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FIVE BLESSINGS
CODED MESSAGES IN CHINESE ART
Estelle Niklès van Osselt

This beautifully illustrated book explores symbolism in Chinese art, particularly plant and animal decoration on ceramics, jade, lacquer, glass, and silk textiles.

When any Westerner looks at Chinese art, it is immediately apparent how much the depiction of animal and plant life in artistic decoration differs from its American or European equivalent. This exceptional world teems with flowers, trees, birds, fish, shellfish, and insects, mixed with fantastic creatures or figures taken from legend and mythology. Various motifs can appear together in one scene, and if the viewer understands the language, the images are charged with symbolism. Chinese decoration can even include concealed word-play, and all of this must be understood if Chinese decorative arts are to be fully appreciated.

This new book explores this rich symbolism with research and insights never before published outside of China, casting new light on the treasures of the world-renowned Baur Foundation collections. Works of ceramic, jade, lacquer, glass, and silk are examined, all with varied decorations that are now fully revealed and displayed in all their subtlety, and meanings that until now have been hidden are brought to light. With a detailed study of all the motifs used, readers finally have access to a cultural heritage that has been too long obscured from Western eyes.

Estelle Niklès van Osselt studied Sinology, Asian arts and Archaeology at the universities of Geneva, London and Beijing. She obtained her doctorate on the *Fish Motif on Chinese Ceramics* theme. Previously with the Guy & Myriam Ullens Foundation for Chinese Contemporary Art, she is currently Associate Curator of the Baur Foundation in Geneva.