

TIMELESS CREATURES

ANIMALS IN EARLY CHINESE POTTERY AND 20TH CENTURY INK PAINTINGS



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SUMMER 2024

FEI CHENG-WU (1911-2000)

DEER IN A SNOWY WOOD

費成武

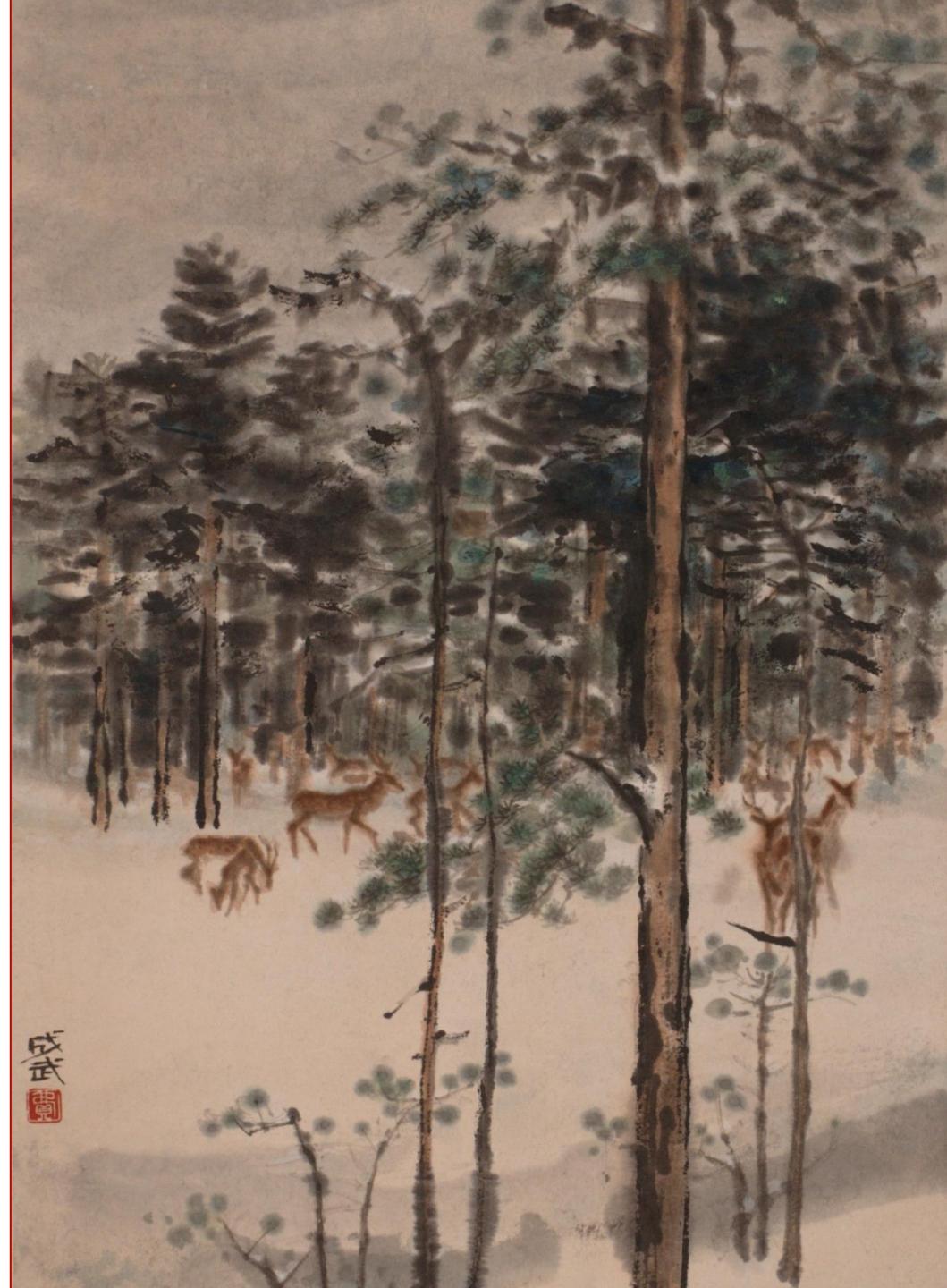
雪林鹿群

51 x 31 cm

Ink and colour on paper, mounted, framed
Signed Cheng-wu, with one seal of the artist

顏色紙本 鏡框
款識：成武
鈐印：[費]

Provenance:
Estate of the Artist



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A GROUP OF SEVEN GREY POTTERY FIGURES OF GOATS

Western Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 9)
Height: 9.5 - 15.2 cm, 3 ¾ - 6 inches

彩繪陶山羊俑七件

西漢
高 9.5 - 15.2 釐米

The group comprises a standing billy goat, five standing nanny goats and one recumbent nanny goat. Each animal is well carved in an alert attitude, with ears held forwards as if listening and with wide open eyes, indicated by black painted detailing. There are orange highlights to the insides of the ears, mouths and nostrils. The surfaces of the bodies and legs are finished with a knife giving the look of carved wood. The pottery is of grey colour.

Provenance:

Acquired in Hong Kong, 1995



CHANG CHIEN-YING (1909-2003)

AFRICAN GREY PARROT IN A SILVER WATTLE TREE

張蒨英

銀荊枝上的非洲灰鸚鵡

54.5 x 38.5 cm

Ink and colour on paper, mounted, framed
Signed Chien-ying, dated 1957, with two seals of the artist

顏色紙本 鏡框
款識：一九五七年蒨英寫
鈐印：[張][蒨]

Provenance:
Estate of the Artist

A number of studies for this work are among the artist's sketchbooks. A fully worked study is inscribed in pencil "Bonjour Bertie" The day passed happily while he rested at the top of a tall tree'.



A RED-PAINTED POTTERY FIGURE OF A STANDING HORSE

Western Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 9)
Height: 54.5 cm, 21 ½ inches

紅彩陶立馬俑

西漢
高 54.5 釐米

The well-proportioned horse stands four-square on slender legs with finely modelled hooves and fetlocks. The neck is held upright, supporting the head facing forwards with an alert expression, the ears pricked back, the eyes set beneath prominent brows, the nostrils flared, and the mouth open showing the teeth. The long furrowed back extends to the pronounced hindquarters, with a hole for fitting the detachable bound tail. The body and tail are painted a dusty red overall. The head is similarly red-painted, with the bridle and teeth picked out in white, the nostrils in red, and the pupils in black. The underside of the body has a small firing hole, showing the grey pottery.

Provenance:

Priestley & Ferraro, 'Animals for the Afterlife', November 2002, no. 25

Horses modelled using these conventions of anatomy and stance have been recovered, often with riders, from a number of excavations dating to the Western Han dynasty, most famously that at Yangjiawan, near Xianyang, Shaanxi province. They were not domestic animals, but served as war-horses in the cavalries built up during the Han dynasty to counter the nomadic tribes on China's borders. The nomads, with their traditionally superior horsemanship, were a continual irritant to the settled Chinese.



CHANG CHIEN-YING (1909-2003)

SLEEPING WHITE CAT

張舊英

睡白貓

21 x 15 cm

Ink and colour on paper, mounted, framed
Signed Chien-ying, dated 1952, and with one seal of the
artist (painted)

顏色紙本 鏡框
款識：舊英一九五二年
鈐印：（書）[張]

Provenance:
Estate of the Artist



A PAIR OF PAINTED POTTERY FELINE-HEADED JARS WITH DETACHABLE NECKS

Western Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 9)
Height of each: 41 cm, 16 1/8 inches

彩繪陶猫科首壺及蓋兩件

西漢
高 41 釐米

The body of each jar is of compressed spherical form resting on a low slightly splayed root-rim. The cylindrical base of the neck is detachable from a short distance above the shoulders. The upper part of the neck is bent over and fashioned into the head of a mythical feline resembling a horned leopard, with large white eyes with black pupils, short pointed ears, and curved white horns set against the red forehead. A circular aperture is let into the highest point of the neck. The body is deftly painted in red and white pigments with swirling clouds, above a double red line border.

Provenance:

Priestley & Ferraro, 'Animals for the Afterlife', November 2002, no. 22

It is rare to find detachable necked jars with feline heads rather than the more usual goose heads. The flexible neck of the goose lends itself to this type of jar, and perhaps it is reasonable to deduce that the mythical feline represented here has a similarly sinuous neck.

The broad register of swirling cloud is characteristic of the Western Han rendition of the celestial realm. The mythical feline, as at home in this misty world as the heavenly version of the tiger, probably serves a similar function, as an averter of evil.



CHANG CHIEN-YING (1909-2003)

TWO BIRDS IN AN AUTUMN TREE

張蒨英
秋樹雙鳥

35 x 27 cm

Ink and colour on paper, mounted, framed
Signed Chien-ying, dated 1957, and with one seal of the artist

顏色紙本 鏡框
款識：一九五七年蒨英寫
鈐印：[張]

Provenance:
Estate of the Artist

The reverse is inscribed in pencil with the title "Grey Tits in Autumn, by Chien-ying Chang". While there is a bird called a grey tit, native to South Africa, the appearance of the present birds is much closer to the native British willow tit.



**A GREEN LEAD-GLAZED FIGURE
OF A BOAR**

Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 AD)
Length: 23 cm, 9 inches

綠釉陶公豬

東漢
長 23 釐米

The animal is modelled as if leaning slightly back, with the legs angled on each side of the low-slung belly. The head is lowered, with large oval eyes set within folds, looking down to the upturned snout. On the high shoulders grows a bristly mane, and on the hindquarters rests the curly tail. A dark green glaze is applied overall, showing a silvery iridescence in places, except on the underside of the body and the feet, which are unglazed, showing the orangey-brown ware.

Provenance:

Priestley & Ferraro, 'Animals for the Afterlife', November 2002, no. 10

For another example of a green-glazed boar, see 'The Tsui Museum of Art, Chinese Ceramics I, no. 52'.

The importance of the pig in ancient China is well attested to by the burial of the heads of jaws of pigs in the graves of the Dawenkou people during Neolithic times; and by the appearance of pig representations in the culture of the Hemudu people. Pork was the staple meat at this time. During the Shang period, the pig – in its manifestation as a wild boar – appears as a shape suitable for a ritual bronze, for example the fine specimen in the Hunan Provincial Museum, illustrated in 'China 5000 Years, Innovation and Transformation in the Arts', no.27; and during the later part of the first millennium BC the pig, again in the form of the boar, occurs in hunting scenes. But it is not until the Han dynasty that we see the pig again represented for its domestic importance, as a source of food. We may be confident that the real life counterpart of the present example, though a boar, was for the table, not the hunt.



CHANG CHIEN-YING (1909-2003)

PIGLET AND FENCE

張蒨英

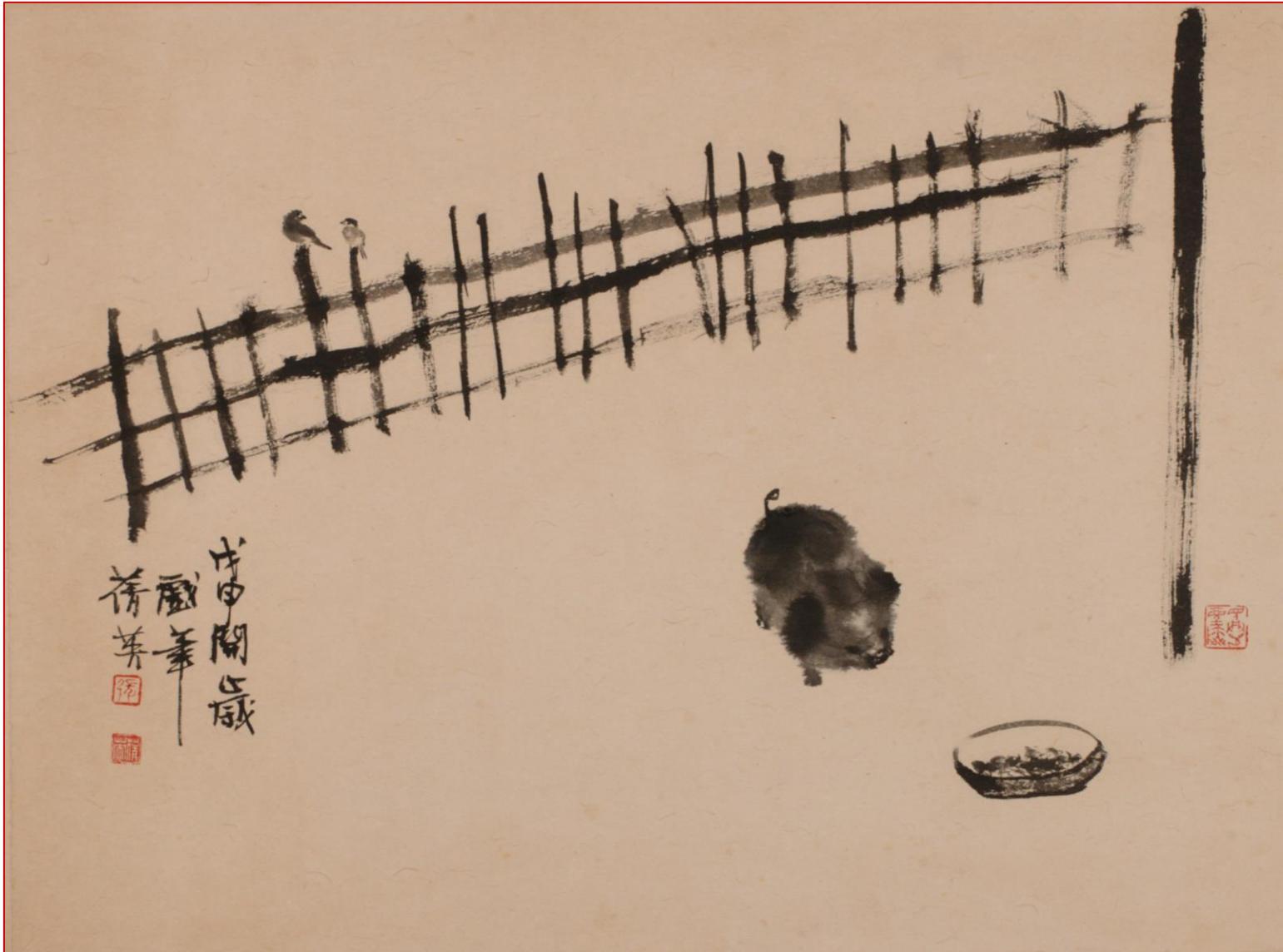
小豬籬笆

62 x 45.5 cm

Ink on paper, mounted, framed
Signed Chien-ying,
dated wu shen, 1968,
and with three seals of the artist

水墨紙本 鏡框
款識：戊申歲開戲筆蒨英
鈐印：[蔣], [英].[見與兒童隣]

Provenance:
Estate of the Artist



**A GREEN LEAD-GLAZED POTTERY
MODEL OF A
SHEEP PEN**

Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 AD)
Diameter: 23.5 cm, 9 1/4 inches

綠色釉陶羊圈

東漢
直徑 23.5 釐米

The pen is of simple circular form with an everted rim. The interior is applied with five crisply moulded figures of standing mountain sheep, all facing in the same direction, their heads with pointed noses and small ears encircled by large curling horns. The sheep and the inside and outside of the pen are covered with a bright apple-green glaze, with some traces of iridescence. The underside of the base is unglazed, showing concentric circular wheel lines.

Provenance:

JJ Lally & Co, 1996
Priestley & Ferraro, 'Chinese Art', December 1996, no. 33
Priestley & Ferraro, 'Animals for the Afterlife', November 2002, no. 3

For another example of a sheep pen, though of a different shape, see Candace Lewis, 'Into the Afterlife', no. 12, p. 13.

Sheep and goats have been held in high esteem in China since the earliest times, as is shown by the appearance of the element *yang*, 'sheep', in several compound words of good meaning, like *mei*, 'beautiful', and *xiang*, 'auspicious'. The rams' impressive heads with their characteristic curled horns found use as finials on ceremonial bronzes; and bronze rams modelled in a recumbent position, with a section of the back mounted on a swivelling hinge, were popular as lamps.



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FEI CHENG-WU (1911-2000)

SQUIRREL AND PINE

Ink and colour on paper, mounted, framed
Signed Cheng-wu, with one seal of the artist

費成武

顏色紙本 鏡框

款識：成武

鈐印：[費]

41 x 21 cm

Provenance:

Estate of the Artist

In traditional Chinese paintings the animals typically depicting climbing around in pine trees are tree shrews (family Tupaiidae) rather than true squirrels (family sciuridae). Here, Fei has substituted the red squirrel native to Britain, his adopted home.



A GREEN-GLAZED POTTERY LAMP-STAND IN THE FORM OF A BEAR

Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 AD)
Height: 32cm, 12 ½ inches

綠釉陶熊燈

東漢
高 32 釐米

The lamp has a splayed conical base supporting a circular platform on which kneels a figure of a bear with its forepaws resting on its knees. The stylized creature has a long snout, deeply scored with lines suggesting fur, tear-shaped eyes, and large tab-shaped ears. On its head it supports a knopped column and a dish-shaped drip-pan. The overall glaze is of good dark green colour with some light iridescence. The underside of the base, with three small prism-shaped supports, is unglazed showing the pale orange ware.

Provenance:

Priestley & Ferraro, 'Animals for the Afterlife', November 2002, no.7

A related, though larger, bear lamp is illustrated by J.J. Lally, 'Ancient China, Jades, Bronzes and Ceramics', 1999, catalogue no. 36.

The great strength of the bear made him a natural candidate for use as an atlantid in a number of roles, most usually as a foot for a vessel. Here he sits in the middle of the lamp, but his role is the same.



FEI CHENG-WU (1911-2000)

KITTEN

Ink and colour on paper, mounted, framed
Signed Cheng-wu, with one seal of the artist

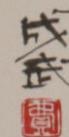
費成武

小猫

顏色紙本 鏡框
款識：成武
鈐印：[費]

42 x 33 cm

Provenance:
Estate of the Artist



A GREY POTTERY FIGURE OF AN EARTH SPIRIT

Northern Wei dynasty (386-535)
Height: 33cm, 13 inches

灰陶鎮墓獸

北魏
高 33 蠶米

The beast is vividly realized, sitting on its haunches with its long slender forelegs with clubbed forepaws resting on the front of the shaped base. The upright body has a prominent chest and a row of flame-like spines running up the back from the curled tail to the pointed crown. The deep-set eyes gaze out from beneath hooded brows, with some incised and pricked detailing, above the huge gaping maw with prominent fangs and long, lolling tongue. The pottery is of dark grey colour.

Provenance:

Acquired in Hong Kong, 2002

The role of the earth spirit in the afterlife was a temporary one, providing protection for the soul of the deceased in the early part of its journey. A terrifying appearance, to scare away demons who might hinder this journey, was vital to its ability to carry out this role successfully, and - incidentally - allowed the Northern Wei potters to stretch the limits of their imagination and skill.



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FEI CHENG-WU (1911-2000)

WHITE DUCK AMID REEDS

費成武

白鴨蘆葦

43 x 36 cm

Ink and colour on paper, mounted, framed
Signed Cheng-wu, with one seal of the artist

顏色紙本 鏡框
款識：成武
鈐印：[費]

Provenance:
Estate of the Artist

A related painting of a duck, resting amid bamboo instead
of reeds, was exhibited at the Leicester Galleries,
London, March 1958



**A PAINTED GREY POTTERY
LION JAR STAND**

Tang dynasty (618-906)
Height: 14 cm, 5 ½ inches

彩繪灰陶四隻獅子形瓶托

唐
高14 釐米

The stand is finely modelled in the form of the front quarters of four lions, facing out to the four directions, in each case with the paws held in front of the chest, and with a fierce-looking maned head with glaring eyes, and alternatingly with the mouth open showing the teeth. They surround a solidly built vertical tubular structure. Considerable amounts of the original pigment remain on the lions and on the outside of the central tube. The interior of the tube shows the grey ware.

Provenance:

Priestley & Ferraro, 'Recent Acquisitions', London 2002

This rare stand would have supported a "pagoda-shaped" jar, that is, an ovoid jar with a high-stepped cover. Such jars, found mostly in northern China, show a variety of stands, most commonly lotus, but sometimes animals like elephants, or, as here, lions.



FEI CHENG-WU (1911-2000)

DOVES AND PEONY

費成武

牡丹白鵠

63 x 41.5 cm

Ink and colour on paper, mounted, framed
Signed Cheng-wu, with one seal of the artist

設色紙本 鏡框

款識：成武

鈐印：[費]

Provenance:
Estate of the Artist

