Plaque
Cloisonné enamel and metal
Ming Dynasty, 16th Century
Sunnylands Collection 2009.1.132

Reference
Ming Dynasty = 1368-1644
Early Ch‘ing Dynasty = 1600s (post 1644)
Middle Ch‘ing Dynasty = 1700s
Late Ch‘ing Dynasty = 1800s to 1912

Description:
A Ming dynasty Chinese cloisonné enamel panel depicting three scholars in a mountainous landscape.

Talking points:
The Annenbergs purchased this piece in 1973 (the ambassadorial years) from a gallery in London. The gallery chose and added the frame at time of purchase. Walter said of this panel: “the vigorous movement of colors, the bold forms reminded me so much of van Gogh.”

Cloisonné refers to the process of creating designs utilizing enameled sections separated by thin metal strips. In Chinese work, the wire does not always enclose a separate color of enamel but rather, sometimes a wire is used just for decorative effect. Chinese cloisonné is the best known enamel cloisonné though the technique is used by other cultures and dates back to the ancient near east. The earliest surviving cloisonné pieces are rings in graves from 12th century BC Cyprus, using very thin wire.

From the receipt:
“A cloisonné enamel landscape panel showing figures carrying umbrellas in a mountainous countryside with pavilions, in strong Ming colors. Chinese. 16th century.” “This panel is remarkable for its size and variety of coloring. In addition to the typical early Ming colors of brick red, lapis lazuli blue, yellow and white are found green and pink formed from the coarse mixing of pigments and unusually delicate shades of turquoise and lavender blue. The panel probably formed part of a screen or furniture, and came from the Wannieck Collection, Paris. The treatment of the human figures can be compared to that on the scroll stand formerly in the Sedgwick Collection, illustrated in Sir Harry Garner’s “Chinese and Japanese Cloisonné Enamels” plate 57; and the treatment of the landscape with that on the censer on plate 45 of the same work (an example in the Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris).”

Publication:
Illustrated in “Collecting Chinese Cloisonné Enamels.” In the Antique Collector, October 1972.

Resources:
Original documentation from the Sunnylands Archive
Sunnylands; p. 129