



Fine Japanese Art (JAP1020)

28th October 2020

Lot 85

Starting price: €12500

Estimate: €25000

MYOCHIN YOSHISUKE: AN EXCEPTIONAL IRON KAWARI KABUTO IN THE FORM OF A TENGU

By Myochin Yoshisuke, signed Myochin Ki Yoshisuke Japan, 18th century, mid-Edo period (1615-1868)

Constructed of eight plates riveted together forming a broad helmet bowl with a low profile, the front hammered up and carved to form the elaborate beak and face of a tengu, the eyebrows boldly carved in swirling whorls and the nostrils pierced for ventilation, the top of the bowl nearly flat in imitation of the reservoir on the pate of the mythical creature, the interior lacquered gold. The shikoro is possibly more recent. Signed on the inside MYOCHIN KI YOSHISUKE, a member of the important Myochin school/family and son of Myochin Yoshimasa.

With an associated stand.

SIZE 41.5 x 35.5 cm

WEIGHT 2.8 kg (incl. stand), WEIGHT 1.9 kg (the kabuto only)

Condition: Excellent condition with minor wear and few loose threads on the ukebari.

Provenance: Czech private collection.

Kawari kabuto (lit. "transformed helmet") refers to strange or eccentric helmets. During the Momoyama period of intense civil warfare, kabuto were made to a simpler design lacking many of the ornamental features of earlier helmets. To offset the plain, utilitarian form of the new helmet, and to provide visibility and presence on the battlefield, armorers began to build fantastic shapes on top of the simple helmets in harikake (papier-mâché mixed with lacquer over a wooden armature), though some were constructed entirely of iron. These shapes mimicked forms from Japanese culture and mythology, including fish, cow horns, the head of the god of longevity, bolts of silk, head scarves, Ichi-no-Tani canyon, and axe heads, among many others. Some forms were realistically rendered, while others took on a very futuristic, modernist feel.

The Myochin School, or family, was a lineage of renowned armorers stretching back to the 12th century. The Myochin flourished, founding branch schools in the provinces. By the middle Edo period, the Myochin were confident enough to style themselves as "On katchu no kiwamedokoro, Nippon yuitsu no katchu no ryoko," or "official appraisers of armor, the best in Japan."

Auction comparison:

Compare with a related kawari kabuto from the same school sold by Bonham's, Arts of the Samurai, 16 October 2012, New York, lot 1016 (**sold for 37,500 USD**).