
PAGODA RED



CALLIGRAPHER'S DREAM

\$1,280

c. 1900 • Northern China, China • Paper, Ink • Collection #CMT148

W: 25.5" D: 1.0" H: 38.75"

Given its strange hybrid forms, you'd be tempted to consider this ink painting an example of Chinese surrealism. In fact, this intriguing work on paper precedes the avant-garde European art movement by several decades. Instead this rare image from around 1900 stems from the erudite traditions of Chinese literati. A mix of gestural and carefully drawn lines, the work describes the curious events of a calligrapher's dream. The painting is arranged in the shape of the Chinese character 信 (xin), meaning letter or note, each figure standing in for a brush stroke. Continued...



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The artist appears as a heron perched upon a branch of plum blossoms, his human head wearing a necklace dangling an empty frame. He faces a large bird holding a slip of paper in its beak, as if proffering the calligrapher poetic inspiration to fill his empty frame.



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