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**AN IMPORTANT TWELVE FOLD COROMANDEL
LACQUER SCREEN FROM THE KANGXI PERIOD**

Dimensions: H: 112 in / 285 cm | W: 265 in / 672 cm | W (each panel): 22 in / 56 cm

9846

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An Important Twelve Fold Coromandel Lacquer Screen
Depicting Spring Morning in the Han Palace
Dating from the Kangxi Period

Designed by Shen Quan (1682 - 1762)

Meant to be read from right to left, of finely carved lacquerwork and polychrome decorated with, to the front, Qiu Ying's famous depiction of the "Spring Morning in the Han Palace" showing primarily female figures in an architectural setting, centred on a distinguished lady of the court in her pavilion. With twelve mythical and symbolic beasts depicted in the lower register, including the 'qilin' and a white elephant. The reverse bearing a dedicatory inscription and birds among foliage perched on rocks. The borders to both sides incorporate the "100 antiquities" containing ancient objects including 'bi-disks' symbolic of heaven and 'cong' tubes symbolic of earth, as well as dragons and the eight good luck tokens from Buddhism. Signed with the artist's two red seals on the back "Shen Quan" & "Nanping" (his courtesy name).
Chinese Kangxi Period, early 18th century



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The poem on the back is an excerpt authored during the Tang dynasty (618 - 907 AD):

"The pine stands at the end of thousands of flowers

Lonely but proud;

The crane only sings once

among the noise of thousands of birds"

Literature:

Symbolism of "the spring morning in the han palace"

"The Spring Morning in the Han Palace" by Qiu Ying is a famous Chinese painting from the Ming dynasty, representing the ideal society. The painting depicts a spring morning in the palace of the Han dynasty and symbolizes the harmony and peace of the palace. Unusual for its time, it emphasizes the central role women played in the court.

The cherry blossom trees in the painting symbolize the fleeting beauty of life, while the clear sky and calm water reflect the peaceful atmosphere in the palace. The central planter in front of the pavilion is filled with red and white peony flowers, which were considered the "king of flowers" in China, symbolizing distinction and prosperity. The musicians playing their instruments and the dancers symbolize the enjoyment of life in the palace. Others playing chess, for example, are associated with intelligence, strategy, and foresight. The overall composition of the painting is characterized by a harmonious balance between the elements and a sense of tranquillity, reflecting the ideal of a peaceful and prosperous society during the Han dynasty.

Symbolism of the flora & fauna on the reverse

The flora and fauna depicted on Chinese coromandel screens are rich in symbolism, reflecting the cultural values and beliefs of Chinese society.

Cranes, for example, are symbols of longevity, happiness, and good fortune. They are often depicted in pairs, representing balance and harmony, and their graceful movements and elegant appearance are associated with peace and serenity.

Rocks in water are another common element found on coromandel screens and are symbolic of stability and strength. The rocks are often depicted as large, imposing formations, suggesting a solid and unchanging foundation. The water flowing around the rocks represents change and the



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impermanence of life, and the combination of these elements symbolizes the balance between change and stability in the natural world.

Symbolism of the borders

The "100 antiquities" is a common motif found on Chinese coromandel screens and refers to a collection of decorative elements that symbolize wealth, power, and good fortune.

One of the most recognizable elements of the "100 antiquities" is the "Ruyi sceptre," a curved staff with a head in the shape of a cloud, symbolizing power and authority.

The "cong" tube is a hollow cylindrical object made of jade or other precious materials. It symbolizes unity, continuity, and longevity, as well as wealth and status.

The "Bi disks" are circular jade or stone discs with a hole in the center, symbolizing heaven, earth, and the cyclical nature of life. They are often depicted in pairs, representing balance and harmony.

In addition to these decorative elements, the "100 antiquities" motif also includes objects such as incense burners, vases, and jade carvings, all of which symbolize wealth, prosperity, and good luck.

The eight good luck tokens from Buddhism

- 1)The Wheel of Dharma:: This symbol represents the teachings of the Buddha and is associated with enlightenment, wisdom, and spiritual advancement.
- 2)The Conch Shell: The conch shell symbolizes the Buddha's voice, and is believed to bring good luck, longevity, and protection.
- 3)The Lotus Flower: The lotus flower symbolizes purity, enlightenment, and spiritual growth, and is associated with peace, happiness, and good fortune.
- 4)The Parasol: The parasol symbolizes protection from harm and evil, and is associated with good luck, happiness, and longevity.
- 5)The Vase: The vase symbolizes abundance and prosperity, and is associated with good luck, wealth, and happiness.
- 6)The Fish: Fish symbolize prosperity and abundance, and are associated with good luck, happiness, and longevity.
- 7)The Mystical Knot: The endless knot symbolizes the interconnectedness of all things, and is associated with good luck, longevity, and protection.
- 8)The Victory Banner: The victory banner symbolizes success, victory, and triumph over obstacles,



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and is associated with good luck, prosperity, and happiness.

Middle border of dragons

Dragons are a common motif found on Chinese coromandel screens and are rich in symbolism. As the king of all animals, dragons are associated with nobility and royalty, and are considered to embody strength, power, and wisdom.

The dragon symbolizes prosperity, peace, and happiness, and is often depicted surrounded by clouds, symbolizing its celestial origins and supernatural powers. In Chinese mythology, dragons are believed to bring rain, which is essential for the growth of crops and the prosperity of the people, and they are therefore associated with abundance and good fortune.

Bottom register

Mythological beasts

The qilin is one of the most prominent mythological beasts depicted on Chinese coromandel screens. It is considered the noblest of all mythological beasts and is depicted as a deer with a dragon's head and flames coming out of its flanks. According to legend, it treads on no living creature, not even grass, which is why it represents goodness and the wish for blessings, especially for children. The qilin is a symbol of prosperity, good fortune, and happiness, and its depiction on coromandel screens is believed to bring good luck to those who display it.

Another commonly depicted mythological beast is the white elephant. White elephants are a typical Buddhist symbol, and they are associated with purity, wisdom, and spiritual enlightenment.

Finally, the Fu-dog, also known as the Chinese guardian lion, is a symbol of protection, strength, and power. It is often depicted as a powerful, fierce creature that guards against evil and brings good luck and prosperity.