



Fine Netsuke & Sagemono (NE0421)

Fri, 16th Apr 2021

Lot 81

Starting price: €15000

Estimate: €30000

𠄎 KAIGYOKUSAI MASATSUGU: A SUPERB AND RARE IVORY NETSUKE-OKIMONO OF THE ZODIAC WITH SECRET INTERIOR

By Kaigyokusai Masatsugu, signed Kaigyokusai 懷玉齋
Japan, Osaka, second half of 19th century

Superbly carved in openwork with each of the twelve animals of the Japanese zodiac, with multiple rats and two rabbits, the smaller animals' eyes inlaid in dark horn and the larger ones' double-inlaid with amber and dark horn. The circular base to the underside, carved in the form of the dragon's coiled body, is attached to the outer carving with two pegs and can be removed, revealing a second composition of several monkeys mounting two horses, an allusion to rising in rank. The underside with the signature KAIGYOKUSAI within a shaped reserve.

HEIGHT 3.6 cm, WIDTH 4.5 cm

Condition: Very good condition with only minor surface wear, no losses to the many inlays whatsoever.

Provenance: European collection.

Kaigyokusai and his followers made several similar netsuke depicting the zodiac, which were obviously popular during his lifetime. A netsuke of such high quality and with a secret compartment, as the present lot, must however be considered extremely rare, if not unique.

Auction comparison:

Compare a related ivory manju netsuke of the twelve zodiac animals from the school of Kaigyokusai Masatsugu at Bonhams, The Julius and Arlette Katchen Collection of Fine Netsuke Part I, 8 November 2016, London, lot 47 (**sold for 15,000 GBP**).

Literature comparison:

A related temari (ball-shaped) netsuke of the zodiac by Kaigyokusai Masatsugu is illustrated in Coullery, Marie-Therese and Newstead, Martin S. (1977) *The Baur Collection*, p. 377, no. C 1199, and another is described in Joly, Henri L. (1966) *The W. L. Behrens Collection, Part 1, Netsuke*, p. 184, no. 5095 (not illustrated).