

87. PAIR OF NGHE

Bat Trang kiln, 16th–17th century

Stoneware, H: 72 cm × W: 29 cm × D: 32 cm;

H: 73 cm × W: 32.5 cm × D: 35.5 cm

National Museum of Vietnamese History, Ha Noi, LSb 13572 and LSb 13573

The Vietnamese call these fantastic creatures *nghe*, part lion and part dog, their spiky eyebrows, flaming manes, whorls of fur on the legs, and flamboyant tails are all aspects of their fantastic nature. The *nghe* were always made in pairs, and generally were shown seated on their haunches; this pair is unusually animated as they crouch and appear to be on the run. Lines along the sides of their bodies and chests and the spirals on their haunches add to the effect of ferocity and action suggested by the bulging eyes and bared teeth.

In addition to being created as free-standing sculptures, the *nghe* sometimes support lamp stands (as in cat. no. 90), where their appliquéd surfaces and more static pose is the norm. Crackled glaze, technically difficult to achieve, became popular in Viet Nam in the sixteenth century, and the surfaces of these two *nghe* are particularly unctuous and well applied.