POST-SALE PRESS RELEASE
Successful Asian Art auctions at Koller Zurich, 17-18 November 2015
Chinese bidding still very active

The great majority of the rare Chinese works at Koller’s Asian Art auctions this week in Zurich were purchased by Chinese bidders, who maintained a strong presence in the saleroom, the telephone and online. These highlights included a rare 1950s painting by Lin Fengmian, as well as a group of 1980s paintings by various Chinese artists collected by the former Swiss ambassador to Beijing, Hans Müller. Buddhistic art was also highly sought after in Tuesday's auction.

“Two Dancers” is one of the rare works by Lin Fengmian to have survived the Cultural Revolution. Depicting a scene from the Beijing Opera, this was the painting’s first appearance on the art market since the artist himself sold it to a Swiss collector living in Hong Kong in the mid-1950s to help pay for his wife and daughter’s passage to Brazil. The work will finally make its way back to China, having sold to a Chinese bidder for CHF 228 500 / GBP 155 000 (lot 295).
A group of six Chinese paintings from the 1980s were also highly successful. All found buyers, many at prices well above the pre-sale estimates. The paintings were all purchased by Hans Müller, the Swiss Ambassador stationed in Beijing between 1982 and 1986. A composition in brown, yellow and red by Zhang Wei estimated at CHF 5,000 – 8,000 / GBP 3,500 – 5,500 sold for CHF 29,300 / GBP 19,800 (lot 301), and an untitled composition from 1984 by Zhu Jinshi estimated to bring between CHF 6,000 and 9,000 / GBP 4,000 – 6,000 sold for CHF 55,700 / GBP 37,600 (lot 303).

A famille rose painted porcelain plaque, signed by the important Republican Period artist Wang Dafan (1886-1961), was the subject of an intense bidding war which resulted in a very respectable sales price of CHF 102,500 / GBP 69,200 (lot 347). Among the furniture that stood out in this sale was the huanghuali wood southern “official’s hat” armchair – so-named because of its shaped crest rail, resembling an official’s cap – from a Swiss private collection that sold for CHF 120,500 / GBP 81,400 (lot 278).

Among the Buddhistic art in this sale, a striking thanka depicting the Arhat Kanakavatsa (lot 173), which had been acquired at Koller in 1978, sold for CHF 82,100 / GBP 55,500, and a 14th-15th century Tibetan gilt copper alloy figure of Buddha Shakyamuni with Vajra sold for more than double its low estimate at CHF 41,300 / GBP 27,900 (lot 105). An 18th century rhinoceros horn libation cup found a new Chinese owner for CHF 31,700 / GBP 21,400 (lot 272).

Japanese, Indian and Southeast Asian art was the focus of Wednesday’s auction, and one of the unanticipated successes was a large Thai silver covered vase from the 19th century (lot 396). Decorated overall with the signs of the zodiac and lotus flowers, bidding rose well above its upper estimate of CHF 6,000 / GBP 4,000, finally selling to a Singapore bidder for CHF 17,300 / GBP 11,700. The top lot among the Indian miniatures was an early 19th-century Kangra school painting of a young woman fainting at the sound of Krishna’s flute (lot 421). In a Swiss private collection since before 1953, the beautifully painted work has now entered another Swiss collection, changing hands for CHF 24,500 / GBP 16,500.
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