



Fine Japanese Art (JAP1221)

Fri, 3rd Dec 2021

Lot 178

Starting price: €2000

Estimate: €4000

A RARE LACQUERED PAULOWNIA WOOD KOTO WITH ROOSTERS

Japan, late 19th century, Meiji period (1868-1912)

Superbly decorated in gold and iro-e takamaki-e against a wood grain ground with two roosters by a stream amid rocks and flowering chrysanthemum below two butterflies in a dense and colorful composition. The roosters are well rendered with finely contrasting textures of the feathers, comb and wattle, beak, and plumage. The ends are decorated in gold hiramaki-e with chicks, leafy vines, and crashing waves.

LENGTH 105 cm

Condition: Good condition with minor surface wear, the underside with few small losses and holes due to worm or insect activity, the two feet to one end have been reattached.

Provenance: Compagnie de la Chine et des Indes, Paris, inventory number 24577, acquired 2010 at Hotel Drouot in Paris. The Compagnie de la Chine et des Indes (China and India Company) in Paris was founded in the early 20th century by the Blazy brothers, acquired in 1935 by Robert Rousset and later run by his grandnephews Mike Winter-Rousset and Hervé du Peuty. With his sister Suzanne in charge of the porcelain, Robert Rousset developed the business, and the company became one of the most important dealers for Asian art in France, selling pieces to the greatest museums, including the Guimet and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The koto is a Japanese plucked half-tube zither instrument, and the national instrument of Japan. It is derived from the Chinese zheng and se, and similar to the Mongolian yatga, the Korean gayageum and ajaeng, the Vietnamese dan tranh, the Sundanese kacapi and the Kazakhstan jetigen. Koto are made from Paulownia wood (*Paulownia tomentosa*, known as kiri). The most common type uses 13 strings strung over movable bridges used for tuning, different pieces possibly requiring different tuning.

Literature comparison:

Compare a closely related koto, dated c. 1891, from the Wakamura workshop, similarly decorated in takamaki-e with roosters and flowers, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number 69.271.3.