



Small Japanese Imari figure of a Bijin 'beauty', late 17th/early 18th century
POA

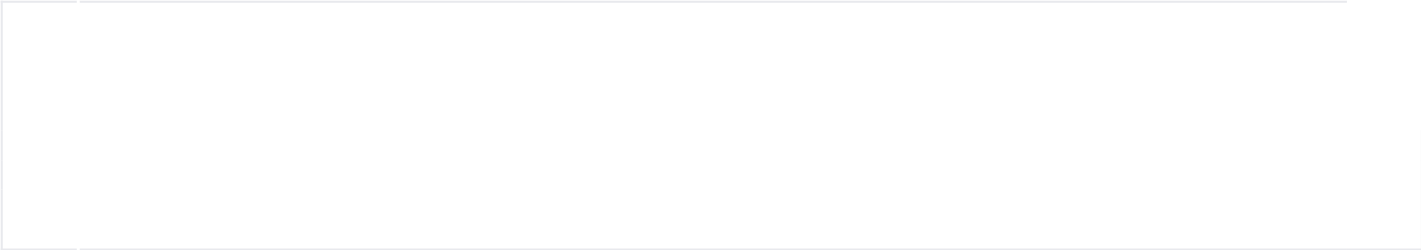
Small Japanese Imari figure of a Bijin 'beauty', late 17th/early 18th century, Edo period, standing with her head slightly upturned, dressed in a sumptuous kimono with long sleeves ('furusode'), decorated with a design of momiji drifting into the swirling waters of a river and cherry blossom to the collar, her black hair drawn into a tall chignon.

Condition: Neck restored

Notes: Art featuring 'bijin' (??, literally 'beautiful person') was highly popular in the Edo period, during which the rise of the merchant classes and the influence of both the pleasure quarters and world of kabuki resulted in a demand for new kinds of art. The hedonistic pleasures of the 'floating world' centred around the pursuit of transient joys, and ukiyo-e, literature, lacquerware and ceramic design from this period frequently feature revellers enjoying seasonal diversions such as hanami (cherry blossom viewing), actors and beautiful women, more often than not courtesans. Though the 'bijin-ga' (???, 'beautiful person picture') genre has a long history stemming back long before the Edo period, it was from the mid-seventeenth century that ceramics depicting beautiful people of the floating world were commercially produced in Arita. Crucially, it was around this time that the large-scale export of Japanese ceramics by Dutch traders was established. These export wares included porcelain figures; Dr Christiaan Jorg notes that the first shipment to the Netherlands in 1659 included '100 various dolls'. He goes on to explain that these ceramics, along with other Arita wares, were considered luxury decorative items for European consumers keen to participate in the fashion for the 'exotic'.

Material and Technique

Moulded porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration in the Imari palette



Origin

Japanese

Dimensions

Height: 21cm. (8 1/4in.)

Antique ref: Y971