

CHRISTIE'S

85 Old Brompton Rd, SW7

For Immediate Release

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**SUMO WRESTLERS – A RARE FASHION ACCESSORY IN THE FINE
ART OF JAPANESE DRESSING AT CHRISTIE'S**



**Asia Sales in 2005
Christie's South Kensington**

London – The revered tradition of Japanese wrestling is the rare subject for a superb group of Kimono accessories to be sold at Christie's. This unique group of 25 *netsuke*, and other ornamental pieces, feature in the sale *Asian Art*, on 17th February 2005. This is one of the regular monthly sales at South Kensington which include Chinese and Japanese porcelains and works of art, with appeal for dealers and lovers of the unusual and decorative, alike.

Worn as part of traditional Japanese dress for hundreds of years, and carved in a huge variety of materials and designs, *netsuke* form a fascinating and affordable aspect of Japanese collecting. These ornamental pieces fastened the hanging pouches and containers to a Kimono sash or *obi* used in place of pockets. Sumo wrestling has a 2,000-year history in Japan but is a relatively rare subject for this form or art. The carvings in this collection show wrestlers and mythical figures in various stages of combat, occasionally with *Gyoji* or referees standing ready to direct a fan at the winner of the contest. Other notable carvings include several animals – a buffalo, an eagle with a wolf in its claws and a hanging tobacco container in the form of a seated monkey.

A 19th century carved ivory *netsuke* of two wrestlers, with two muscular figures in combat, one grasping the other's loin cloth, lifting the other aloft is estimated at £2,000-3,000. A 19th-century carved wood *netsuke* of figures in combat, their faces with fierce expressions and eyes inlaid in with horn, is estimated to realize £500-700. Two further ivory *netsuke*, one showing a wrestler with his hands raised in victory and the other with a wrestler wearing a hat with floral decoration, are estimated to fetch £400-600 and £300-500 respectively.

A 16th-17th century hanging tobacco container, or *tonkotsu*, is made of lacquered wood and carved in the form of a seated monkey holding a fruit in his paws (estimate: £400-600). An ivory *netsuke* of an eagle, is carved with the bird peering down at a wolf held in its claws, the eagle's eyes inlaid with gilt lacquer, (estimate £800-1,200). A Japanese ivory *netsuke* carved as a large rat, a revered creature in Japanese culture, is seated on a cylindrical basket with a rat's head poking out of the basket beneath (estimate: £600-800).

Asia 2005 Calendar

Christie's South Kensington

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| ▪ February 17, | Asian Art | 10.30am |
| ▪ March 10, | Asian Art | 10.30am & 2.00pm |
| ▪ April 14, | Asian Art | 10.30am |
| ▪ April 29, | Indian and Islamic Art | 10.30am & 2.00pm |
| ▪ May 12, | Asian Art | 10.30am & 2.00pm |
| ▪ June 9, | Asian Art | 10.30am & 2.00pm |
| ▪ July 15, | Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art | 10.30am & 2.00pm |
| ▪ Sept 15, | Asian Art | 10.30am & 2.00pm |
| ▪ October 2, | Asian Art | 12 noon |
| ▪ October 14, | Indian and Islamic Art | 10.30am & 2.00pm |
| ▪ Nov 11, | Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art | 10.30am & 2.00pm |
| ▪ Dec 15, | Asian Art | 10.30am & 2.00pm |

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Images available on request

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