



Fine Netsuke & Sagemono (NE1021)

Fri, 29th Oct 2021

Lot 37

Starting price: €2000

Estimate: €4000

‡ A GOOD IVORY NETSUKE OF CHOKARO'S HORSE EMERGING FROM A DOUBLE GOURD

Unsigned

Japan, 18th century, Edo period (1615-1868)

Finely carved as a horse emerging from a gourd, its front legs extended forwards and hooves resting on the lower part of the fruit as it slowly eases itself out. The horse's mane is finely incised and its features, such as the round eyes and prominent muzzle, are well detailed. The himotoshi are formed by the loose ivory ring around the gourd's waist, which exhibits a superb polish even to the interior – quite the confounding feat!

LENGTH 4.2 cm

Condition: Very good condition with old wear, natural age cracks, and a fine, honey-gold patina.

Provenance: German private collection, acquired from Ludwig Bretschneider, Munich. Ludwig Bretschneider (1909-1987) was a German art dealer, specializing in tribal and ethnographic art, most active between the 1950s and 1980s in Munich.

The horse is the familiar of Chokaro Sennin, who is able to conjure the animal out of a gourd at will. The Japanese expression hyotan kara koma (lit. 'a horse in the gourd'), referring to a completely unexpected event that actually comes to pass, akin to the flight of pigs in the English-speaking world.

Literature comparison:

A closely related ivory netsuke, dated circa 1830, is illustrated in Rosemary Bandini Japanese Art (2014) Japanese netsuke from the collection of Teddy Hahn, no. 20.

Auction comparison:

Compare a closely related netsuke dated to the late 18th century at Sotheby's, Fine Netsuke & Ojime from The H. G. Beasley Collection, 14 March 1984, London, lot 116 (**sold for 1,600 GBP, approx. 6,125 EUR today after inflation**).