



Fine Netsuke & Sagemono (NE1021)

Fri, 29th Oct 2021

Lot 83

Starting price: €5000

Estimate: €10000

A SUPERB AND RARE TANBA SCHOOL WOOD NETSUKE OF A FREEZING KARASU TENGU

Unsigned

Japan, Tanba province, early 19th century, Edo period (1615-1868)

Published: Bandini, Rosemary (2013) In a Nutshell, A Loan Exhibition of Japanese Netsuke from European Collections, p. 57, no. 99.

An exceptionally well-carved netsuke, described by Gabor Wilhelm as “tengu frieux” or freezing tengu, in our opinion very fittingly, as the mythical bird-like being clutches its large wings together, standing rather stiffly, the three-clawed feet clenching together, and its expression shuddering – one imagines the cold breeze fluttering by. The karasu (crow-beaked) tengu has long finely carved hair, wears a token cap inlaid in lustrous black horn, the pupils inlaid from the same material. The plumage is spectacularly well-detailed. Asymmetrical, generously excavated himotoshi through the back. The carving bears many hallmarks of the Tanba school. The artist skillfully alternates textured and smooth surfaces, the stain and finish certainly resemble the work of the Toyomasa school.

HEIGHT 6.1 cm

Condition: One leg is restored, otherwise excellent condition with minor surface wear and a fine patina.

Provenance: The Gabor Wilhelm Collection, Paris.

Literature comparison:

A similar netsuke is illustrated in Joly, Henri L. (1912) The W. L. Behrens Collection, Part 1, Netsuke, no. 2562, illustrated on pl. XXXIII. Another similar netsuke is illustrated in Okada, Neill (1980) Real and Imaginary Beings, no. 42 (see auction comparison), where the stylistic influence of the Toyomasa school is noted.

Auction comparison:

A very similar wood netsuke of a tengu, formerly in the Kurstin collection, was sold at Bonhams, The Harriet Szechenyi Sale of Japanese Art, 8 November 2011, London, lot 59 (**sold for 23,750 GBP**).