



Fine Netsuke & Sagemono (NE0920)

25th September 2020

Lot 106

Starting price: €7500

Estimate: €15000

IKKYU: A SUPERB WOOD NETSUKE OF AN OCTOPUS IN A POT, TAKO-TSUBO

By Ikkyu, signed Ikkyu 一丘
Japan, Nagoya, second half of 19th century

Published: Netsuke Kenkyukai Study Journal, Vol. 9, Fall 1989, p. 56, lot 101 (illustrated in the report of the Sotheby's sale).

A well-sized, very finely carved and humorous wood netsuke depicting an octopus (tako) clinging to the side of a pot trap which is covered in various barnacles and shells. The octopus' tentacles are carved with a superior sense of naturalism, five of them hanging over the pot in the back, two fondling a large awabi shell, one curling inside the pot to form the himotoshi and the last touching its head in a humorous gesture, apparently completely unaware of the deadly trap within the pot. Its funnel-shaped mouth is pressed forward, and the amusingly large eyes are double inlaid in bone and dark horn. Signed to the side of the pot within an oval cartouche IKKYU.

The octopus was one of Ikkyu's favorite subjects and he executed them in his own imaginative and immediately recognizable design. The mixture of the humorous character coupled with the very fine and detailed carving make his netsuke incredibly unique, and as a result high in demand.

HEIGHT 4.5 cm, LENGTH 4.3 cm

Condition: Excellent condition.

Provenance: Sotheby's New York, 25 May 1989, lot 101 (**hammered down at 9.500 USD**, excl. premium). Since then in a German private collection.

Literature comparison:

Compare to a similar netsuke, dated early Meiji, illustrated in Meinertzhagen, Frederick / Lazarnick, George (1986) MCI, Part A, p. 228.

Auction comparison:

Another netsuke by the artist, but with two octopi, was sold at Bonhams, The Bluetie H. Kirchhoff Collection of Netsuke and Sagemono, 19 September 2009, New York, lot 2032 (**sold for 54.900 USD**).