



Fine Netsuke & Sagemono (NE0421)

Fri, 16th Apr 2021

Lot 31

Starting price: €2500

Estimate: €5000

A RARE DARK WOOD NETSUKE OF A RONIN DRAWING HIS SWORD

Unsigned

Japan, 18th century, Edo period (1615-1868)

Carved standing with the feet and legs together, the back slightly arched, bending forwards with the head, wearing the characteristic mino (straw cape), the muscles of his arms and legs powerfully sculpted, the vengeful warrior about to draw his sword, his face with a fierce, snarling, almost evil expression with intense eyes, furrowed brows, and a nasty smile. Two large asymmetrical himotoshi to the back.

HEIGHT 7.2 cm

Condition: Good condition with minor surface wear. Tiny repair to the very edge of one foot.

Provenance: European collection.

The revenge of the forty-seven ronin is an 18th-century historical event in Japan in which a band of ronin (leaderless samurai) avenged the death of their master. The incident has since become legendary. The story tells of a group of samurai who were left leaderless after their daimyo (feudal lord) Asano Naganori was compelled to perform seppuku (ritual suicide) for assaulting a court official named Kira Yoshinaka, whose title was Kozuke no suke. After waiting and planning for a year, the ronin avenged their master's honor by killing Kira on the night of December 14th, in the year of 1702. They were then obliged to commit seppuku for the crime of murder. This true story was popularized in Japanese culture as emblematic of the loyalty, sacrifice, persistence, and honor that people should display in their daily lives. The present netsuke, however, appears to highlight some of the more nefarious motivations behind such a violent act.