by Ye Xiaofeng, Beijing” with a seal, yin (seal).

Ye Xiaofeng, Beijing, Circa 1945
Height: 6.8 cm
Stopper: green quartz

Ye has found the most gorgeous amber bottle to paint inside, and the luminous colours which shine through the amber resemble the bright eeriness of a new moon at night.

79 **Quartz;** crystal of flattened rectangular form, painted inside with a narcissus in full bloom, below a five-character inscription which reads: “for the enjoyment of respected tenth brother Tongyou” followed by the signature Qiu Yan (Autumn cliff) followed by an illegible seal; the other side with a poetic inscription: “With a scent as fair as an orchid’s, and a chaste virtue which can be compared with the lotus, its charm and lasting appeal are natural and pure, this long-standing one in the water is called narcissus; signed Chen Quan”.

Chen Quan, Longnan School, 1816-1830
Height: 5.8 cm
Stopper: green and brown jadeite
80 Quartz; crystal; of flattened rectangular form, painted inside with a fan painting and fragments of calligraphy which may be read: "The Palace of Nine Accomplishments; this follows in its style." "The river flows to the other side of the horizon, with no destination" followed by a signature Ban Zubei, seal illegible.

The side with a long inscription reads: "Nanchang, the old city, is very important. It connects many water routes, and is the centre for transporting goods. A light from the precious dragon in the sky (referring to the Emperor) makes this city fabulous and full of clever people. Signed Ma Shaoxuan, second Spring month of 1896" followed by a seal Xuan in positive seal script.

Ma Shaoxuan, Beijing, 1896
Height: 6.7 cm
Stopper: green glass

81 Quartz; crystal; of pear shape, carved with peony and chrysanthemum within quatrefoil panels on each side; painted inside with a scholar painting a rock with his attendant holding the inkstone, and a clump of orchids; around the neck is an inscription: "longevity as with the mountains, and with eternal blessings together with the sea and sky" another in one part reading: "a blossom of the peony tree is of great worth"; and another with: "the standing chrysanthemum is cold-resistant; signed in the Spring of (ding mao) 1867, Banshan at the Stone Imitating Studio." Another small inscription reads: "the source of copied inscriptions should be declared", and with the Manchu script version of his art names.

Yiru Jushi, Lingnan School, 1867
Height: 5.3 cm
Stopper: green jadeite
Glass; of flattened rectangular form, painted inside with a long inscription derived from Liu Yuxi's *Lou Shi Ming* ("Inscription for a Humble House");

"Mountains need not be tall to become famous if immortals dwell there. Waters need not be deep to become magical if dragons live there. Because of virtue my humble home is fragrant. Green moss encroaches on the stairs and the colour of the grass is reflected in the curtains. Great scholars chat and laugh, and of my visitors, none are uneducated. We play plain music and read great books. There is no music of string or bamboo to confound the ear, nor official business to weary the body. There is Zhuge Liang's cottage in Nanyang, and Zi Yun's pavilion in Xishu. As Confucius says: 'Where is the humbleness?' Made by Ma Shaoxuan in the Winter of 1898", followed by a seal *Xuan*.

Ma Shaoxuan, Beijing, 1898
Height: 6.7 cm
Stopper: pink glass imitating tournamline

Liu Yuxi was a famous scholar during the Tang Dynasty.

Quartz; crystal; of bulbous form, painted inside with two figures in a clearing, one with a bundle of sticks, the other with a fishing rod and basket, below an inscription: "in the style of Shitian, painted by Banshan", the other side with a long inscription which reads: "The immortal blossoms in the land are well known, the flavour from the bottle is long lasting; a scent in the morning refreshes the mind; a slight incense on the road in the evening protects you from disease! Made in the Summer of *xintei* (1871) by Yunfeng": Seal of Yunfeng.

Yiru Jushi, Lingnan school, 1871
Height: 5.0 cm
Stopper: pink coral
Illustrated: *Journal ICSBS*, December 1974, Volume VI, Number 4, page 22, figs. 43 & 44

Yunfeng, Banshan, and Yiru Jushi are all assumed names of an otherwise unidentifiable Lingnan painter whose production was small and of a scholarly nature. Yiru Jushi painted inside old crystal bottles, often with many imperfections, sometimes of irregular form, but all of his works possess enormous character and show considerable signs of use. His bottles are rare. Evidently the Trojans appreciated his work and collected several examples.
84 Quartz; colourless crystal of flattened rounded form, carved on both sides within a central reserve with flowering lotus; painted inside with chrysanthemum, bamboo and reeds growing from rocks; inscribed above: “The fragrance of kings, in the style of Shitian” (art name for Shen Zhou, 1427-1507) followed by the signature Banshan; the other side with a further inscription: “the playing fish, swimming through the water, resting beside the pavilion; the greenness of the water is vivid, and the lotus-collecting song is still being sung” followed by the Manchu equivalent of his art name and the date “Autumn 1867”.

Yiru Jushi, Lingnan school, 1867
Height: 6.1 cm
Stopper: green jadeite

Although Early School bottles were painted comparatively recently in the history of China, they follow the Chinese painting tradition of stylistic reference to earlier masters.

85 Glass; of rounded form; painted inside with two figures on a rocky ledge enjoying a breathtaking landscape with two pavilions in the distance; the other side with a still-life scene of rocks, a vessel, and a branch of blossom below the inscription: “respectfully made for the pure enjoyment of respected elder brother Zijie in the winter of 1885” with an illegible seal.

Zhou Leyuan, Beijing, 1885
Height: 5.6 cm
Stopper: green glass

This is an early example of Zhou Leyuan’s painting and a forerunner of the superb landscapes for which he was to become famous.
86 **Glass;** of flattened rectangular form; painted inside with a hen strutting on a mossy bank, keeping guard over her chicks, with the inscription “In the style of Yuan painters, by Ding Erzhong in the winter of 1898”; with the seal Ding, the reverse with a figure riding his donkey over a bridge beneath a gnarled pine tree, with mountains in the distance.

Ding Erzhong, Beijing, 1898  
Height: 6.0 cm  
Stopper: coral carved with a dragon

Ding Erzhong is one of the most highly regarded of all the artists who painted inside snuff bottles. I recall very few bottles by Ding which were not of the highest quality.

87 **Quartz;** colourless crystal; of flattened rectangular form; painted inside with a stork resting on one leg on a flat-topped rock with bamboo plants in the background and a flowering tree, with lingzhi fungus below; one side with an inscription which reads: “In the gloomy night a twig lies diagonally. The bright moon in the clear sky makes the scene beautiful. Do not think you are alone in this deep gloominess; a crane keeps watch on the forest and flowers,” followed by a seal Zhou Shi (Mr Zhou); the reverse reads: “made by Zhou Leyuan in the capital” followed by a seal of the artist Leyuan.

Zhou Leyuan, Beijing, circa 1885  
Height: 5.9 cm  
Stopper: pink glass
88 Quartz; crystal; each side carved with an oval panel; painted inside with a lady reading at her desk, near a pile of books and a small table with a vase of flowers; the other side with two pavilions by the water's edge in a mountainous landscape; the shoulders with inscriptions which read: "here comes the Spring bringing the beautiful colourful blossoms" and "the jade-like subtleness and aroma are embraced fully."

Gan Xuanwen, between 1814-1823
Height: 5.9 cm
Stopper: coral with bronze collar

Early School inside-painted portraits are rare, and although this one is unsigned, its style and execution, as well as the form of the bottle itself, permit a confident attribution to Gan Xuanwen.

89 Glass; transparent, of flattened rectangular form, painted inside in grisaille with a portrait of Puyi, the Xuantong Emperor as a child; the reverse with three-line inscription reading: "Painted at Beijing in 1911. Long life to the Xuantong Emperor of the great Qing Dynasty. Ma Shaoxuan"; with the seal Shaoxuan.

Ma Shaoxuan, Beijing, 1911
Height: 5.8 cm
Stopper: green jadeite
Illustrated: Byrne Curtis, Emily Reflected Glory in a Bottle, New York 1980, #54; Journal ICSBS December 1976; Volume VIII, Number 4, page 38; Journal ICSBS December 1978, Volume X, Number 4, page 5, fig. 1

A famous bottle, depicting the Xuantong Emperor as a rather forlorn-looking little boy. Ma was celebrated for his realistic portraits of the leading political figures of his day and Emily Byrne Curtis has identified many of these in her book cited above. The Trojans adored this bottle and it is for that reason that Chris Trojan and I chose it for the cover of their catalogue.
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