

For Immediate Release

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DAINICHI NYORAI SCULPTURE OF A BUDDHA REALIZES \$14,377,000 AND ESTABLISHES NEW WORLD AUCTION RECORDS AT CHRISTIE'S

- World Auction Record for Japanese Art
- Auction Record for Asian Art Sold in New York

A Highly Important Wood Sculpture of Dainichi Nyorai, Attributed to the Sculptor Unkei, Surpasses Previous World Auction Record by \$12,617,000

New York – In today's sale of *Japanese and Korean Art*, a newly discovered wood sculpture of Dainichi Nyorai, the supreme Buddha, attributed to the sculptor Unkei achieved \$14,377,000, exceeding its presale estimate of \$1,500,000-2,500,000. It set new world auction records including record for Japanese art, and any Asian work of art sold in New York. This price largely surpasses the previous record of \$1.76 million realized by a Rakuchu Rakugai screen, sold in October 1990 at Christie's New York. The Dainichi Nyorai Buddha was bought by the Japanese company, Mitsukoshi Co Ltd.

Katsura Yamaguchi, International Director of Japanese and Korean Art said, "History was made today with the phenomenal result of \$14,377,000, which is a testament to the extreme importance and beauty of this supreme Buddha, and elevates Japanese art to a new record level. We witnessed enormous interest from clients worldwide who traveled from near and far to visit the exhibition at Christie's and participate in this landmark sale."

Thought to be the work of Unkei, the seated figure of Dainichi Nyorai, the supreme Buddha of the esoteric pantheon, is preserved in fine condition. Unkei was one of the greatest carvers of the early Kamakura period (1190s), who received the title of *hojin*, the highest rank an artist could achieve. Dainichi is classified as a Buddha, and here he is presented as a Bodhisattva in princely regalia. Made of Cypress wood, he sits on lotus position, with hair piled in a high topknot and wearing the crown and jewelry of royalty. The deity forms a distinctive hand gesture, called "knowledge fist:" his left hand forms a fist with the index finger pointing up and grasped by his right hand.

The statue is believed to have come from a temple during the Meiji period (1868-1911) when the government officially adopted Shinto as the state religion. Upon leaving the temple, it was a part of a prominent family collection in the northern part of the Kanto region. The statue's existence was unknown until it was later sold to a Buddhist dealer and bought by the current owner. Suspecting the figure was hollow inside, the owner approached the curator at the Tokyo National Museum and it was discovered by X-rays that the figure contains three dedicatory objects, sealed inside the torso for over 800 years.

The three objects, a wood five-stage pagoda, crystal ball supported by a bronze stand, and a crystal five-stage pagoda, represent Buddhist symbols and are tied together with bronze wire. The wooden plaque is likely to be inscribed with the date of the dedication and the name of the temple or donor, as well as the sculptor's identity.

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Download images here:

http://cshk.myftp.org/OverSeas%20Sale/New%20York/2008/Mar_Asia%20Week/Mar_Japanese%20and%20Korean%20Art/

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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