



Fine Netsuke & Sagemono (NE0421)

Fri, 16th Apr 2021

Lot 99

Starting price: €750

Estimate: €1500

MASAMITSU: A WOOD NETSUKE OF SNAKE AND SKULL

By Masamitsu, signed Masamitsu 正光

Japan, Ise-Yamada, mid-19th century, Edo period (1615-1868)

A finely carved wood netsuke of a snake (hebi) coiling around and through the eye sockets of a skull. This usually quite morbid depiction is depicted here with charm, the snake appears to be smiling. The scales are rendered with an appealingly rough stippled pattern, and the large staring eyes are inlaid in lustrous dark horn. Signed underneath the skull on a bridge which functions as the cord attachment MASAMITSU – a pupil of Masanao.

HEIGHT 3.1 cm, LENGTH 3.5 cm

Condition: Good condition with some surface wear and few minuscule nicks.

Provenance: Ex-collection Richard R. Silverman purchased from Jeffrey Moy, Chicago, in 1997. Richard R. Silverman (1932-2019) was a renowned Asian art collector with one of the largest private collections of netsuke outside of Japan. He lived in Tokyo between 1964 and 1979 and began to collect netsuke there in 1968. Since the 1970s, he wrote and lectured about netsuke and was an Asian art consultant for Christie's, Sotheby's, and Bonhams. His gift of 226 ceramic netsuke to the Toledo Museum of Art constitutes perhaps the largest public collection of these miniature clay sculptures in the world. After moving to California, Silverman became a member of the Far Eastern Art Council at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1984. In 1993, he joined LACMA's Executive Board. He served on the board of directors for the International Society of Appraisers from 1986 to 1994 and served nine years as chair for the City of West Hollywood Fine Arts Commission. Richard Silverman was posthumously awarded the Order of the Rising Sun for his decades-long promotion of Japanese culture.

Auction comparison:

A related wood netsuke by Masakatsu was sold at Christie's, Art of Japan, 8 December 2016, London, lot 20 (**sold for 6,875 GBP**).