



Fine Netsuke & Sagemono (NE0920)

25th September 2020

Lot 235

Starting price: €5000

Estimate: €10000

NAITO TOYOMASA: AN IMPORTANT WOOD MASK NETSUKE OF WARAI JO TYPE DEPICTING A SELF- PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST, THE REVERSE CARVED AS HIS GHOST

By Naito Toyomasa (1773-1856), signed Hachijuni Toyomasa
八十二豊昌
Japan, dated 1855, Edo period (1615-1868)

Published: Netsuke Kenkyukai Vol. 16, no. 1, Spring 1996,
p. 42.

Bulletin Franco Japonais, no. 50, October 1996, p. 26, fig. 16
& in the subsequent issue no. 51.

A masterfully carved depiction of Warai-jo (laughing old man) with a finely incised long beard which extends to the other side. The mouth is opened showing both rows of teeth, the nose and cheek bones are prominently carved. The eyebrows are raised and furrowed. The dense root-like wood is of a very good color with accentuated darkened areas, typical of the artist.

As noted in the International Netsuke Society Journal (1996) Volume 16, no. 1, the type of Warai-jo is utilized as a 'stepping-stone' towards something much stronger and more individual – one suspects it to be the self-portrait of the artist in his old age carved one year before his passing at the age of 82. The stylized 'negative-mask' in the interior further underlines this assumption, as it shows a ghostly face, as if to be carried off by the wind into the afterlife. Himotoshi through the central bar in the reverse, below the signature Hachijuni TOYOMASA (Toyomasa at the age of 82).

HEIGHT 5.1 cm

Condition: Excellent condition, expected wear.

Provenance: European Collection P. Jacquesson,
purchased from Klefisch on 26 November 1995, lot 382
(hammer price of 6.900 Deutsche Mark).

Literature comparison:

Another mask netsuke of Hannya, carved at the age of 74, is illustrated in Ducros, Alain (1994) Paris Edo Convention 1994, no. 9. It seems probable that only this and the present example are authentic works by Toyomasa, the other ones being later copies, most likely by his pupils.

Auction comparison:

A mask signed Toyomasa, though likely by a pupil, was sold by Matthew Barton Ltd., European & Asian Works of Art, 6 June 2018, London, lot 83 (hammered down at 3.600 GBP).