



451. Nut Pyramid

China, Kangxi Period (1662-1722)

H: 24 cm

An unusually large enamel on biscuit (sousancai) walnut pyramid, with naturalistically moulded nuts in a fluted dish. The coloured enamelling is in a limited palette of ochre yellow, green and brown glazes. The nuts are arranged in eight layers, with abundant green leaves in between. The fluted under-dish, has a green rim and is brown on the side. To construct this piece, each nut would have been individually moulded, then arranged layer by layer and joined with slip; the veined leaves were added last before the first firing. Coloured glazes would then be added onto the fired biscuit, after which it was fired again at a lower temperature.

Such porcelain models, derive from the Chinese tradition of piling offerings of various sweetmeats on the household or temple altar; either for ancestor worship or in the tomb for the afterlife. Artificial fruit dishes such as these were sometimes used as an alternative to fresh fruit. These exotic looking forms were exported to the west as luxurious curiosities in the 18th century. The earliest recorded example in Europe of such a pyramid, was a small sketch made in a French auction catalogue in 1769.

The underside of the pyramid has a label L. Michon, 156 bd. Haussmann, Paris. He appears to have been dealing in Paris in the 1930's, attested by various advertisements we have found in journals and exhibition catalogues of that period. We find one further reference that he had previously been trading at 29 rue des Pyramides. Before the second world war, Paris had been an active centre for the Chinese art trade, including prominent dealers such as the famous CT Loo, Maison Bing and L. Wannieck.

Provenance:

- With L. Michon (Label)
- Private Collection, France 2018