
PAGODA RED



PAIR OF FRAMED ANCESTOR PORTRAITS

\$12,880

1880 • Northern China, China • Paper, Ink, Pigment • Collection #CAG026

W: 23.0" D: 2.0" H: 32.25"

Believing that the departed continue to hold influence over the lives of the living, many Chinese households honor their ancestors in private family rituals, invoking their spirits for long life, health, and prosperity. Commemorative portraits, which came into vogue in the late Ming and Qing dynasties, were commissioned specifically for ancestor worship and were believed to house the spirits of the deceased. When properly cared for, one's ancestors were believed to be a powerful source of honor, protection, and good luck.

This pair of ancestor portraits was hand-painted in the late-19th century and beautifully depicts a Qing-dynasty couple. Continued...



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While some ancestral portraits offer a more stylized representation of one's ancestors, this particular pair is painted with incredible realism and life-like expressions. Rather than depict the pair in a regal hall wearing elaborate finery, the couple is shown in a quiet home environment, seated at either end of a square tea table. Their surroundings are minimal, practically undecorated, and they wear simple, matching blue silk robes. Two young children stand beside them, each trying to capture the attention of their grandparent. We love the painting's close attention to detail and the glimpse it offers of Qing-dynasty interiors - from the carved apron of the marble-top table to the red silk lotus slippers peeking out from under the woman's skirt.

Ink and pigment on paper. Framed.

Minor discoloration. Minor losses to one painting.

