

For Immediate Release

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FROM THE CROSSROADS TO THE HEART OF SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Indian and Southeast Art

September 20, 2006

New York – Following the morning sale of Modern and Contemporary Indian Art, the afternoon will be devoted to the classical foundations of art in India and Southeast Asia. The true connoisseur and history buff will appreciate many of the works of art coming up in the sale of Indian and Southeast Asian Art – be it Indian bronze or stone sculpture, Gandharan statues or Tibetan ritual objects – as the seeds that enabled the flourishing of artistic and religious expression across the centuries in Asia. Voluptuous or remarkably simple, monumental or miniature, these works light the path to a true understanding of India and Southeast Asia.

Gandhara

From the Collection of Julian Sherrier is a gray schist relief of Shiva and Parvati (estimate: \$30,000-40,000) which offers a fascinating and rare expression of an anthropomorphic representation of the Hindu god Shiva. This highly remarkable process happened in phases: Shiva was at first represented in powerful abstract iconic images, most importantly the phallic linga, symbolic of creation. In a first step towards realism, face(s) were added to the sides of the rounded shaft. And then, around the first century, a full anthropomorphic image emerged in Gandharan reliefs such as the one offered for sale. Images of this type are extremely rare. They represent among the very first anthropomorphic images of the deity in the Indian subcontinent and are highly important from a cultural and historical point of view. Another highly unusual object from the same collection is the model of a stupa that likely served as a traveling shrine, surrounded by four figures on the base, including Indra, Brahma and Maitreya, Buddha of the Future. It bears an inscription in Karoshti around the base: “[Gift of] Sivaraksitaka, the stupa with people around it paying homage.” The name of the donor literally means ‘protected by Shiva’, surprising in this Buddhist context. The

dating on paleographic grounds is no later than 150 A.D. Also offered in the Gandharan section is a large black schist figure of the Teaching Buddha, 2nd/3rd century (estimate: \$100,000-150,000). The figure refers to the second miracle of Buddha whereby the two Naga kings created a lotus on whose petals the Buddha seated himself and by supernatural power created multiple images of himself that issued all around him. Extremely interesting and rare is a copper coin of Buddha, first half 2nd century (estimate: \$4,000-6,000) that depicts a frontal view of Buddha inscribed in Bactrian with his name on one side and an image of King Kanishka on the other. It is under the rule of King Kanishka I, during the first quarter of the 2nd century, that coins bearing his image and that of the Buddha were issued for the first time.

Indian Sculpture

From a Private Hamburg Collection and previously in the Collection of Hubertus Elsterman, the sale presents a rare triad of granite figures of Vishnu and his consorts from South India, Tamilnadu, late Chola/early Vijayanagar period, 13th/14th century (estimate: \$150,000-200,000). This group represents the classic Vaishnava triad of Southern India with Vishnu flanked by his two spouses Sridevi and the earth goddess Bhudevi, each holding a lotus bud and with their outer arms elegantly extended. From the same collection is a rare granite figure of a deity with a flywhisk, South India, Pallava period, 8th/9th century (estimate: \$60,000-80,000). This sculpture is remarkable for its graceful elongated forms characteristic of Pallava stone sculpture. A bronze figure of Jina, India Karnataka, 10th century (estimate: \$60,000-80,000), stands out for its purity of concept and form. Having obtained complete liberation, the Jina, is depicted naked ('sky-clad') and standing in a yogic meditation position, expressing well-being and emphasizing the spiritual over the physical.

Tibet

Two Tibetan sculptures of particular note are the 15th century black stone stele of Yama Dharmaraja (estimate: \$150,000-200,000), who is the wisdom deity protector of the father class of Anuttarayoga Tantra. The quality of the figure is exceptional, showing the deity with his right leg bent atop a buffalo over a prone human figure on a lotus base. The base is carved with a rectangular opening sealed with a wooden plaque for consecration. The second figure is a finely cast 15th century bronze depiction of Akshobhya (estimate: \$150,000-200,000). A fascinating group of Tibetan ritual objects includes a 15th century red and gold lacquered leather lama cap box (estimate: \$8,000-10,000) as well as a 15th/16th century iron lamellar helmet constructed of fourteen plates rather than the usual eight (estimate: \$10,000-15,000).

Further included in the sale is a splendid pair of gilt copper repoussé figures of two Taras, Nepal, 18th century (estimate: \$120,000-180,000). Each figure is finely worked and shows the deity holding lotus stalks rising up to flank their shoulders. In their extraordinary execution, these repoussé figures, worked from sheet copper and assembled in sections, gilt and richly inset with hardstones,

represent the pinnacle of the repoussé technique both from an artistic as well as a technical perspective.

Auction: Indian and Southeast Asian Art

September 21 at 2 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

September 15 - 20

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