



Fine Netsuke & Sagemono (NE0421)

Fri, 16th Apr 2021

Lot 71

Starting price: €5000

Estimate: €10000

‡ DORAKU: A SUPERB IVORY NETSUKE OF TWO WRESTLING DRUNKS

By Doraku, signed Doraku 道乐

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

Published: Bandini, Rosemary (2001) *Expressions of Style, Netsuke as Art*, Scholten Japanese Art, New York, p. 27, no. 25.

Bandini, Rosemary (2006) *Tiny Titans*, p. 58, no. 67.

Lightly stained and finely carved depicting two kneeling drunks, slumped up against each other as they lock themselves in a sumo-like struggle. They are only wearing a fundoshi and their tousured hair is drawn up into knotted mage. Each has a stubble stippled chin, and their hairy limbs are enhanced with light sumi-e stain. Their left hands have both secured a belt grip, but one has also clinched his opponent's neck in a headlock, the unfortunate underdog grimacing at his predicament. The overwhelming impression, though, is that neither really has the strength to bring their competition to a conclusion, their rather skinny bodies betraying an alcohol-induced lassitude. Natural himotoshi and signed within a wavy oval reserve – DORAKU.

HEIGHT 3.4 cm, LENGTH 3.7 cm

Condition: Very good condition. Some age cracks and wear to inked details.

Provenance: Ex-collection Karl-Ludwig Kley.

Whereas the sumo wrestler is only permitted to touch the ground with his feet, this pair grapples with each other in a kneeling position. This along with their severely inebriated expressions points to this being a drunken game.